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Monthly magazine of the British section of the League for the Fifth International

BRING DOWN THE TORIES?

Photo: Guy Smallman



- Defend every job and service
- Strike together
- Unite the anticuts movement

YES WE CAN!

Richard Brenner

MANDATE? NO WAY. Cameron and Clegg do not have the voters' backing for their vicious cuts package – the deepest in British history. Their Coalition only has a majority in Parliament because of Lib Dem support, and the Lib Dems only won votes because they promised to oppose the cuts.

What's more, no one voted for cuts in frontline staff in health and education, and Cameron even said he would not cut. Now we know he was lying. A staggering 50,000 teachers are under threat and hundreds of schools put under financial strain.

What's more, no one voted for the wholesale privatisation of the welfare state. Now Cameron

has announced it anyway, with housing, hospitals, schools and care services up to be handed to "any willing [private] provider".

Less than a year into the Coalition government, all the polls and by-elections show Labour would win a thumping majority if there were an election tomorrow. It's a clear sign that a majority oppose the Coalition's offensive on our jobs, services and living standards.

But that won't stop the Tories. They are determined to use their Coalition while it lasts, to inflict irreversible damage on the whole post-war welfare state. Someone has to pay the trillion pound price for the crisis caused by their friends in the banks and corporations, and the Tories have decided who: the working class.

If the Tories succeed it is fast-forward to the pre-war past. Privately run schools and hospitals in place of public health and education systems, a new poor law in place of universal benefits, a three million strong pool of unemployed labour to undercut wages and deter militancy, a little bit of guff about a 'Big Society' and a gale of racism against Muslims and migrants to keep people divided and turn people into scapegoats.

Action

So what can stop them? The answer is mass action. Like in Egypt and Tunisia, where all out general strikes and mass protests brought down dictators. Like in Wisconsin USA, where a union revival has brought scores of thousands onto

the streets and into the council chambers. Like in France and Greece, where one-day stoppages came within a hair's breadth of beating the cuts and would have won if they had launched indefinite general strikes.

Ed Miliband says general strikes are "not the way you change governments", but Egypt and Tunisia show just how wrong he is. It is mass action on the streets and in the workplaces that can change things, that can show the capitalists and their governments that we won't pay for their crisis, and that can force them to back down.

The huge numbers on the streets of London on 26 March show that the mood is there for action and the numbers are there too. So the TUC's mass demonstration must

not be the end of the campaign. We do not need a one-day wonder but a launch pad for a wave of action that shakes the Coalition to its foundations.

A general strike, backed by huge marches in every major city, and occupations of the main squares and government buildings, could make this country ungovernable until the cuts package is dropped and the Coalition falls.

If the people of Egypt can bring down a tyrannical dictatorship with a general strike and mass street action, then the working class in Britain – with our seven million strong trade unions, our mass student movement and our anticuts committees in every city – can bring down the weak regime of Cameron and Clegg.

The editorial SIMON HARDY



ALL TOGETHER

OVER the next four years the Tories and the Liberal Democrats want to destroy the welfare state as we know it. They can't be allowed to get away with it.

This isn't just about ideology. These cuts and privatisations are being demanded by the entire capitalist class. The bankers, who got £1.5 trillion in the bailout, want the deficit they made to be filled by the working class through huge cuts.

This view is accepted by all the main parties. Before the election, Brown's chancellor Alastair Darling said Labour's cuts would be "deeper and tougher" than Margaret Thatcher's.

Ed Miliband - though he is speaking on the platform at the TUC's great 26 March demonstration - has refused to take part in the march. He condemned those like the RMT's Bob Crow who call for "coordinated strike action and civil disobedience."

Instead he denounced "irresponsible strikes" - whatever they are - and said strikes "are not the way you change governments. The way you change governments is through the ballot box." Tell that to the Egyptians!

If we take Miliband's advice it will condemn us to four years of Tory demolition of the welfare state and the public sector.

We need to match the bosses blow for blow.

Their attack is a political one - it's about what kind of society we want to live in and whether we allow them to throw our living standards back in to the Dark Ages. It's legislated for by an illegitimate government that nobody voted for. It's backed up on the streets and in the workplaces by the police and the courts.

If we play by their rules - of polite lobbying, of begging for concessions - and take the line of least resistance, then we will lose. However well you speak in parliament, however many Labour MPs vote against the government, it will not stop the cuts. Neither will the usual routine of one-day strikes and protests. We have to bring down the government which is implementing these cuts. Nothing less will do.

That is why Workers Power is calling for a general strike. Some people will say it is not possible. To those people we ask: how do you propose to stop the cuts?

The example of the students last year proved that a massive eruption of anger at cuts is possible if it is given leadership. And the revolutions that are sweeping the Middle East show there is a new mood of anger affecting young people all over the world.

We can and we must link all our struggles together and make the country ungovernable for the bosses and their parties. We can bring down the Tories, break their cuts and open a fight for working class power: socialism.

This is a special issue of Workers Power produced for the 26 March demonstration. It's a change from our magazine format and gives us more room to deal with the many things happening across the world - from the revolutions in the Middle East to the inspirational workers' struggle in Wisconsin and the catastrophe in Japan.

If you like what you read please support us by taking out a subscription, or even better, join Workers Power in the fight against capitalism internationally.

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Millionaires' war on services

NEARLY 80 per cent of the Con Dem Coalition cabinet are millionaires - that's 23 of the 29.

Together they are worth about £60m.

Even the bosses admit it. The right wing Tory Daily Mail said the cabinet is "drawn almost exclusively from the ranks of the financial elite."

It is also - as personified by Cameron and Osborne - part of the old public school and Oxford clique that ran the country up to the 1960s.

Their claims about representing a break from the old Tory past are utterly bogus when you actually look at who they are, and where they're from.

In their days at Oxford, with their chum Boris Johnson the buffoonish Mayor of London, all three were mem-

bers of the Bullingdon Club, what The Times called, "the ultimate club of super-wealthy hellraisers".

Andrew Gimson, author of a biography of Boris Johnson, described how Boris, David and George spent their time at university in the "loads-of-money 1980s":

"I don't think an evening would have ended without a restaurant being trashed and being paid for in full, very often in cash. [...] A night in the cells would be regarded as being par for a Buller man and so would debagging [removing the trousers] of anyone who really attracted the irritation of the Buller men."

Interesting that David was to go on to demand harsh sentences for those

who broke the windows of the Tory HQ on Millbank.

Was it concern for "violence" and "thuggery"? Or perhaps it was the political motive of resisting cuts of 30 pounds a week to FE college students or tipping tuition fees - when in David and George's day they got a grant from the taxpayer like everyone else.

It wasn't quite all free though.

There were a few overheads like the Bullingdon Club uniform; a swallow tailcoat in Oxford blue with ivory coloured silk lapel revers, brass monogrammed buttons, a mustard waistcoat, and a sky blue bow tie. In addition there is a sky blue striped with ivory Club tie.

The full uniform costs in the region of £3,000.

THE CABINET OF HORRORS



Prime Minister - David Cameron

Age: 43

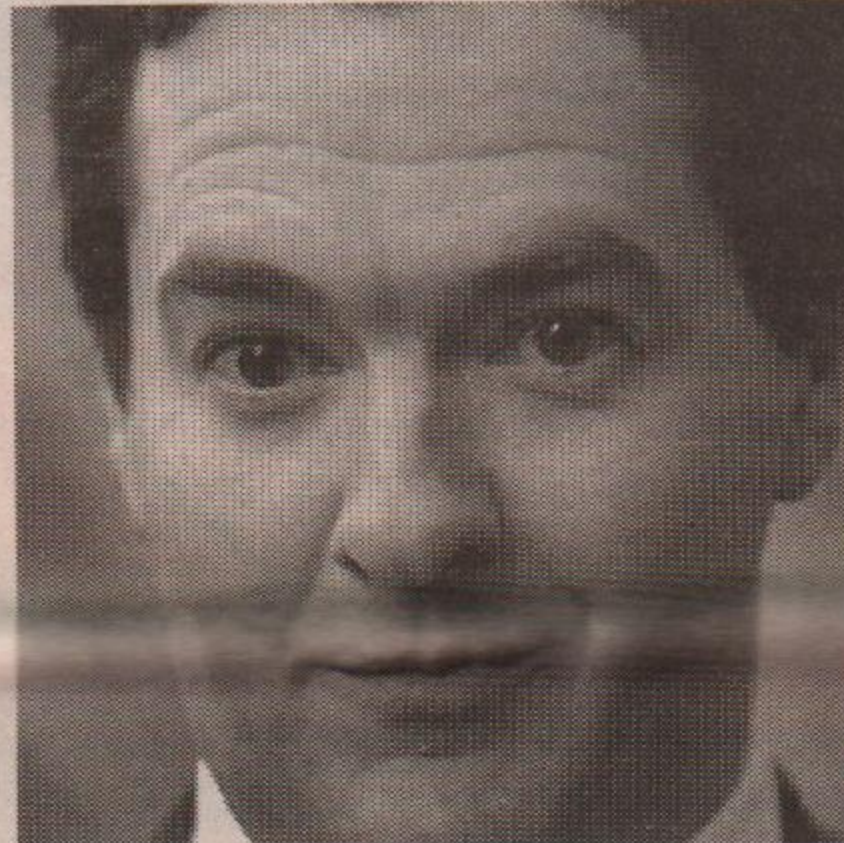
Public school: Eton

University: Oxford

Career: former PR executive

Personal wealth: £4 million.

Background: Cameron and his wealthy wife are in line to inherit huge fortunes from their parents: the combined wealth of the Cameron's' parents has been put in excess of £30 million. Their London home is valued at £2.7million and their constituency house at £1million. Cameron is a descendant of King William IV, and 5th cousin twice removed of the Queen.



Chancellor - George Osborne

Age: 39

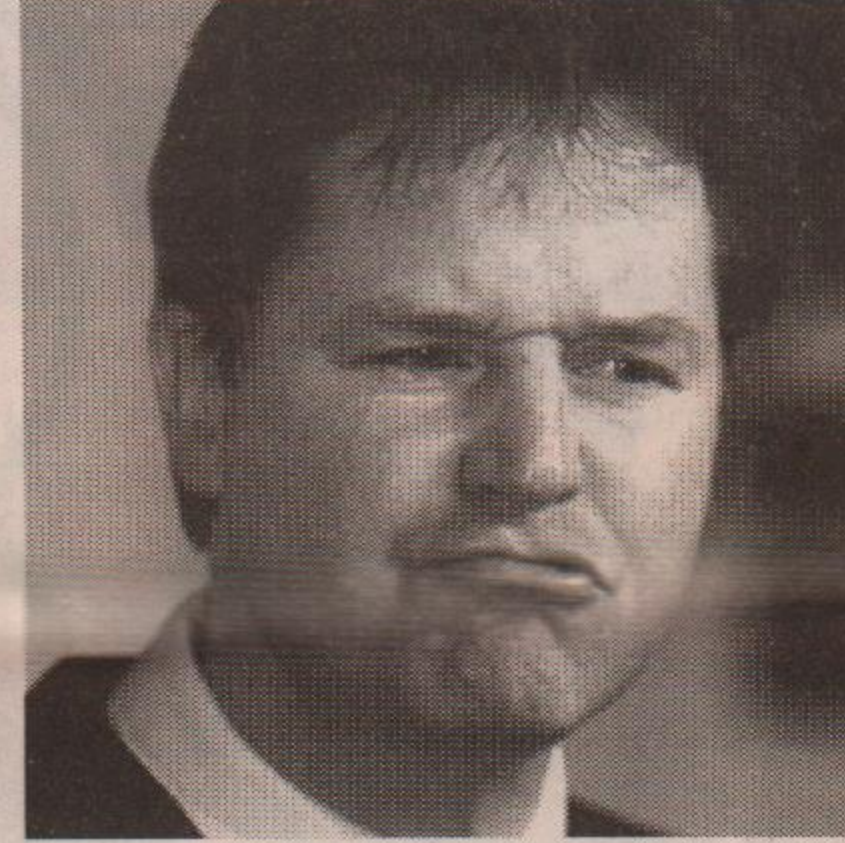
Public school: St Paul's

University: Oxford

Background: Eldest son of the 17th Baronet Osborne of Ballentaylor and Ballylemonin, Tipperary. Lives in a £2 million family home in London's Notting Hill.

His constituency property in Tatton is worth £600,000. He benefits from a 15% stake in his family's luxury wallpaper business, Osborne & Little, a company which is valued at £12m.

His personal wealth stands at £4.6 million.



Deputy PM - Nick Clegg

Age: 43

Public school: Westminster

University: Cambridge

Background: Son of a banker, Nicholas Clegg CBE, chairman of United Trust Bank, and a trustee of The Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation. Grandmother was a Russian aristocrat. Together with his wife, a highly paid lawyer, his personal wealth is reckoned to be about £1.8m.

Interesting fact: Clegg has not always been a Lib Dem, at university he joined the Conservative Association.

Stop these cruel attacks

NHS

The NHS Bill is an attempt to destroy the NHS as we know it by giving free reign to the profiteers. More than 150 NHS health services would be at risk of closure. GPs will control 80 per cent of the £80 billion health budget from 2013 to contract out services to private medical companies. Even Tory MP Sarah Wollaston, said the plan would mean the NHS going "belly-up". But fundamentally that is the aim.

Benefits

The plans to overhaul and slash housing benefit would price low-income households out of a third of local authorities in England. Welfare cuts would see £2.1 billion taken out of the disability allowance pot over five years. Nine per cent of disabled people surveyed said that if they lost disability living allowance then their lives wouldn't be worth living at all.

