

# workers power 5



Left Unity Platforms p9



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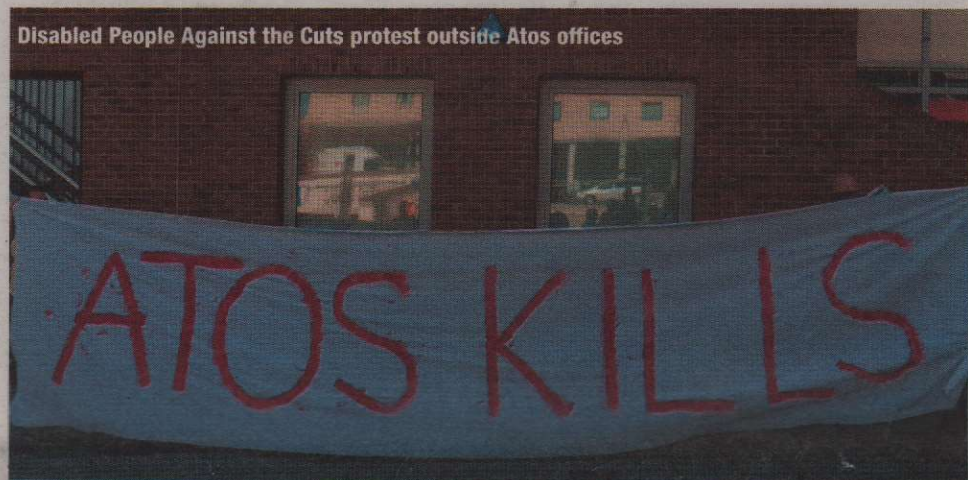
PUT THE POLITICIANS ON MINIMUM WAGE AND WATCH HOW FAST THINGS CHANGE

How are we exploited? p5

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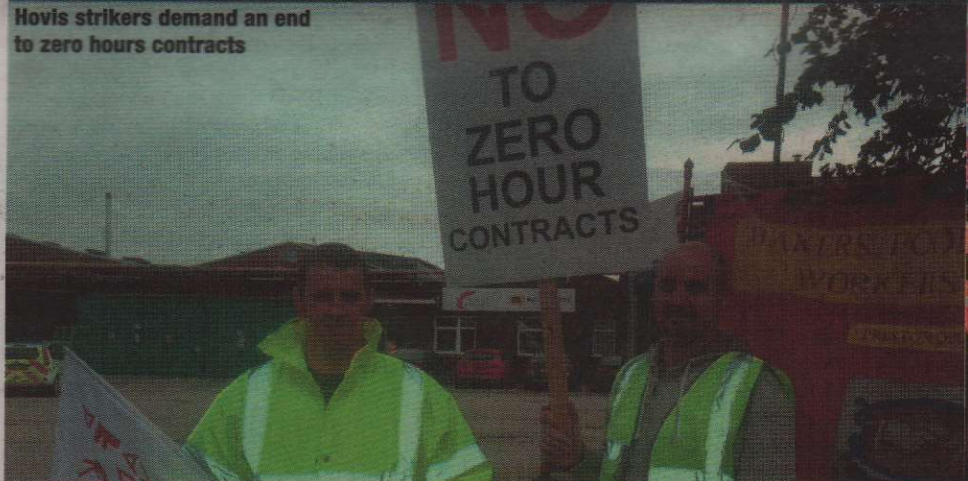
# Storm the Tories!



Disabled People Against the Cuts protest outside Atos offices



Environmentalists stop Cuadrilla fracking in Balcombe



Hovis strikers demand an end to zero hours contracts



Campaigners defend hospital services

By Jeremy Dewar

WHETHER YOU'RE angry that your local hospital is being downgraded; or tearing your hair out at the thought of another 20 years of burning oil fracked from the countryside; or incensed at the idea that more and more of us are being made to work on exploitative zero hour contracts; or saddened by the fact that 10,000 people have taken their lives or just given up on living after ATOS took their benefits away – you need to join the TUC demo at the Tory party conference in Manchester.

When the government lost

the vote to send Britain hurtling into another war, millions of people rejoiced. Not just because parliament stopped another military adventure, but also because it weakened this illegitimate, welfare-cutting, income-sapping government.

Now let's really give them a kicking.

The number of unemployed remains at 2.5 million, with nearly a million youth out of work and another million of the long-term jobless – a 20-year high.

Average wages have declined in real terms by 5.5 per cent since 2010. In Europe, only

Greek, Portuguese and Dutch workers have fared worse.

All state pensions and benefits have lost value, too, as rising food, fuel, transport and housing costs cause millions to fall below the breadline and resort to food banks. Child poverty has risen to 3.5 million – more than one in four.

Meanwhile the rich get richer. Corporation tax and the top rate of income tax have been slashed, while evasion and avoidance schemes are in hot demand. The top 1 per cent now take home 10 per cent of the country's income, while the bottom half of society get by on just 18 per cent of the UK's wealth.

That's why tens of thousands are marching on the Tory party conference in Manchester on 29 September.

Unite and Unison are laying on trains and coaches. Antiracists, environmental campaigners and benefits activists will also converge on the bosses' party. This issue unites us all.

Workers in Crown Post Offices and Royal Mail are set to strike this autumn