Serve the rich, screw the poor – the Tories' vision for Britain

HIGHLIGHTS

John Bowman

IN POWER now for nearly a year, the Tories are showing their true colours. It's a simple and clear-cut message: "You heard what we said to get the votes, now here's what we really think." For all the promises of "fairness" and "protecting frontline services" in the last general election, now the gloves are off.

The public service White Paper will explain why this isn't all just total madness, but part of a deliberate plan to break down and dismantle the entire welfare state.

"It will put in place principles that will signal the decisive end of the old-fashioned, top-down, take-what-you're-given model of public services. And it is a vital part of our mission to dismantle 'Big Government' and build the 'Big Society' in its place. This change is long overdue. We all know the damage caused by centrally controlled public services." (David Cameron, *The Telegraph*, 20 February 2011)

Beneath all the jargon and rhetoric, what is Cameron really saying? When he says 'big government', he means the idea that the state should provide public services for all regardless of who you are, where you're from and how much you earn.

When he says he wants to dismantle it and put "big society in its place", he means opening them up to private companies, which put profits before people.

Once the state's only dealing with public services is writing cheques to private companies, the next move – one that the Tories haven't dared yet suggest – will be to make people pay directly for such services, like students who want to go to university.

This plan is a massive attack on all ordinary people, who depend on health services, who have ever been



made redundant, who work in the public sector, who send their children to the local comprehensive school, and who don't just rely on public services, but believe in them too.

The 'Big Society' wants to do away with the state and replace it with individual charity and hand outs - it's taking Britain back to the Victorian age.

The White Paper will have at its core a three-point ethos for carrying these attacks through - labelled

diversity, choice, and delivery at the lowest possible level. But this positive wording masks the real objective - privatisation.

The Tories have said that diversity means allowing a range of different private providers to bid for contracts. Choice and delivery at the lowest level are about turning service users into customers, and turning the point of delivery into the 'point of retail':

"Instead of having to justify why it makes sense to introduce com-

petition in some public services - as we are now doing with schools and in the NHS - the state will have to justify why it should ever operate a monopoly."

By introducing competition, private companies will attempt to beat the public sector with lower prices. When they are trying to seize 'market share' from the public sector, they can promise the world and undercut to drive them out of business. But the end result of competition is a monopoly.

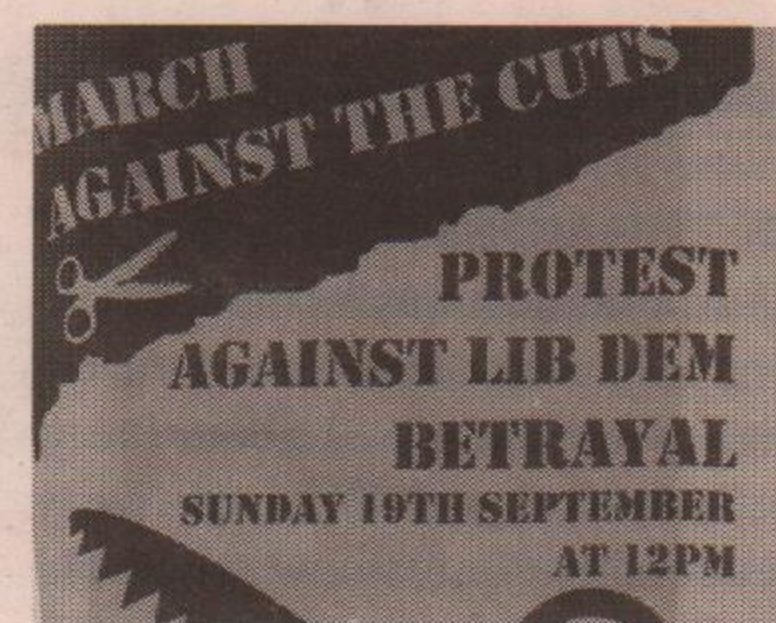
Just look at the NHS. Once they drive out ordinary NHS hospitals, forcing them to close as they can't compete in the new 'free market', the big US health multinationals will be free to drive down quality, force up prices and make big profits.

It is the same logic across the board and is deliberately destructive. The Localism Bill, for example, will significantly hit the poorest in the country - it gets rid of the idea that communities with the highest level of poverty should get more support from the state.

This is the reality of so-called 'consumer choice' in public services. It boosts inequality allowing the middle classes to cherry pick better-funded services, perhaps by paying a bit more on top of the 'bog standard' state provision afforded to the rest of us.

The 'Big Society' isn't about fairness. And, really, it isn't about consumer choice either. What everyone of these policies eat away at is the idea that everyone has a universal right to quality public services - regardless of where you live or what you can afford.

And this is at the heart of the 'Big Society' - ending the system of universal provision and creating a society sharply divided between the haves and have-nots. That's why it must be stopped.



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Middle East revolt continues pg 11



Japanese tsunami catastrophe pg 13



The Royal Wedding: is it something to be celebrated? pg 14

Education

Michael Gove has set in motion the privatisation of the schools system. His Education Bill proposes a huge increase in academies - allowing private businesses to control our schools. Every state school is being encouraged to break from local education authority control. This comes on top of taking the hammer to higher and further education - with EMA grants scrapped and fees tripled.

Local services

The Localism Bill aims to transfer council-run services over to the private sector. Cuts of almost 10% across the board, to council services - libraries, schools, refuse services, day centres, all endangered - make a mockery of the 'Big Society'. It also massively boosts inequality by allowing

councils to keep the business rates they raise - it means that the City of London would gain £517 million, while Birmingham would lose £175 million, Hackney £116 million, and Liverpool £104 million.

Pensions

The Tories want us to work longer, contribute more and get less when we retire. Nurses, teachers and other public sector workers will lose the final salary pension

scheme and work six years longer.

Women

Women will be hit hard by the cuts. Women are more likely to be hit by cuts in social care, affected by the 27% cut in local council budget. The public sector job cuts will impact on women, 65 per cent of the workforce. £600 million cuts to legal aid means that most divorce and child residence cases would

no longer be eligible. More than half of domestic violence services may close due to funding cuts.

Jobs

Unemployment has risen 8 per cent to 2.53 million - the highest in 17 years. But young people are being hit particularly hard. One in five youth can't find work - that's a million of our young people condemned to poverty.

Labour Party: with us or against us?

John Bowman

IN THE MONTHS after the Con-Dem coalition was formed, 30,000 people – fearful for their future – signed up to join the Labour Party.

Brown's departure meant a party leadership contest and many old and new party members hoped someone would emerge who would rally resistance to the impending savage cuts to jobs and services. They were in for a disappointment.

Leadership

The Miliband brothers dominated the 2010 Labour leadership race, with David representing the Blairite wing of the party and Ed positioning himself a little to the left.

It was summed up in his Conference speech. "I know we lost trust, I know we lost touch, I know we need to change. Today a new generation has taken charge of Labour."

The language might have been vague – but trade unionists and constituency socialists wanted to believe this meant a clean break with New Labour and a return to being "the party of the trade unions".

"Irresponsible" strikes

But the right-wing media immediately opened fire, dubbing the new leader "Red Ed", claiming he was a poodle of the trade unions.

But instead of defending the right of organised workers to have their own political party and pointing out that the Tories were a party funded by billionaires and led by millionaires, Miliband rushed to prove his "innocence" by condemning projected industrial action by British Airways cabin crew and London firefighters in defence of their jobs and working conditions. He repeated the formula that he was against such "irresponsible strikes".



Ed Miliband is trying to hold back the anticuts movement

Bob Crow, RMT leader, responded: "Ed Miliband has to decide whose side he is on – the working class on the streets and on the picket lines or the ConDems and their corporate supporters. All the signs are that he is already caving in to the right-wing press." Too right!

In November, a mass movement that erupted among students and youth against cuts in higher education put this to the test. But Miliband sat on the fence. He told media sources he was "tempted to go out and talk to them", but was "busy at the time".

This pathetic response reflected Labour's whole "responsible opposition" strategy, a term coined after the election by stand-in leader Harriet Harman.

The strategy was more fully explained during the student revolt

by Dan Hodges, an editor of the 'Labour Uncut' internal policy blog.

"The savage coalition cuts may unleash a hurricane of protest. But if that storm strikes... we can find solid shelter. And then lend our aid and our labour when the storm has past. There is protest. And there is power. Labour cannot be the party of both."

Councils at a crossroads

For Labour councils, just taking shelter and "weathering the storm" is not an option.

It is an either/or situation: refuse to implement Westminster's cuts at local level, or carry them out. In every single Labour-controlled council, they have chosen to cut, becoming the focus of anti-cuts protests.

The best they could do was waste money on advertising campaigns saying: "The government has cut our money, so we are forced to cut our

services."

Occupations and protests took place at many Labour-held town halls in February and March, with councillors fleeing the chambers to pass cuts budgets in secret, hiding from the working class people they were elected to defend.

They claim they have no option – refusal to carry out the cuts will mean Eric Pickles, Tory local government secretary, sending in his unelected officials to slash their budgets.

They say that at least if Labour carries out the 15-35 per cent cuts, they would "protect frontline services and the most vulnerable". But to all those losing childcare, benefits, libraries, sports facilities and jobs, it looks like Labour councillors are doing the Tories' dirty work for them.

Where next

After the TUC March for the Alter-

native – after Ed Miliband has taken the platform – what will Labour do? Will it finally commit not just to verbal protests but refuse to pass on Tory cuts and start supporting action to stop them?

Labour parties, alongside local unions, could make towns and cities ungovernable by Pickles' henchmen.

To help the Tories in their destruction of the welfare state, to sit it out in the hope of winning an election in four years' time, could be a disaster for Labour's electoral hopes.

If the Tories succeed in implementing their policies and the unions and working class communities are crushed, then they could win again in 2015. After all, the Tories defeated Labour after the miners' strike in 1984-85 because workers were demoralised after this historic defeat.

More importantly, what will be left of jobs and services if we don't fight?

New party

The trade unions set up the Labour Party and still have an impact on its internal life, as the election of Ed Miliband showed. The unions currently provided Labour with 88% of its donations.

But Labour isn't just the party of the trade unions. In terms of what it does in office – whether at Westminster or in the town halls – it is a party of the bosses.

That is why its leaders are more concerned about winning middle class voters from the Lib Dems and even the Tories than protecting working people in a life or death struggle to save our services and jobs.

It's time to break with Labour and form a new party – a revolutionary party that fights on the streets and in the workplaces for a socialist society.

TUC: leaders without a strategy

Joy Macready

THE TRADE Union Congress called the 26 March demo under the slogans: jobs, growth and justice. Countering the Con-Dems' rhetoric that there is no alternative to cuts, the TUC bases its economic strategy on three demands:

- Crackdown on tax avoidance and loopholes
- Raise Robin Hood tax on banks and finance
- Policies and time to secure recovery and create new jobs.

Fine policies as far as they go, but

as a strategy this does not go nearly far enough to recover the trillion pounds we handed over to the banks in the credit crunch or restore workers' living standards.

Of course we should make the super-rich and mega-corporations pay their taxes – and raise their rates dramatically. But what happens when these companies decide to relocate to a country with lower taxes?

We have a clear answer: workers should occupy their premises and the government nationalise them, without a penny's compensation. Let them move, but the factory, equipment and production stay in

the UK. We should run the companies under workers' control to stop the bosses throwing people on the dole.

The Robin Hood tax could bring in £20 billion. But it doesn't address the fact that RBS, Lloyds and Northern Rock are "publicly owned" yet behave the same as before the crisis. RBS paid its top bankers £950 million in bonuses despite a £1.1 billion loss. It has shed at least 27,000 jobs since its rescue.

We should nationalise all the banks, merge them into a single fund and use their assets to put the unemployed back to work, rebuild-

ing our services and renewing our environment.

Also fine words about creating new jobs *in time* but where's the policy to stop job cuts *now*?

TUC chief Brendan Barber has warned unions not to launch strikes because they could be perceived as "automatically partisan and hostile to a Conservative-led government" – as if that's controversial! He counterposes a letter-writing campaign to Tory MPs and stunts against tax dodgers.

Why is the TUC so opposed to action? Strikes have an excellent track record in reducing cuts; if they

were coordinated and extended beyond one day protests, they could save even more jobs and services.

But Barber and his fellow bureaucrats know such action could easily get out of their control – and these well-heeled ladies and gentlemen fear that far more than they fear the Tories.

Thousands of rank and file trade unionists have already seen through this charade. On 26 March, we need to raise loud demands on the union leaders for real action – strikes, occupations, solidarity – and prepare to organise it without them if necessary.

Strikes take anticuts fight to next stage

Jeremy Drinkall, Unison steward

AS WE GO to press, the Universities and Colleges Union is in the middle of a week of strikes. This will culminate on 24 March, when 120,000 further and higher education teachers will strike together across the UK.

For lecturers this is an opportunity to payback the students, who showed such determination last year. The strike isn't just about jobs, pay and pensions, but about the whole future of Higher Education. Importantly, it's also the first, major national strike against the cuts.

However, the UCU is not alone. Communication Workers Union members in Crown Post have voted 9:1 for strikes over pay. Andy

Young, a CWU rep in Royal Mail, told Workers Power: "All postal CWU members – counters, delivery, network, and indeed BT staff – now need to strike together."

This theme has been taken up by the National Union of Teachers and the civil service union PCS, which have called for coordinated strikes against the attack on public sector pensions.

While talks to get this off the ground have been agonisingly and needlessly drawn out, Tower Hamlets teachers and council workers in Unison have launched their own united strike against budget cuts with a borough-wide walkout on 30 March. Neighbouring Camden NUT members are also taking action on that day.

Numerous other strikes are also



on the way.

This all shows that anger against the cuts and falling wages is bubbling over. The bankers keep their pen-

sions and corporations dodge their taxes, while we get job losses and pay cuts. But workers are fighting back.

Now we need to step up the action

in two ways: one, unite the strikes and link our demands; two, extend the strikes and go all-out, indefinite to win. Anticuts groups and rank and file organisations can really help move things in this direction.

Union leaders have shown no stomach for such action – which would quickly develop into a showdown with the government and pose the need for a general strike. That's why workers need to elect their own strike committees and wrest control of their disputes from bureaucratic leaders all too eager to call off action for talks or bow to the vicious anti-union laws.

A million public sector workers are facing an historic attack.

Imagine the power we would have if we all struck together.

There is a serious debate going on within the movement about how to beat the cuts, write *Jeremy Drinkall and Richard Brenner*. Different strategies are being proposed but there is one thing that the TUC and Tories certainly agree on...

"No one's talking about a general strike"

THE TORIES' anti-union minister, Francis Maude, told the nation in December that, conveniently for the coalition, "No one is talking about a general strike."

This odd remark was echoed by TUC head Brendan Barber less than one month later. Coming out of the TUC's January meeting to 'discuss' coordinated action, Barber walked straight up to the assembled cameras and the first thing he said was: "No one was talking about a general strike."

Then last month the Tories' *Daily Mail* rag revealed "a secret 'war plan' to prevent a general strike has been drawn up by ministers ... a unit has been set up in the Cabinet Office to prevent Britain grinding to a standstill in the event of mass public sector walkouts. Officials have conducted 'war games' to ensure that strike breakers are available to run vital facilities..."

No surprises for guessing that this special unit for talking about a general strike is chaired by... Francis Maude.

It seems while the Tories want to stop trade unionists talking about a general strike, they themselves are talking about it constantly.

This is because they know full well that an all-out indefinite general strike is the one thing that can wreck their plans, beat their cuts and bring down their illegitimate government.

Don't we need some national disputes before we can get a general strike?

There are already national disputes – look at pensions, the lecturers and

teachers, and the wave of disputes in local authorities up and down the country. The key is to turn them into indefinite strikes that can really pile on the pressure, not just one day actions.

If a strong union leads the way with a national all-out strike, it could inspire others to follow behind them. The fight for solidarity could develop into a movement for a general strike.

But it can work the other way round, too. Some sections of workers can be worried about going out on a limb, especially given the anti-union laws.

A massive campaign across the country for a general strike would encourage workers to take action, because it would raise the prospect of solidarity – and the possibility of winning.

Because one thing is clear: a strike by one union or one sector alone could be beaten – but an indefinite general strike could bust the anti-union laws and bring down the Tories.

Why not simply call for coordinated strikes, as the TUC Congress did?

It sounds like a simple legal alternative to a general strike, but this 'coordination' strategy has another obvious weakness.

If a set of strikes is legal, then each of them must be a trades dispute with an employer over pay or conditions, not a solidarity action or political strike.

So if a series of legal trades disputes take place at the same time, all the bosses and the government

If a strong union leads the way with a national all-out strike, it could inspire others to follow behind them

need to do is decide to settle one of them. It may cost them a few million, but it takes a key battalion off the battlefield.

This is what Thatcher did in 1984 when she settled with the dockers to let the miners fight on alone.

The same thing happened in November last year, when the BBC, London Fire Brigade and the tube were due to walk out, but the FBU called off their action for "talks" which led nowhere.

In other words, coordinated strikes can become uncoordinated as soon as one employer makes the slightest concession. That's why a general strike – all for one and one for all – is so much more powerful.

Why call on the TUC to do something they won't do?

It is completely untrue that a moderate-led TUC will never call a general strike. They will – if they are put under so much pressure that they have to either call it, or lose control of the movement. That's what happened in 1926 when they called a general strike, and in 1972 when they threatened to call one, forc-

ing Heath to back down on his anti-union laws.

Second, why should we let them off the hook? The Tories don't want them to call a general strike. Nor does Clegg or Ed Miliband. Why go along with this agreement? These people are the leaders of seven million workers – they should do their jobs and organise action.

As for creating illusions, this fine idea assumes that the illusions aren't already there. But for every excellent militant who sees that the TUC moderates will sell us out, there are 500 union members who want action but haven't yet lost faith in the union officials. A skillful militant will help them to find out by calling on the leaders to act, and then showing them in practice that trusted leaders can fall short of their hopes and expectations.

Didn't the general strikes in Greece and France fail?

Yes, they did, because the union leaders refused calls to turn one-day protests into an indefinite general strike. If they had, they could have won their demands and brought down their governments.

But if the TUC lead it, they'll sell it out!

That's why we need to work overtime now to build unofficial structures that can build for a general strike, control and coordinate action when it happens, warn that the TUC could sell it out like they did after nine days in 1926, and continue the action if Barber tries to do the same.

The best way towards this is to build the anticuts committees as large as possible, drawing in as many delegates as we can, from every workplace, every estate and tenants' group, every campaign, every local trades council, trade union, Labour, student and socialist group. That way we can create something like the councils of action that spread across the country in the 1920s, real councils of working class delegates that can take control of the movement from below.

What about the anti-union laws?

The government would take a huge risk if it dragged the all the unions through the courts. For a start there are not enough courts or jails to prosecute and punish us all. And they can't run the country without us. Total defiance makes the law impotent, as the unions showed in 1974 and as we showed in the great anti-poll tax movement.

Well I'd love to see a general strike but it's just not going to happen...

Then why are the Tories busy telling us no one is talking about it? Why are they preparing a unit to stop it or crush it? This argument sounds very "realistic" but has been influenced, even without realising it, by the very message the bosses and Barber want us to believe.

The bosses are not wrong to worry about a general strike. Times of global crisis are typically times of revolution, and the capitalists know it very well. We should too.

A working class answer

1 THE CON-DEM Coalition aims to destroy the welfare state. The bosses, police chiefs, top civil servants and most of the media back them.

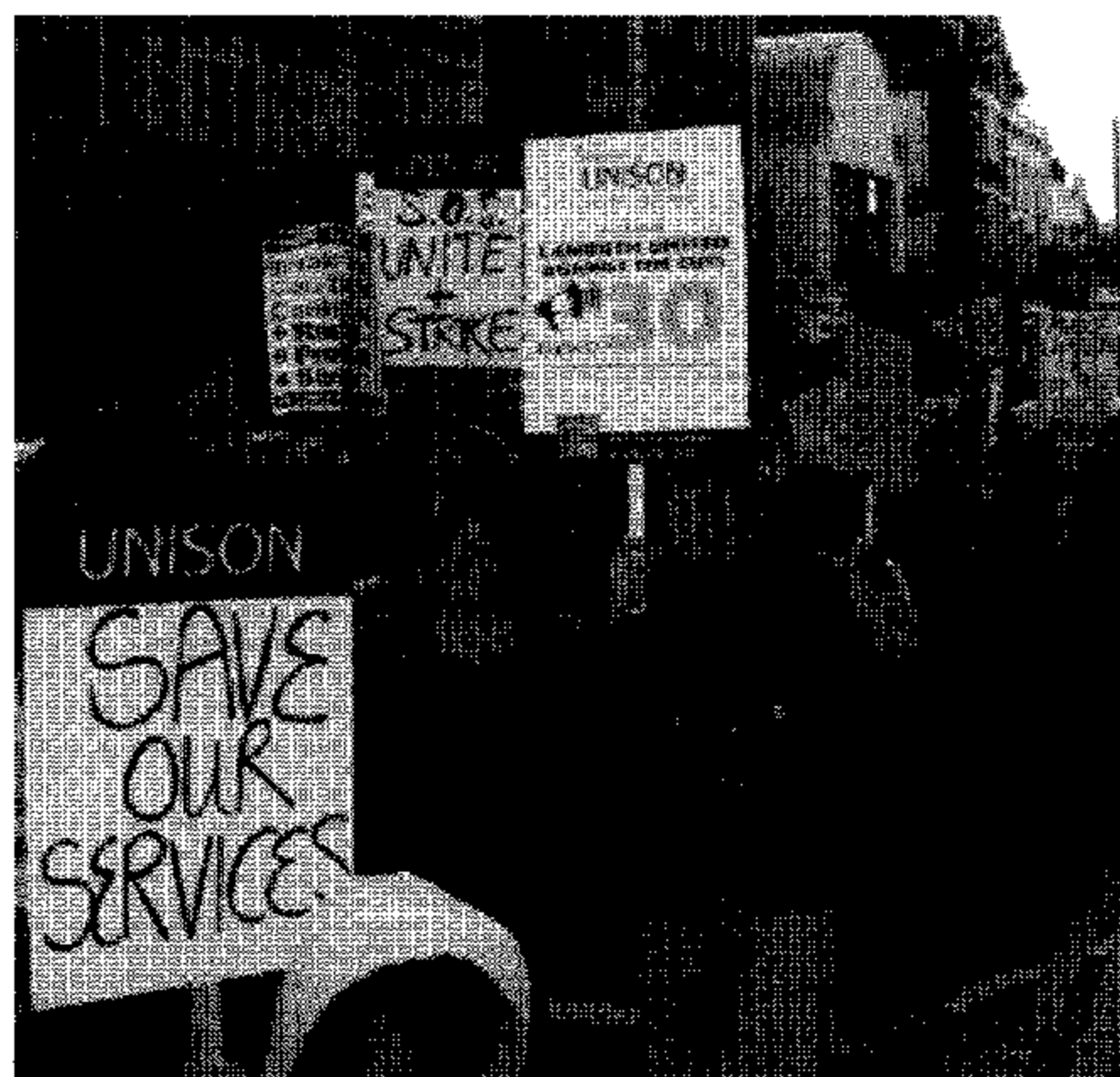
The 26 March demonstration can launch a massive wave of popular anger. But the government won't back down because of one huge demonstration. Blair went to war in Iraq despite more than a million marching against.

To stop the government, we need action by workers, service users, young people, pensioners, unemployed – the whole working class.

It will take a general strike to throw these vicious cuts into the rubbish bin of history – and this coalition of millionaires with it.

But how can we get this when our leaders, from TUC head Brendan Barber to Labour leader Ed Miliband, are more frightened of a general strike than they are of the Tories and Lib-Dems?

The first step is to build stronger united anti-cuts campaigns in every city, every borough, every town, bring-



ing into them delegates chosen in every union branch, workplace, college and school, every estate, campaigning group and working class political party. Our aim should be to transform them into real action councils capable of calling local and nationwide strike action.

We need to push for solidarity strikes with every sector facing cuts, drawing in the whole community, students' and the unemployed to support workers' action.

Through action we can create local councils of action and a national co-ordination that can either force the union leaders to call a general strike or unleash one from below ourselves.

In Greece and in France last year there were huge waves of strikes against the government's attacks. The governments tottered but the union leaders refused to press home the attack, restricting things to on-off days of action and mass demonstrations. In

Tunisia the announcement of an all out general strike sent dictator Ben Ali packing – and a developing mass strike wave in Egypt brought down Mubarak.

A general strike always poses the question: who runs the country? If we succeed in stopping the cuts and bringing down the ConDems, who would rule in their place?

Labour has only promised to carry out "fair cuts". There is a danger that if the ConDems were brought down then Labour would come in and start cutting while everyone has gone home. After all, Labour councils throughout the UK are cutting services and jobs just like their Tory counterparts.

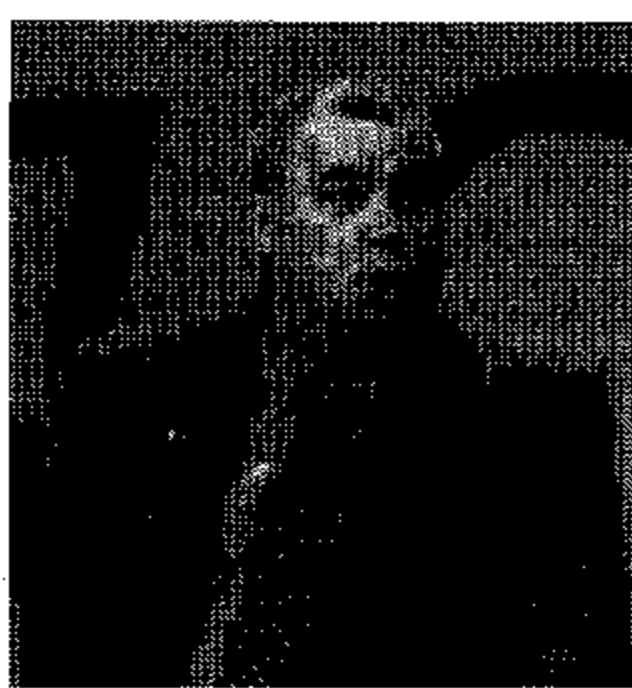
The working class should form the new government. Councils of action based on delegates elected from working class communities could be the basis for a new type of government – a workers' government. Delegates would be subject to recall by the working class people who elected them, so they couldn't break their promises like capitalist politicians.

Where are the Labour and trade union leaders?

2 BACK IN October the TUC promised to coordinate industrial action against the cuts.

Since then week after week the government has announced more cuts while the TUC leaders have done nothing.

When the TUC finally met in February in response to the wave of cuts, they announced the demonstration on 26 March, which they had decided on five months previously. Brendan Barber



and other union leaders went out of their way to assure the bosses and the government that "no one was talking about a general strike."

But if the trade union lead-

ers announced from the platform of the 26 March demonstration a mass campaign of coordinated strike action against the cuts culminating in an all out general strike, it would be greeted by a roar of enthusiasm. Hundreds of thousands would leave Hyde Park to organise militant action. Britain could rapidly be made ungovernable. But most of the TUC leaders, Ed Miliband and the Labour Party leadership fear this like the plague.

However a united nation-

wide movement on the scale of the millions-strong victorious anti-Poll Tax movement would also put huge pressure on the union leaders to call a general strike – or stand aside.

The students did just this in December when NUS leader Aaron Porter tried to demobilize the movement after the occupation of Tory HQ at Millbank.

Our watchword should be: with the official leaders where possible, without them where necessary.

Against falling wages and greater inequality

4 INFLATION IS reducing the value of our wages even without the public sector pay freeze. The official inflation figures are a deception as they fail to take into account the poorer you are the more you spend on vitals such as food and fuel – the very prices that are rising fastest. We workers should calculate our own cost of living index by means of local price control committees.

Pay should be automatically protected against inflation with a one per cent rise in pay for every one per cent rise in prices. We should put

this in every wage claim and demand this sliding scale of wages is enshrined in law. All pensions and benefits should also be protected against inflation in the same way.

The minimum wage should be set at £9.75 an hour and index linked to inflation too.

At the top of the social pyramid are 10 per cent of the population who own between 85 per cent of the country's wealth. The incomes and the ill-gotten gains of the rich should be subject to swingeing taxation. We should scrap indirect taxes an abolish income tax for all but the wealthy.

Stop racism and fascism

5 THE TABLOIDS – the *Daily Mail*, *Express*, *Star* and *Sun* – stir up a barrage of hate against "Islamic extremism" and "floods of migrants". They pillory Muslim women for wearing the niqab, they demand that Muslims adopt "British values" but cannot say what these are.

The English Defence League has picked on "extremist" Muslims as the scapegoats. The EDL and its Welsh and Scottish branches are fascists, they are using anti-Muslim prejudice in the same way as the Nazis and their English followers used anti-Semitism. They must not be allowed to march and intimidate black and Asian communities. The Labour movement must mobilize to stop them wherever they try it.

But the state, with its police

and its courts, is still in the front line when it comes to persecuting migrants – hunting them down, setting up prison camps and deporting whole families.

We demand they can remain and work in Britain with full citizenship rights. No to nationality tests, pledges of allegiance or forced learning of English.

The state also continues to persecute black and Asian people irrespective of their religion or whether they are British citizens or not. Black people still face higher rates of arrest and imprisonment, poorer housing and education, discrimination in jobs and careers.

The Labour movement should actively support the self-defence of migrant, black and Asian communities against racist and fascist attacks as well as police harassment.

Smash the anti-trade union laws

3 THE ANTI-UNION laws ban solidarity action and political strikes – but the law doesn't prevent solidarity between the bosses or stop a government attacking workers' living standards.

But defiance of them – solidarity action between workers in support of anyone attacked – can make these laws inoperable. The police cannot arrest all the strikers, the courts could not hold them all!

We must demand our

trade union leaders break the laws or we will do it ourselves.

We need mass pickets and because the police will try to break the strikes, we need our own organised self-defence squads to protect them.

For the liberation of lesbians and gays

6 LESBIANS, GAY men and transgendered people may have legal equality in the UK but at schools, workplaces, in towns and cities, they still face attacks and discrimination. And despite court rulings

against homophobes, there are still churches and sections of the media that want to deny LGBT people equality.

The workers' movement and youth must defend lesbian, gay and transsexual people and fight for full rights for lesbian, gay and transsexual

people including marriage.

There should be no discrimination in access to work or to services including the right of lesbian and gay couples to rear children. No bans on educating people in their sexual choices, or on the public expression of affection.

to the capitalist crisis

Fight unemployment Liberate women from inequality and oppression

7 WE MUST fight all job losses and workplace closures. The working week should be cut to a 35 hours. When faced with factory, shop or office closures or mass redundancies we should strike and occupy, demanding they be nationalised with no compensation to the bosses and run under workers' control.

Workers can draw up an emergency plan of production to meet people's needs; building affordable housing, schools, clinics, green power and transport systems.

When the bosses and their government whine that they



cannot afford all this answer is simple. Open the books! Abolish the business secrecy that allowed bankers to bring the economy to the verge of collapse in 2008 and today is used to covers their lies on the necessity for savage cuts. We can end this by workers inspection and control.

10 28 YEARS since the Equal Pay Act, women still earn on average 15.5 per cent per hour less than men.

Equal pay means raising women's wages so that they are really the same as men's. We need to win equal pay through strike action across the public and private sector, linking women's

demands for justice to the fight of male workers against inflation and the pay cuts.

Women are exploited at work and in the home. Housework and childcare are still mainly the job of women. Only the socialisation of these tasks – with free 24-hour nurseries, under the control of parents

and crèche workers, can share these responsibilities amongst everyone.

Domestic violence and rape remain common, while conviction rates are very low. Many rights are still not established in law, the right to abortion is limited and under regular attack.

The liberation of women from discrimination and

oppression is in the interests of the whole working class.

The more they can divide us on pay, the lower they can hold down wages – the more unpaid work at home they can foist onto women, the cheaper it is to pay for our labour. We should unite with men and fight as a united class.

Combat climate change and global warming

11 CLIMATE CHANGE is threatening a global catastrophe. Destruction of the environment is growing every year.

Emissions of greenhouse gases through burning oil and coal, the massive expansion of reliance on private cars, is melting the icecaps and raising sea levels.

Extreme weather events

are a growing global phenomenon, raising food prices threatening food supplies. But the capitalist system can't reduce emissions because it can't plan the global economy to meet human need.

The way to combat climate change is for a massive shift away from energy based on burning fossil fuels. But nuclear power is not, as

Cameron claims, a "green alternative." The ongoing crisis of Japan's nuclear plants in the aftermath of the earthquake shows this.

There should be no expansion of or reliance on nuclear or coal-fired power stations. Instead they should be phased out as soon as possible and the workers should be redeployed in environmentally sustainable produc-

tion, on equal pay and conditions.

We should demand a massive expansion of investment in renewable energy funded by taxing the rich. We should make the big polluters pay. We should fight for the nationalisation of the energy companies under workers control without compensation and draw up a renewable energy plan.

Youth fight for freedom

8 YOUNG PEOPLE are under attack, paid less, suffering double the rates of adult unemployment and now having higher education put beyond their reach. There must be massive investment in education, in free sports clubs and gyms, in art, film and music studios, where young people can bring out their full creativity and have fun.

Young people themselves

must decide what services they require and then run them democratically for themselves. This is a real antidote for anti-social behaviour, not media abuse and police repression.

Students debts should be cancelled, all tuition fees scrapped and loans replaced with grants. In short there must be fully funded free state education for all paid by taxing the banks and multinationals.



Troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan now!

9 THE WARS in Iraq and Afghanistan are a cynical attempt to control the oil reserves of the Middle East and Central Asia. Every socialist, every militant worker must support the defeat of our own ruling class in reactionary these wars. Our real enemy is at home.

British troops must come home now; our membership of Nato must end; there

must be no attack on Iran. We must oppose foreign wars on the false pretexts of defending about human rights, humanitarian missions or restoring democracy.

The home front of the war on terror are the reactionary laws that increase the power of the state to spy on and arrest and even imprison us for 28 days without charge. We call for the repeal of all these undemocratic measures.

For a planned economy to meet workers' needs

12 UNDER THE last Tory and New Labour governments industries and services were privatised and the market was introduced into education, the health service and local government.

Now the Con-Dem coalition intends to finish the job by breaking up or privatising the remaining public services and slashing their workforces.

All privatisations right back to Thatcher's time must be reversed, we must nationalise without compensation. Their profits must be ploughed back into society to pay for services, pensions and amenities.

But the old state run companies of yesteryear were

bureaucratically managed to serve interests of the private sector before those of the public.

We need a radical new vision of how our society can be run, where the people who work in and use the industries can make the decisions. We need a democratic plan of social production and use.

All the major banks and financial institutions must be taken over without compensation and merged into a single state bank that channels investment where the working class believes it can be used best.

A state bank would help rationally organise the economy, connecting wants to needs according to a democratic plan.

Why we need a workers' government

13 A WORKING class government would cancel the cuts, renounce the national debt, confiscate the property of the banks and corporations, end the war, and set up a democratic plan of production and distribution to eradicate poverty and build a civilised society for all.

The capitalist state would not allow such a government to come to power without a fight. They would use brute force – the police, security service and at the end of the day even the army – to try to stop it. At root that is what the state is all about: armed force in defence of property.

It will take a revolution to bring this about but a revolution can develop out of any serious struggle to defend our social gains and our democratic rights.

That is why we need a revolutionary party of the working class: to fight for the formation of workers'

councils, and to fight for them to seize the power, using the force of millions to overcome the force of the millionaires.

As events in the Middle East and North Africa show, revolutions don't respect national boundaries. A revolution in Britain would have a massive impact all over the world. We would reach out to our brothers and sisters fighting the same enemy in France, Greece, in the Arab world and so on.

The great financial crisis and recession has opened a global crisis of the entire capitalist system.

Our fightback against the Con Dems is part of worldwide working class resistance to this crisis-ridden system, part of a great uprising of humanity. We should have confidence because we are six billion and they are a handful of billionaires – if we can see clearly and act decisively, we will win.

2011 YEAR OF

It is only March and already this year has seen mass protests and revolutionary movements bring 2011 could be "one of those years" like 1968 where the whole world seems to erupt in resistance

From credit crunch to global crisis The fightback begins

WHAT STARTED as a credit crunch became a worldwide recession. The banks demanded public money to keep their system afloat – now the governments of the world face huge deficits in their budgets and demand the poor pay the cost of this crisis.

Mervyn King, head of the Bank of England, said he was surprised that people were not more angry with the bankers for what has happened. "Now is the period when the cost is being paid. I'm surprised the real anger has not been greater than it has."

But the resistance has begun! Around the world millions are fighting back.

Despite the deafening chorus of the capitalist media, economic experts and politicians, demanding cuts, more cuts and yet more cuts, ordinary people are fighting back. Whether students demonstrating on the streets of London or workers on the streets of Athens and Paris, we are fighting for our futures, jobs, communities, education, pensions and healthcare.

And in the Middle East, bitter poverty and mass unemployment combined with vicious dictatorships to produce not just resistance but outright revolution.

In both cases and all over the world, it is young people who are erupting with rage against the prospect of a life without hope or dignity. The youth are fighting not just against inequality and outright poverty but also against the police beatings, arrests and brutalisation, whether in Parliament Square or Tahrir Square.

In the liberal democratic capitalist countries, young people and trade unionists are fighting the right wing governments and the media barons that backs them. In the outright dictatorships under which most of humanity lives, youth have thrown off their fear of secret police and torturers and started to make revolutions.

The launch of massive austerity measures by European governments



Students walk out in support of Wisconsin workers

in 2010 has generated organised resistance movements across the continent. The so-called European social model, what we call the welfare state, is now under direct attack. In Britain it is to be replaced by the "Big Society" – a return to a pre-1945 system based on charities and a new Poor Law.

In the Western world so far, resistance has done little more than slow the pace of the capitalist offensive – but so far we have not been able to halt the attacks. The reason is that the "moderate" leaders of the workers movement (like the TUC and the Labour Party in Britain) would rather face defeat than unleash action on a scale that can win, such as indefinite general strikes. They know full well that this would destabilise the whole system and they have all pledged never to do that. On the contrary, they want to govern the system for the bosses' not overthrow it with the workers.

Today, in a historic crisis of capitalism, the basis for winning reforms has narrowed almost to nothing because the stability of the whole profit system depends on the bosses winning a major victory over the working class. That is why the only way to stop the

cuts is to link our resistance to the fight to overthrow the cuts governments and the capitalist system itself.

Workers rise up

In 2011 the fightback also erupted where many least expect it. In recent years, US workers have accepted cuts, factory closures and give-backs (reductions in wages), and seen the numbers of trade unionists remorselessly decline. But this year's huge battles in Wisconsin and Ohio show how US workers will fight when their backs are to the wall.

In Europe the picture was even more militant. In 2010 there were eight one-day general strikes in Greece, Spain and Portugal. In Ireland hundreds of thousands demonstrated and struck, sweeping away the bosses main party since the Republic's foundation, Fianna Fail, which introduced four austerity budgets and handed the economy over to the IMF and EU, in an election landslide. Millions have marched and struck in Italy against Berlusconi and in France in October-November saw mass strikes and demos against Sarkozy.

In the UK in November school and university students have marched in their thousands and occupied universities and colleges. They have not forced a serious retreat yet, but they have exposed the savagery of the cuts to millions and the popularity of the government imposing the cuts has slumped.

But the reason the cuts packages have not been defeated and the governments imposing them driven from office is straightforward. A one-day general strike is a demonstration, a manoeuvre to rally the troops. It is not the declaration of war that an all out strike is and, unless the enemy is weak and divided, it will not succeed. Indeed, if repeated again and again, it will dissipate and demoralise our own forces.

That is why the fight against the cuts needs to go beyond one day and separate strikes, and combine into a united indefinite political strike of the whole class.



The Middle E

TODAY ALL eyes are on the revolutionary upheavals in North Africa and the Middle East. There millions of people face hunger due to rising food prices, mass unemployment or underemployment, but also a lack of dignity and humiliation by cruel and corrupt rulers. The new media – such as Al Jazeera, websites, blogs, Facebook and Twitter – have enabled the universal character of these outrages to become known, especially to the youth.

They are aware too that the western world lives in relative wellbeing and with democratic rights – indeed its global media boasts of this. Why should they be excluded? They can see how the corporations of imperialist nations suck the Third World dry of their natural resources, bribing and corrupting the local ruling classes. This leaves their countries under-

developed, with little or no welfare, with chronic structural unemployment. Low wages are the norm. IMF-promoted privatisation strips the nation of its infrastructure, the market commodifies everything and nothing is safe from the expansion and demands of capital to exploit and control. These conditions make people restless, angry and wanting fundamental change.

The West does indeed send back a tiny part of the its plunder but most of the "aid" is in the form of guns and tanks. Egypt gets \$1.3 billion a year. Bahrain, the poorest of the Gulf states, gets \$19.5 million a year; Yemen is given \$35 million. Israel receives £3 billion, in order to police the Palestinians and act as the gendarme for imperialism in the region. Since making his peace with Blair and Sarkozy, Gaddafi has received

THE REVOLUTION

own governments, defying dictators and the armed thugs that protect them. to capitalism and oppression, writes **Simon Hardy**



East in revolt

record arms sales from the UK, while his people suffer under dictatorship and in poverty.

Half of the Middle East and North African regions population is under the age of 30. They are largely educated, but with no prospects for careers. Some try and go to the West to find work and to send money home, but the West is closing its borders tighter every year.

In countries that exercise such strict censorship over the print media, social media websites play a crucial role in connecting people, fostering the exchange of ideas, and creating the conditions for civil debate and mobilisation.

The bloggers are the modern equivalents of the revolutionary pamphleteers of the American and French revolutions. They are the revolutionary moles, burrowing away under the

regimes, spreading dissent and daring to exercise free speech. They can face imprisonment or worse. Navid Mohebbi, an 18-year old, was arrested, imprisoned and beaten for blogging on women's rights in Iran. Kareem Suleiman in Egypt was imprisoned for four years for criticising Mubarak. These brave individuals are just the tip of an immense iceberg threatening dictatorships across the planet.

What is so inspirational about these struggles is that for years these countries were maintained under the iron heel of the dictators, but today people are fighting back – proving that everywhere that there is oppression and exploitation, there is also the possibility of resistance. The path is not an easy one, but it is a necessary one – one that, with the right revolutionary leadership, can overthrow all dictators and exploiters.

Women on the frontlines



In the struggles of 2011 women are everywhere. In Tahrir square they disproved the myth that the women in the Muslim countries are passive, accepting exclusion from public life. Large numbers of women – some wearing hijabs, some not – fought and organised alongside men to bring down Mubarak. In Europe and America women are playing a

crucial role in the fight against austerity.

They know that these cuts will hit them hardest. Women everywhere are oppressed under capitalism, but every resistance struggle can turn into a fight for women's liberation too; one where women as frontline fighters liberate themselves from oppression!

Are peaceful revolutions possible?

The revolutions and mass protests have proved once more that our rulers always use force to defend their power. It is an illusion that the struggle against capitalism can be peaceful. Politicians who said the protesters in Egypt must remain "peaceful" are just hypocrites, since they know every serious issue is ultimately decided by force. Usually that force is exercised by the state. But some people tell us revolutions must be peaceful and can not use force. Tell that to the youth of Tahrir, under attack from

Mubarak's brutal thugs. If they had not defended themselves with makeshift weapons they would have been driven out of the square.

When the students in Britain protested to defend education they too were met with violence from the police. In France and Greece striking workers have been violently attacked by riot police.

We must defend ourselves, with force if need be, and be under no illusions that our rulers will give up their power unless they are forced to do so.

Now we need a Fifth International

NEW FORMS of communication, especially social media, have played a huge and positive role, creating networks and mobilising masses on the streets against dictatorial regimes. This is revolution in the 21st century – not only televised but Twittered and Facebooked as well.

But we need to go further. In Egypt Mubarak has gone but the army is still in power. The Egyptian workers and revolutionary youth, whose strikes and resistance beat the police and brought down the regime, still face a government of tyranny and oppression. Now they need more than a social network – they need a working class party to fight for a different type of government and a different system.

This means going beyond the "new" methods to a radical rediscovery of some "old" ones – methods the working class has known in every generation. In every country the working class in its millions must come to the head of the movement. This is no illusion or daydream of Trotskyists; it is the urgent task of today. It is the difference between a world of increasing barbarism, or one which breaks free from misery and oppression for good.

The programme we need is one that starts from the burning issues – austerity, cuts, hunger, unemployment, legalised police repression or outright dictatorship – and meets these with powerful counter-attack: the all out general strike, mass demonstrations, the popular uprising. To develop and extend these actions, new and also old forms of organisation are needed – revolutionary parties on the genuine democratic model of Lenin and the Bolsheviks in 1917 – not the Stalinist bureaucratic tyrannies.

Such parties cannot be built in isolation. We have to learn lessons from one another around the globe, helping each other not simply spontaneously but as part of a conscious plan. In short we need a revolutionary working class international – a Fifth International.

Solidarity sweeps USA as workers dare to fight

Andy Yorke

THE ACTION of workers and young people in the US has been an inspiration. A series of mass protests, occupations and strikes have shaken the states of Wisconsin, Ohio and Indiana.

Battling a huge programme of spending cuts and attacks on the unions, their struggle shows what can be achieved even in historically right wing countries like the US.

Just like the Con Dems in Britain, the Republicans are on the warpath, demanding that the \$14 trillion government debt, nearly as big as US GDP, is reduced by sweeping austerity.

The intensity is particularly bad in the twenty states where they have full control of the state government machinery. Wisconsin's governor, Scott Walker, has led the way by cutting corporate taxes, while also trying to balance the state budget with massive cuts.

The shortfall is to be met by effectively banning collective bargaining by public sector workers, while massively hiking their payments into pension and healthcare funds. The AFSCME public sector union summed it up. "This is about trying to abolish the unions, pure and simple". The response of workers and youth to his attacks has been magnificent.

The explosion of protest by workers and students has stunned the US political class. Workers of all ages and ethnic backgrounds marched on the state house in their tens of thousands, despite bitterly



cold weather. Teachers and students occupied the State Capitol building – for over two weeks.

Even though Walker exempted the firefighters from the cuts, they turned out in solidarity, staying in the occupation to help guard it. Thousands of protesters in Indiana and Ohio followed suit, surrounding and crowding into the state houses. The illegal teachers' strike and the call by the South Central Federation of Labor of Wisconsin endorsing a general strike if the Walker law is signed show the way forward to to break the Republican offensive.

The Wisconsin revolt shows the potential strength of the US work-

ing class, despite its very low levels of unionisation (11.9 per cent of workers). However, it has also showed a major weakness: the pro-Democrat, well-paid bureaucracy that veers away from outright confrontation with the bosses.

Democratic legislators and union leaders originally offered to meet Walker "halfway", accepting the cuts if union rights remained. Walker refused, determined to be the hero spearheading the Republican charge. Only his intransigence forced the union leadership to fight.

Rank and file control of the struggle can ensure that the key demand in these situations, the general strike, is brought to bear as the most

effective weapon to smash the Republican cuts.

The Wisconsin workers' militancy, and the national scale of solidarity with them, as thousands upon thousands of trade unionists from other states joined the protests, illustrate the potential in the current situation. The message from Wisconsin is clear: we can fight back, recruit millions to the unions, kick out the bureaucrats and reverse the decline of the unions in a wave of militancy.

Mass resistance

The danger now is that the union leaders focus on legal challenges to the bill instead of mass resistance. After it was passed through undemocratic rigging of the senate by the Republicans, Judge Maryann Sumi issued a temporary restraining order preventing the bill from coming into effect, because rules may have been breached when it was passed.

This judgement is to be welcomed and will give confidence to US workers. But legal challenges cannot become an alternative to mass protest and strikes.

Only such a mass resistance will deliver victory. The Supreme Court judges are certainly no friend of American workers and their interpretation of the constitution can be very 'flexible'.

It's extra-parliamentary action that can win. Even if it is implemented our motto should be 'what the parliament does the street can undo!'

Obama's trail of broken promises

BARACK OBAMA campaigned on a ticket of 'hope and change' but, in office, has radically short-changed his young, Black and working class supporters. It was their huge mobilisation for his election campaign in 2008 that put America's first black president into office and also swept the Democrats to victory in both houses of Congress.

Two years on, the Obama presidency has left a trail of broken promises. His priority in office has been saving US capitalism at the expense of those supporters. As well as maintaining Bush's bank bailout, Obama's own initiatives – a stimulus spending bill for the economy, healthcare "reform", financial re-regulation –

were either gutted or turned into measures favouring big business, under the pressure of the Republicans and Wall Street.

Obama refused to mobilise his supporters, while the right-wing, billionaire-backed Tea Party movement took to the streets, to attack his timid proposals as "socialist".

Worse still he dropped his promised environmental reforms and a union rights bill, then restructured the Detroit auto industry by gutting workers' jobs, pay and conditions. Unemployment rose to 10 per cent, while the Afghanistan occupation dragged on and on.

Obama leads a capitalism in decline, with a stagnant economy,

high levels of unemployment, and an historic debt crisis, and seemingly unable to challenge new international competitors like China.

The Republicans have a clear programme of refloating US capitalism on the backs of the working class, with union busting and vicious austerity. The Democrats have no real alternative and offer only a few concessions to their supporters.

That's why American workers need a party of their own - not a bosses' party like the Democrats. Today the new struggles of the working class have brought this goal of a working class party much closer. We must seize this historic opportunity.

Free Bradley Manning



Joy Macready

UNTRIED AND unconvicted, 24-year-old US army private Bradley Manning has been imprisoned for almost 300 days, held in cruel, inhuman and degrading conditions under a 'prevention of injury' order at the Quantico marine base. He is kept in his cell 23 hours a day, force fed a daily diet of antidepressant pills, forbidden to exercise in his cell, and forcibly woken if he attempts to sleep in the daytime.

For the first few weeks of March, he was forced to sleep without clothing and stand naked for morning parade, which his lawyer described as ritual humiliation. Welcome to justice in Obama's America.

Bradley was arrested in May 2010 in Iraq, on suspicion of having passed classified information to the whistleblower website WikiLeaks. He was charged in July with transferring classified data onto his personal computer and communicating national defence information to an unauthorised source. An additional 22 charges were added in March 2011, including 'aiding the enemy', a capital offence which carries the death penalty.

His father Brian Manning, an ex-navy intelligence specialist, has compared his son's treatment to those in Guantánamo, while Pentagon Papers whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg, compared the treatment to what happened inside the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Ellsberg wrote that it amounted to what the CIA calls "no-touch torture", and said he believed its purpose was to demoralise Manning.

Bradley's treatment is creating cracks in Obama's administration, which criticised the extreme treatment of detainees by George W Bush as being against the national interest. State Department spokesman Philip J Crowley was forced to resign after stating that Manning's treatment was "ridiculous and counterproductive and stupid". Obama weakly said that the Pentagon had "assured" him that Bradley's confinement was "appropriate" and "meeting basic standards".

On 19-20 March protests were organised across the world demanding his release, including Minneapolis, London, Montreal, The Hague, Phoenix, San Diego, and Vienna.

Historic struggles are shaping the Arab world

Dave Stockton

THE YEAR 2011 is already being compared to 1989 as a year of revolutions. The overthrow of Ben Ali in Tunisia directly inspired Egyptian youth and trade unionists to launch a similar movement to get rid of Hosni Mubarak. The mass occupation of Tahrir Square in turn provoked similar youth-led movements in Bahrain, Jordan, Algeria, Yemen, Oman, Iran, Syria and Libya. The revolution that is happening there will truly be historic in its scope and scale.

The events in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya are what Lenin called "real people's revolutions" in contrast to

coup d'états by military officers. Lenin defines these as times when "the mass of the people, their majority, the very lowest social groups, crushed by oppression and exploitation, rose independently and stamped on the entire course of the revolution the imprint of their own demands, their attempt to build in their own way a new society in place of the old society that was being destroyed."

Students, unemployed and youth initiated these popular uprisings. By their sheer courage and tenacity in holding the streets and squares against brutal police repression, they encouraged wide layers of workers, the middle classes and



Pro-democracy demonstrators in Egypt

the shantytown poor, to join the protests *en masse*.

Now the old order has been undermined as dictators who ruled

for a generation are overthrown. Though not overtly anti-imperialist these revolutions will inevitably challenge the interests of the west-

ern powers.

For a third of a century, a repressive regime ruled over Egypt. Its capitalist masters, however, were mere clients of the US. Alongside Israel, they acted as the keystone of American domination and exploitation across the entire Middle East. They supported the cruel oppression of the Palestinians, who are victims of a creeping expulsion from their own land, a national if not a physical genocide.

In terms of population, Egypt is the largest Arab state and its working class the most militant. Therefore victory for the workers of Egypt is the key to the future of the whole region.

The counter-revolutions

POWERFUL AS the wave of revolutions across the region is, it is also inevitably provoking more sustained counter-revolutionary resistance than Ben Ali or Mubarak were able to mount. As the anti-colonialist Regis Debray said: "Revolution revolutionises the counter-revolution." The regimes were caught off guard but now they have dug in and seek to crush the uprisings before they have become too strong. In Algeria, Iran, Iraq, Yemen, and Bahrain, the rulers have showed less hesitation in going beyond clubbing and tear-gassing to shooting demonstrators.

The arch-reactionary Saudi royal family, crucial allies to the western powers, sent troops into the tiny island kingdom of Bahrain to suppress the demonstrations. But it was in Libya where the counter-revolution showed its most brutal face.

Libya is an oil rich state with a small population, where a huge proportion of the working class are foreign migrants. Mass popular uprising in Tripoli and Benghazi met with deadly attacks from soldiers and helicopter gunships. In the east of the country, sections of the army went over to the masses and the revolution triumphed in Benghazi and other towns. But in the west Gaddafi's ruthless repression won against an unarmed people. Now revolution has turned into a full-scale civil war.

Despite starting life as a radical Arab nationalist regime in the early



Gaddafi supporters in Tripoli

1970s, over the last decades Gaddafi evolved into a pro-imperialist totalitarian dictator. His machinery of repression rests not so much the army but on tribal militias and security battalions commanded by Gaddafi's sons. They were more than willing to shoot down urban demonstrators demanding elections and a change of government.

Starting from his base in the west around Tripoli, Gaddafi's highly professional forces, with tanks and heavy artillery, have begun a so-far successful push eastwards. However, to take Benghazi – a city of around 700,000 –

will be far more difficult. But if Gaddafi succeeds in crushing the revolution, this would clearly have a very negative impact on further developments across the Arab world and beyond.

Counter-revolution comes not only in the form of forces still loyal to the old regimes, bent on restoring the dictatorships under which they flourished. After the initial "surprise" victories, there is a serious danger of a counter-revolution emerging from within the forces that made – or more correctly, supported – the revolutions.

Figures like Mohamed ElBaradei and his Movement for Democratic Change, or the new Egyptian prime minister Essam Sharaf, who urge the workers and the youth to not to strike or make demands which could "undermine the revolution", are not allies but enemies of the people.

Naturally they have the full support of those sudden friends of the revolution: Barack Obama, Hilary Clinton and David Cameron.

The capitalist politicians who are lining up to use their wealth and the backing of the imperialists and the media to expropriate the revolution from the fighters of Tahrir Square need to be fought all the way. They are the forces of the democratic counter-revolution – one that will not hold back from using very undemocratic measures against the worker and the peasants if they fight for their rights.

What strategy to win?

IT WOULD be wrong to treat the revolutions as simply democratic political revolutions that must leave the socio-economic system untouched. In fact they are only the first, democratic phase of a *social* revolution. But this phase is far from complete – it requires working class leadership to press ahead.

The demands of the workers must not be held back in the name of democracy. Across the region there is rampant unemployment, about 40 per cent of Egypt's population survives on \$2 a day. Between 20 and 30 per cent live below the poverty line, and living standards have fallen

steadily since the 1990s. If these exploited masses link their economic demands to the exercise of their new democratic rights, then the forces of the old regime will find it almost impossible to restore it.

But no government of the capitalist class can be expected to meet the most basic needs of the Arab masses. Only a government based on the working class and the poor peasants can carry through those measures at the expense of the property owning classes. The Arab revolutions must become permanent, forming workers states across the Middle East and North Africa.

No to imperialist intervention

AS REVOLUTIONS erupted in Tunisia and Egypt, Western leaders fretted about losing allies in the region. Obama and Cameron now want to manage the aftermath, to make sure genuine democracy will not emerge. In Libya's, our rulers are now intervening with military force, with the same pretensions to 'promoting democracy' that they used in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Although they use the language of humanitarianism, nothing could be further from their minds. Their motives have nothing to do with democracy. Britain, France and Italy flattered and fawned on Gaddafi – and his unspeakable

sons – for the past decade. So why are they so interested now?

Libya holds massive oil and natural gas reserves. It also has very low production costs, and its oilfields are close to Europe's markets and refineries. Huge parts of the country remain unexplored by Western oil companies. No wonder the British and French governments are hawks for intervention.

We must oppose all intervention by the imperialist nations in Libya's civil war. The 'no fly zone' is just a cloak they are hiding under to wrest control from the real democratic forces on the ground – the revolutionaries.

imperialism in the dock MARCUS HALABY



Will Arab revolutions transform Palestine?



Ismail Haniyeh from Hamas and Mahmoud Abbas from Fatah meet to discuss a national unity government

HOW WILL the emerging Arab revolutions affect the struggle of the Palestinian people? Will it help their long battle for national liberation? This question is on the minds of millions throughout the Middle East, where solidarity with the Palestinians remains a key component of popular aspirations.

There is no sign yet that the revolutions will end the present huge imbalance of power. And while the Arab revolutions of the 1950s and 1960s may have provided strategic depth and material assistance to the Palestinians' armed struggle, all the Arab regimes used this as leverage to manipulate Palestinian internal divisions.

They even had to use force to discipline the Palestinians, whenever their struggle threatened to ignite the masses in their own countries – as in Jordan in September 1970, and Lebanon in June 1976.

So Palestine will not be free overnight. But the example of a mass movement winning democratic rights on the streets cannot fail to influence the Palestinians as well.

That is why Washington was so afraid when the movement in Egypt began. Fear that a democratic Egypt would tear up its peace treaty with Israel caused Obama to back dictator Mubarak up to the last minute.

Many must have hoped that Mahmoud Abbas, head of the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority, would face his own "Mubarak moment". After all he has given in to Israel's every demand, while winning nothing in return for his people. This collaborator has even continued to rule, with Israel's support, after his term of office has expired, while Gaza's 1.5 million people languish under a murderous siege, their punishment for voting for Hamas in 2006.

Mahmoud Abbas was amongst the first Arab leaders to declare his

support for Mubarak. He knew full well that his strategy of prostration before Israel and the United States would be doomed, if they lost their militarily most powerful Arab ally. But in Gaza, Hamas also repressed marches in support of the Tunisian and Egyptian people, although it later hypocritically "celebrated" Mubarak's resignation.

No wonder demonstrations calling for Palestinian political unity were attacked by Hamas security forces in Gaza, and "contained" by Fatah security forces in Ramallah. The protesters demanded new elections to the Palestinian National Council, the executive body of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, which is supposed to represent Palestinians worldwide.

But now, under pressure, Abbas and Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh are talking about a national unity government. Clearly something has changed. Now Palestinian activists should break free of both Fatah and Hamas, and take the road of mass revolutionary struggle.

In fact, the real threat posed by the Arab revolutions to Israel's domination of the Palestinians is political. It was not Islamism, guerilla warfare or "terrorism" that brought down the Tunisian and Egyptian dictatorships, but mass demonstrations and strikes.

What is more, the 2011 revolutions point the way towards a solution based on equality and democratic rights. With Palestinians now close to a majority in the territory under Israel's control, the prospect of a Palestinian state, on whatever scraps of land Israel does not want, will seem much less attractive than the demand for "one person, one vote", in an undivided country.

And Israel will no longer be able to present itself as "the only democracy in the Middle East" when it tries to deny the Palestinians that right.

Why socialists want troops out of Afghanistan

Dave Stockton

THIS OCTOBER will be the tenth anniversary of the invasion of Afghanistan. It will probably not be celebrated anywhere in the world, least of all in Afghanistan itself. This has been the most unpopular of wars – second only to the war in Iraq.

A poll in December 2010 found 57 per cent opposed to Britain's military involvement in Afghanistan, while only 34 per cent supported it. The same number say it was wrong to have invaded and occupied Afghanistan in the first place.

So just why do Labour, Tories and Lib Dems all support the war, while the majority of people in Britain oppose it?

The answer is that our much-vaunted parliamentary democracy, with its two-and-a-half party system, is not "the rule of the people". It rep-

resents us least of all when it comes to life or death questions like war. Parliament represents the interests of big business and the banks and takes military action on their behalf.

We have been lied to repeatedly about this war. They said it was a "war on terror" – but we are now exposed to more terrorism as a result of the war.

They said that invading Afghanistan would improve the rights of Afghan woman. But Malalai Joya, Afghanistan's most famous women MP, wants the troops out of her country. She says, "For our people, Obama is a warmonger, like Bush. He follows the same disastrous policies, only with much more determination and force."

Another lie is that NATO forces are winning, and will be able to hand over control to their puppet Afghan army within four years. In fact, the

violence is increasing, and has spread to the previously more peaceful North and East of the country.

But the biggest lie is that British soldiers are fighting and dying "for our freedom". The real reason they are there is so that Britain and the US can control Central Asia's oil and natural gas reserves.

This is a war in which 356 British and over 1,420 US soldiers have died. The pro-war media highlights every British death to boost support for the war, exploiting families' grief for political gain. They say little about the estimated 34,000 Afghans killed in the last ten years, most of them civilians.

We must oppose all military interventions by our big business government. The occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan have been a disaster, solely carried out with the aim of securing the country for western interests.

Next Chinese leader set to face workers' rebellion

Peter Main

YOU MAY not have heard of him, but the man to watch in China is Xi Jinping. Two years ago he organised the Beijing Olympics. By this time next year, he will be President of China.

In the capitalist dictatorship that still calls itself the 'People's Republic', the question of government is not left to chance, let alone to the choice of the people, and Xi has been carefully groomed for his new post for several years.

Xi Jinping is identified with the "pro-business" faction in the ruling Communist Party which restored capitalism in 1992. But, if his promotion seems certain, the outlook for capitalism in China is far less secure.

Although China has overtaken Japan to become the second biggest economy after the USA, under capitalism economic growth inevitably heads towards crisis.

Mounting problems were laid out last month by the current Premier, Wen Jiabao, in his "government work report" to the National People's Congress (NPC). Wen's tone was distinctly downbeat, even sombre. China's recovery from the crisis of 2008 has been fast, 10.3 per cent growth last year, but the government fears this is too fast. The 12th Five Year Plan (2011-15) proposes a slow-

down to 7 per cent. Rising prices, growing inequality, corruption and housing shortages were all threatening social stability, he explained.

He could have said simply that capitalist growth is driving forward the class struggle. China's bosses are forcing through their own agenda. The government and the Party want to give greater emphasis to development in the interior and to increase rural incomes to stimulate domestic demand. Many of the "new rich" are used to quick profits and prefer the property speculation and exports that have driven the growth rates. As businessmen, they are not keen on any economic slowdown.

Not that the industrialists, financiers, entrepreneurs or traders have any fundamental problem with the Party's dictatorship. They are not about to start the fight for democratic rights – the "stability" the Party enforces is very good for business! No, they just want a Party that is more attuned to their interests.

Decades of close collaboration between Party leaders and capitalists at all levels, the creation of a big layer of capitalists within the Party itself, partly through recruitment, partly through privatisation of state assets to senior Party officials, means they may be about to get what they want.

Despite the official trade unions

acting as Party agents within corporate management, China's workers have been finding ways to fight back. When 40 million lost their jobs at the depth of the crisis, they demanded their unpaid wages with riots, occupations and highway blockades.

Now, with the return to growth, workers are forcing up wages. China Labour Bulletin reports that production line wages in parts of the Pearl Delta have increased by 50% since the crisis as employers have to raise basic rates and give bonuses and incentives to keep their workers.

Even more significantly, last June strikers at the Foshan Honda plant demanded the right to elect their own negotiators with management. This demand, essential for workers to control their own representatives, is now increasingly common in China's "workshop of the world". But it is only a first step towards the formation of truly independent unions that can really defend workers' interests.

Unlike their bosses, who can hope to pursue their own interests via the Communist Party, the workers of China need a new party of their own that can lead the fight to resolve capitalism's "social instability", by socialising the economy and planning it under their own democratic control.

From tsunami to nuclear crisis and market chaos

The horrifying tsunami that hit Japan is a reminder of the destructive power of nature. But effects have been made worse by big business, government and the priorities of capitalism, writes Simon Hardy

AT 2:55PM on 13 March a 30 foot high Tsunami struck Japan, the waves crashing over flood barriers and in some areas reaching as far as six miles in land. It was caused by an earthquake which measured 8.9 on the Richter scale that occurred out at sea 10 minutes earlier. The earthquake was roughly the equivalent of 474 megatons of dynamite. It was so powerful it moved Japan 13 feet eastward and shifted the Earth's axis.

The earthquake and tsunami led to a huge loss of life. Whole towns were swept away and thousands of people are still missing. It struck Japan so hard, that it will leave a scar on the country for a generation to come. In some parts food is running low and in Tokyo there are rolling blackouts as the government tries to preserve the power supply.



shares as companies closed down their operations.

Now the question is who will fund and who will benefit from the reconstruction? The cost of rebuilding the damaged areas will run into billions of dollars. The Bank of Japan has pumped serious money into the economy to keep it moving, anticipating more problems further down the line.

Already Japanese traders have been selling foreign currency to secure more Yen, predicting that companies and insurance agencies will be paying out more money in the coming weeks and months.

Currency speculation is a real fear, so much so that the Prime Minister has issued a stern warning that he would not tolerate any stock market profiteering from the catastrophe.

Even without the cost of reconstruction, Japan's gross-debt-to-GDP ratio may reach 228% this year. Its economy has been stagnant for many years and it was badly hit during the credit crunch in 2008.

Free market exposed

The neoliberal ethos that the free market will solve all the world's problems is cruelly exposed during such events when in fact the state is forced to intervene to save lives.

In poor countries like Haiti the government has very few resources and has to rely on foreign intervention, which often includes military forces, to assist disaster relief. But these relief efforts always come with strings attached, either more debt or lucrative reconstruction contracts for imperialist companies.

This catastrophe shows control of nuclear power must be taken out of the hands of capitalist firms.

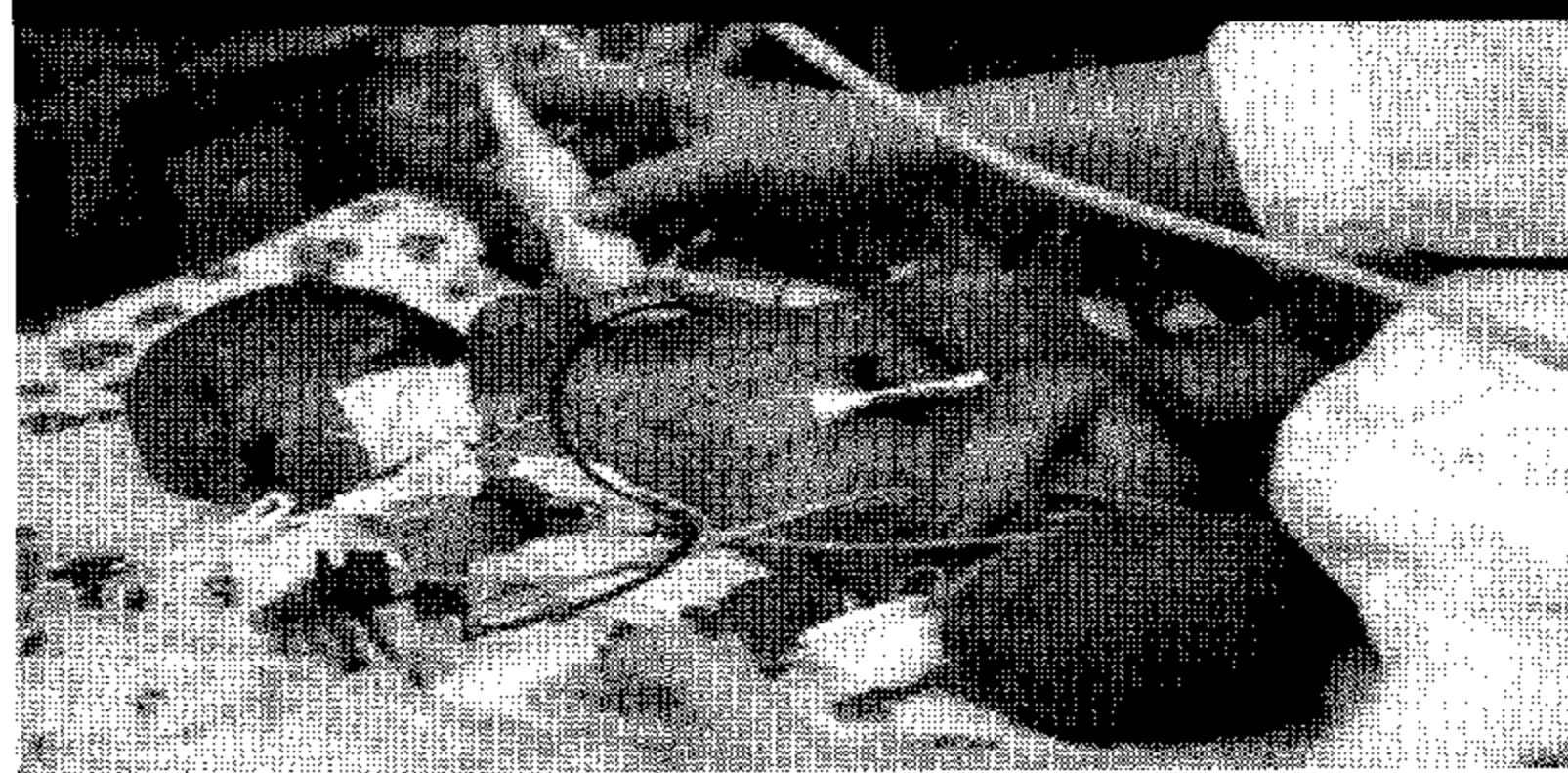
There is no "absolute" level of safety that could prevent a "worst possible accident". Nuclear plants must be decommissioned as quickly as possible. We need an energy plan based on renewables that will allow a planned shift away from fossil fuels and atomic energy.

The capitalists are incapable of this. So far they have not even been able to agree a global plan for effective carbon emission reduction as the Copenhagen conference fiasco showed, so how can we expect them to implement a global plan to shift energy to safer forms? The reason they can't do it is the profit motive that drives all economic decision making in their system. Also the division of the capitalist world into a patchwork of rival nation states hampers serious attempts to effect the international changes needed.

In Japan the fight is now to limit the damage, rebuild homes and the environment at the expense of the profiteers not the people. Around the world the fight is on to stop building new nuclear power stations, to decommission and to open records to inspection. Energy companies and suppliers should be nationalised without compensation under workers' control and a plan for safe and sustainable energy drawn up.

This struggle points to the need to overcome capitalism and replace it with a democratically planned economy. Fukushima and the tsunami found capitalism guilty of gross negligence. Only when production and distribution serve the needs of the great majority will humanity be able to prepare for natural disasters and minimise their impact.

SECRETS AND LIES OF NUCLEAR POWER



Birth defects are still common near Chernobyl, the meltdown of 1986

MOST PEOPLE do not think nuclear power is a problem until something goes wrong – then the threat of radiation or an explosion suddenly becomes real. One Japanese worker told the BBC of his fear "going to work 150 miles away from three nuclear reactors in near meltdown".

Japan has become increasingly reliant on nuclear power since the 1970s. Today it has 53 nuclear reactors which provide 34 per cent of the countries electrical power, substantially more than renewable sources.

Despite well known safety fears, the nuclear industry is shrouded in secrecy. The Japanese government tried to cover up the severity of the recent crisis, just as the Soviet Union did in 1986 when Chernobyl went critical causing the worst ever nuclear disaster.

Many remember the outrage caused by Japan's 1995 accident at the Monju nuclear power plant which was covered up by the government with false documents, edited video tapes and gagging orders on employees.

Built on faultlines

Not just in Japan but around the world, many nuclear power stations are built in areas that are at risk of earthquakes and tsunamis. For instance in the US four large reactors are positioned near the California coast. One at the Diablo Canyon Power Plant sits virtually on the San Andreas Faultline and is only built to resist a force 7 quake.

An earthquake like this year's of 8.9 and a tsunami could badly damage or destroy the plant, irradiating large parts of the US west coast.

Although the Japanese government has invested money in new technologies for buildings to withstand some of

the worst affects of earthquakes, there is no known technology that can always prevent a nuclear reactor from suffering damage in very serious quakes registering 7 or more on the Richter scale.

Serious incidents

Even operating under normal conditions nuclear power plans



A US nuclear plant sits on the San Andreas faultline

can still suffer serious incidents. The Three Mile Island nuclear facility in the US had a level five incident in 1979. In 1959 there was a fire at the Windscale site in Cumbria. There was controversy surrounding the site for years with concerns over radioactive leaks.

The real problem is the secrecy of the nuclear industry internationally which has fought hard to suppress negative publicity and cover up accidents. Business and official secrecy means it is impossible to really hold the governments and companies to account.

Nuclear power cannot be safe under capitalism. There should be a moratorium on all new plants being built and independent workers' and scientists' inspections of active plants. The argument that this cannot happen because of business, government or military secrecy just shows how unaccountable the whole industry is, an alarming fact when we realise the lethal potential for destruction that these nuclear reactors represent.

Royal Family: affront to democracy

The media is saturated with Royal wedding fever. Keith Spencer asks if the monarchy really is a harmless institution

THE FORTHCOMING marriage of Prince William and Kate Middleton on 29 April is being paraded as a “feel good” moment for the whole country. Yet it has already cost £20 million for security while the rest of us have to put up with swingeing cuts.

The wall to wall coverage of the Royal wedding has provoked response ranging from anger to indifference. A poll carried out in November 2010 found that 31 percent “couldn’t care less” and a further 28 per cent were “largely indifferent” to the big day.

The anger came in when links between Prince Andrew, Duke of York (William’s uncle and fourth in line to the throne) and dodgy dictators were revealed.

But Prince Andrew isn’t just one bad egg. The whole family is up to it.

Among those invited to the Royal Wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton are:

- Sheikh Hamad Bin Isa – the butcher King of Bahrain

- The King of Saudi Arabia, who sent in troops to Bahrain to attack pro-democracy demonstrators
- Dictators including the Sultan of Brunei and Oman

Past the smiles and grandeur, the royal family keep these dodgy connections for a reason – to boost Britain’s status and profits to British business from the world’s most sickeningly wealthy oil-rich regimes.

They are at the centre of the circles of corruption and horse-trading among the world’s elites, using their hereditary titles to access all areas.

Undemocratic powers

The role of the monarchy is not just based on titles though. On paper, the monarch has extensive powers: to declare war, dissolve parliament and to rule by decree. In practice, these are limited, although they are normally exercised (officially ‘in the Queen’s name’) by the sitting prime minister.

For example, parliament was only



Bosses hope royal wedding will provide “feel good factor” in time of cuts

given a role in deciding on declarations of war after the protests against the invasion of Iraq. Even now, the government claims the sole right

to decide over intervention in Libya. Other powers are greyer areas, such as the protocol when there is a hung parliament.

The monarchy’s powers mesh with those of other secretive committees and unelected officials, to undermine the democratic will of the people. This becomes especially important in periods of class struggle.

By appearing to be “neutral” and standing ‘above politics’, the monarchy gives those gathered around it the ability to repress or derail working class struggles, in the name of “Queen and Country”.

In Australia, for example, Governor-General Sir John Kerr used his powers as the Queen’s representative, to dismiss the elected Labour government of prime minister Gough Whitlam. He refused Whitlam’s request for new elections to the Senate, to resolve a constitutional crisis provoked by the Tory opposition, and appointed Tory leader Malcolm Fraser in his place.

The monarchy therefore has to be abolished. It is a rotten symbol of wealth and privilege, and a dangerous weapon in the hands of the bosses.

Britain’s young jilted generation

Young people are demonised in the press and blamed for many of the problems in Britain today. The truth is very different, argues Dan Edmonds

SOME PEOPLE would have you believe that young people today are lazy and that they don’t care about education. Adverts tell young people how terrible their life will be without the right shoes, deodorant or iPhone. Teachers and celebrities tell us that there is a world full of opportunities and it’s our own fault if we don’t become entrepreneurs or millionaires.

But the reality of being young is very different from the stereotypes.

Youth unemployment stands at 20 per cent with nearly one million under-25s officially unemployed. We are often the first to be made redundant and the last ones to be employed.

Youth get less unemployment and housing benefit. We are forced into unpaid work experience or repetitive and depressing courses, otherwise we lose our benefits.

Those who manage to get employment often find themselves facing worse pay and conditions than older co-workers, and are frequently dumped on temporary and zero-hour contracts. Trade unions often fail to recruit or fight for young workers. Trade union leaders have also signed up to pension deals that have worsened provision for younger workers.

The Tories want to raise the age



at which young people can leave school from 16 to 18, making teenagers increasingly dependent on their family. The combination of the difficulty of getting benefits while at school, the abolition of EMA, and the fact that the minimum wage is lower if you’re under 18, makes it almost impossible to be self-sufficient and effectively traps young people in their family.

This makes it incredibly difficult for young people to escape situations of domestic abuse and violence.

About 100,000 young people run away from home every year, fleeing violence, rape, and psychological abuse. Across the country, Crisis Centres, which give free legal

advice and support to victims of abuse and rape, are being shut down; councils are cutting youth and children services. Large numbers of young people suffer mental health problems with about 80,000 suffering serious depression, which often goes untreated (95% of all children in prison suffer from mental health disorders). But mental health services for young people are also being slashed.

Then after cutting youth services and centres, forcing us to stay at home or failing to treat our illnesses, the state punishes us for hanging about in groups on the street with dispersal orders and ASBOs. And if there’s no youth centres in your area, and if going to the cinema or

a leisure centre is too expensive, then where are we meant to hang out except for the parks and the streets?

This condescending attitude extends to sex as well, with Tory MP Tim Loughton recently saying the government should punish under-16s who have consensual sex. Apparently all young people must remain chaste and pure, because obviously we are too stupid to understand how a condom works or know when we are being taken advantage of.

Young people are relegated to being second-class citizens because capitalism can’t afford to pay us a decent wage, provide a good free education system or fund services.

The government and bosses portray us as stupid, violent and reckless, incapable of taking advantage of this world of opportunities, so they can justify putting us on the scrap-heap, paying us less, and regulating our lives through the police, the family and the schools.

Young people and workers face the same enemies, we can’t let the bosses, the presses and the trade union bureaucrats divide us against each other. United we can win our struggles for better treatment, better services, and a better world for everyone.

Smiley Culture dies in police custody



SMILEY CULTURE, Britain's first rap star, died on Tuesday 15 March with a single stab wound to the heart. His family, friends and the black community as a whole are in shock and demand answers.

The Serious Crime Squad had raided Smiley's home in Surrey at 8am and arrested him. Police claim they let Smiley go into the kitchen on his own "to make a cup of tea", where he stabbed himself with a knife so big it came out the other side of his body.

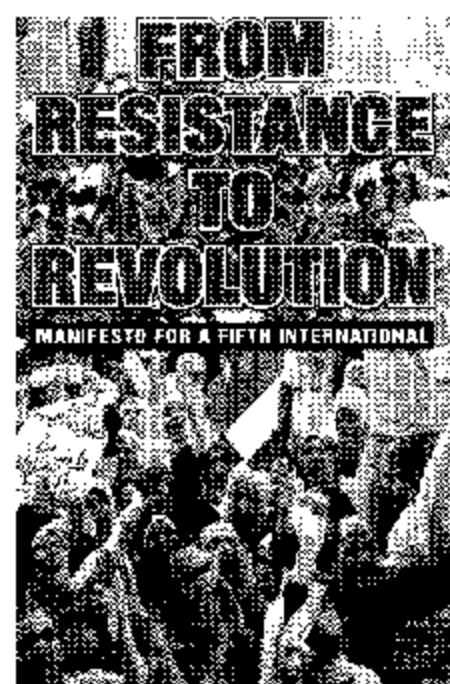
But Smiley's nephew, Merlin Emmanuel, told a 300-strong meeting in Brixton the next day, "Smiley had a great deal to look forward to... The police have a lot to answer to." Black activist Lee Jasper added, "It is inconceivable that police officers on a drugs raid would let Smiley into a kitchen full of knives on his own."

We cannot leave the investigation into the incident in the hands of the Independent Police Commission, who failed to charge the policeman who killed Ian Tomlinson at a demonstration two years ago.

We demand a public inquiry with full access to police records, and the police involved immediately suspended and barred from speaking to their colleagues.

No cover-up – justice for Smiley!

From Resistance to Revolution



A new manifesto for global socialist change OUT NOW £2

fifthinternational.org

Introducing Workers Power

WORKERS POWER is a Marxist organisation committed to building the strongest possible resistance to cuts, imperialist occupation in the Middle East, racism, sexism, environmental destruction and war. We fight for solidarity with the revolutions against western-backed dictators in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Bahrain and Yemen. The root of all these evils is the capitalist system, so we work to direct the resistance against the ruling class and towards socialist revolution.

We are involved in the trade union movement with members in the post office, local authorities, the civil service, teaching and journalism. Most recently we backed Jerry Hicks' campaign for leadership of Unite, Britain's largest union, and have campaigned energetically to turn the unions towards the building of local anti-cuts committees.

Our members take part in the leadership of the nationwide Coalition of Resistance, in networks of shop stewards and in cross-union initiatives and local anticuts committees.

Amongst young people and students our members play a significant role in the National Campaign against Fees and Cuts and one of our members, Joana Pinto, is standing as part of the joint anticuts slate against the NUS leadership that failed so abysmally to lead radical action against the fees rise.

Against imperialism

Workers Power has always taken an uncompromising stance against imperialism, racism, nationalism and fascism. We opposed the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and demand the immediate withdrawal of British troops. We participated on the national leadership of the Stop the War Coalition though we criticised the limited methods which ultimately caused it to fail.

We support the Palestinians and their struggle against the racist Israeli state. We call for a bi-national one state solution to end the conflict.

Antifascism and antiracism

We have been in the forefront of mobilisations to drive the fascist English Defence League off the streets and campaigned against the British National Party. We argued for an Anti Fascist Defence force to protect our demonstrations and communities from far right violence.

And we opposed the 'British Jobs for British Workers' strikes in 2009,



Workers Power marching against the G20 in London, 2009

fighting for jobs for all instead of anti-foreigner actions.

Youth

Our emphasis on organising young people is widely recognised. We took the initiative at the time of the emergence of the anti-capitalist and anti-globalisation movement to set up REVOLUTION as an independent socialist youth organisation, and have always believed that it is critical that young people should have an organisation under their own control.

Unlike the youth organisations of the capitalist parties, and of some of the socialist left, which are obliged to follow the line of their 'parent'

group, REVOLUTION is entirely self-governing. We believe this is essential, if young people are to find their own way and take socialism forward to a new generation.

International

Finally, Workers Power is an internationalist organisation. We actively support struggles of the workers around the world, and we aim to participate directly in building links of solidarity.

We are the British Section of an international organisation called the League for the Fifth International, which also has groups in Germany, Sweden, Czech Republic, Austria, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the USA,

and networks of sympathisers in other countries.

Revolution

At the core of our belief is the view that while the contradictions of capitalism and its repeated crises will present opportunity after opportunity for the working class, the socialist revolution will not happen spontaneously or by its self. There is never a vacuum in politics, and unless revolutionary socialists are organised to give political leadership, other forces will fill the space, misleading the revolution. We think this view is being borne out in the amazing events in Egypt today – overcoming the crisis of working class leadership is a key task for socialists everywhere.

Karl Marx said the emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class itself – and he often observed that self-emancipation has to be a conscious act.

Our political positions are democratically decided and published in *From Protest to Power* and *From Resistance to Revolution*. They are guides to action, which links the needs of today's struggles to the fight for revolution and socialism. Our clear international programme and our fight for the formation of a Fifth International – a world party of revolution – is what distinguishes us from other groups in the working class movement.

Get in touch

Workers Power isn't just a magazine. We are an activist organisation that fights and campaigns for socialist politics in the movement day in, day out.

In schools, colleges, universities, workplaces and local communities, Workers Power members are at the forefront of the fight against cuts. We have branches and activists in North, South and East London, Oxford, Leeds, Birmingham, Surrey, Worcester, Leicester, Bradford, Wakefield, Bolton and Manchester. We are always looking to develop new networks of members and supporters.

Wherever you are – we want you to join forces with us.

All around the world, from Sweden to Sri Lanka, members of our sister sections in the League for the Fifth International are campaigning for a socialist future. Join us today!

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Workers power 5

Stop the UN intervention in Libya

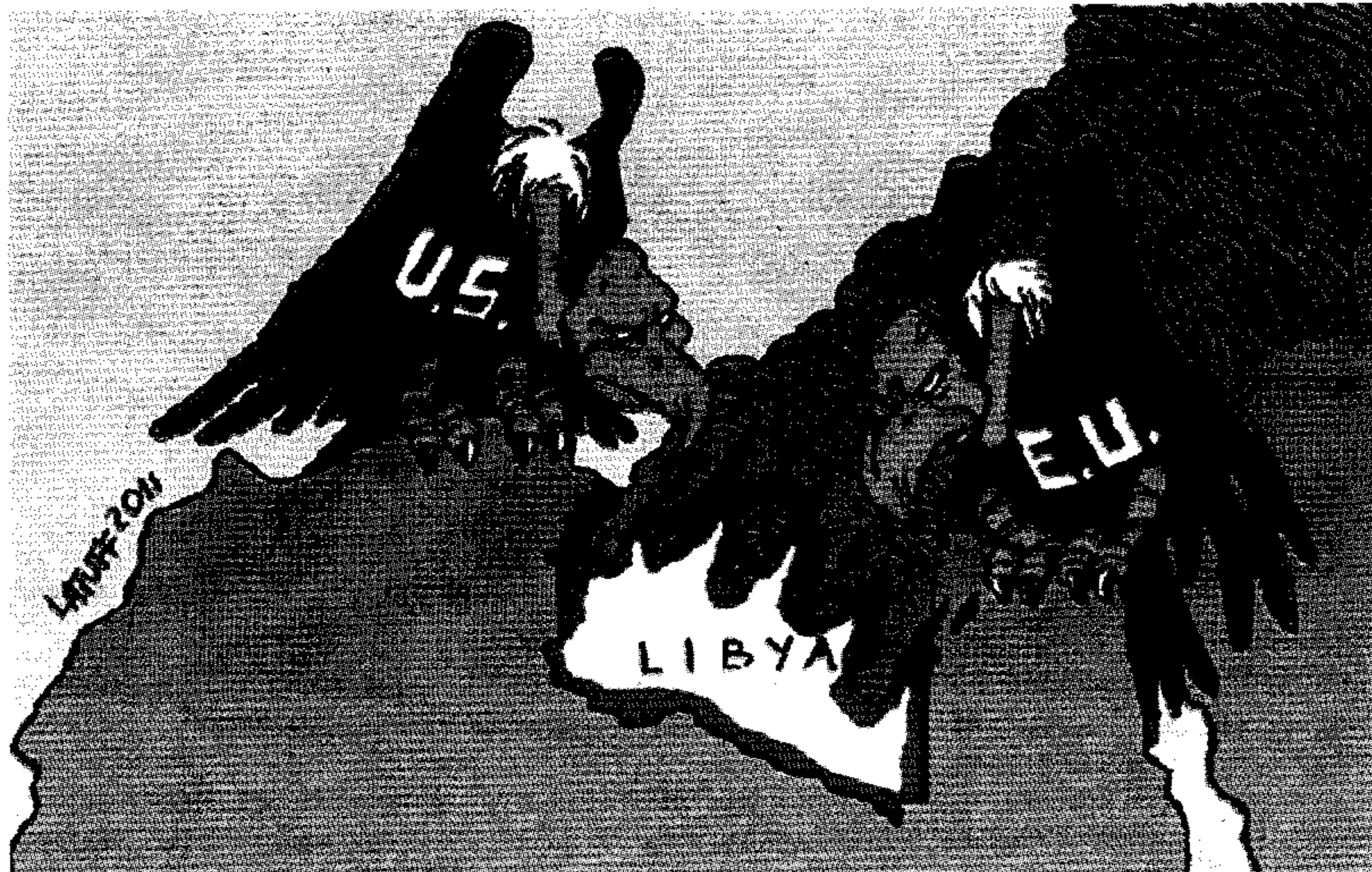
Peter Main

THE UN decision to intervene in Libya was not a humanitarian measure to “protect civilians”. It was, first of all, a carefully calculated policy to protect Western interests in the country. Secondly, however, it was a major step towards stabilising the entire region, stemming the tide of rebellion while ensuring the continued rule of Western allies such as the Kings of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

Resolution 1973 has been presented as the minimum necessary to protect civilians from Gadaffi's counter-revolutionary advance. In reality, it gives the main imperialist powers a virtually free hand to act as they please. The resolution does not ban the use of ground troops, as widely reported. It does ban any foreign occupation force – but none of the powers involved have either the means or the need to mount an occupation. It does not ban the use of “special forces”, like those Britain tried to infiltrate two weeks earlier, or the sending of any number of “military advisers” to assist any potential new allies in overthrowing Gadaffi.

War aims

Britain and France took the lead in organising the “no-fly-zone” because they had the most to lose, – and the most to gain – from stabilising Libya. Access to the oilfields was certainly a factor but so also was regaining greater European



control over North Africa, now often referred to as “the EU's southern border”.

The USA, the third Security Council member to support the resolution, has played a different role, because Washington has different priorities. Above all, they had to find a way to strengthen their overall position in the Arab world. The combination of the Iraq and Afghan wars, Obama's call for democracy in his Cairo speech, the ditching of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt and the obvious decline in US economic prowess, put in question the USA's ability, even willingness, to protect the remaining Arab

rulers, also threatened by democratic revolutions.

Obama's delay in “making up his mind” was a result of the time needed to agree the eventual deal with a whole range of other states. It appears that Saudi support and, reportedly, arms supplies for Benghazi could only be bought at the cost of US acceptance of the invasion of Bahrain. So much for democracy and “humanitarian concerns”. Closer to Libya, the “new” military rulers in Egypt had to be reassured while, at the same time, Israel's security was guaranteed.

Having secured all these preconditions, Obama was then able to step

in and, apparently, strengthen the text of the resolution as originally tabled by Britain and France. Now, as well as “no-fly” provisions, the UN was to sanction “all necessary measures” to allow protection of the civilian population – and what was “necessary” was to be decided by the interventionist forces themselves! The idea that this was not all agreed in advance is not credible.

An important part of the deal, indeed a crucial part, was the role of Russia and China. As permanent members of the Security Council they have a veto over all decisions. They could have stopped all intervention simply by raising a

hand. They did not. And, of course, they did not decide on this in the course of the discussion. It was negotiated and agreed, in advance, with the US, France and Britain – all of whom well understood that the butchers of Chechnya and Tibet could not be expected to support intervention, at least not in public.

Germany, on the other hand, has no right of veto. Why did it abstain? Here, we have to take into account both domestic political pressure, already incensed by involvement in Afghanistan, and longer term policy considerations. By not taking responsibility for the military intervention, Berlin may hope to be able to play a key role in future when it comes to “negotiating a settlement”. That would make sure that Europe continues to assert its influence in the region, even if Britain and France have to stand aside.

The whole procedure makes clear the real character and purpose of the United Nations. It is not a “world parliament” or a representative of the “community of nations”: it is a framework within which the Great Powers and their various subordinate allies can try to resolve the inevitable frictions between them. UN support for the military intervention in Libya does not make it “legitimate”; it remains an imperialist aggression to secure their own interests. That is, why the workers and the oppressed of the world, but especially those in the leading powers, Britain, France and the US, should oppose the intervention “by all means necessary”.

Victory to the Libyan Revolution!

Peter Main

THE REBELLION against Gadaffi's dictatorship deserves unconditional support and that is not altered by the UN decision.

Those who oppose powerful states have the right to get hold of arms wherever they can and to take advantage of any weaknesses in their oppressors' situation. That remains true even where the weaknesses are the result of imperialist action. If, under cover of the no-fly zone, Libyan insurgents and revolutionaries can retake positions, undermine the morale or the loyalty of Gadaffi's troops and even advance on the capital, Tripoli, that

is a step forward for the Libyan revolution and should be welcomed.

At the same time we must oppose the US, British and French attack. The imperialist attack allows Gadaffi to pose at home as defender of the nation. It gives him a popular cause where before he had none. Now he can try to rally part of the people and deploy them against the revolution.

The imperialists are obviously looking for potential allies within the opposition to Gadaffi with whom they can do a deal to guarantee their own interests. Such a deal might even include elements from Gadaffi's current administration. The exact composition of the National Transition Council in

Benghazi is not clear but it is likely to contain figures prepared to make such a deal and to establish a new regime no better than Gadaffi's.

However, recognising the danger is not the same as concluding that it is inevitable. In the here and now, the key task for revolutionaries in Libya is to strengthen the role and capacity of the working class and the urban poor in the struggle against Gadaffi. They need to build their own organisations, trade unions, working class women's groups, neighbourhood committees and their own militia.

These are needed now in Benghazi against Gadaffi – they may be needed tomorrow against the com-

promisers, even the imperialists themselves. But first things first. Today, the population is mobilised against Gadaffi but led by unaccountable, self-appointed leaders. Workers should demand that these people subordinate themselves to popular control; open their meetings, report their decisions, veto them if they do not advance the cause!

Just like Gadaffi, just like the imperialists, the workers of Libya need international allies. They should turn first to their neighbours, the workers of Egypt and Tunisia and the rest of the Arab world. A reversal in Libya would be a threat to the further progress of revolutions throughout the region.

Equally, support from the workers of the region for the Libyan revolution could turn the tide not only against Gadaffi but also the plans of the imperialists.

The speed of developments in Libya underlines the need for the working class to form its own political organisation and leadership, a revolutionary party committed not only to overthrowing Gadaffi by mass mobilisations and organisations but putting power into the hands of democratic workers' councils. Only that strategy, the strategy of permanent revolution, can internationalise the revolution and defend it against counter-revolution and imperialism.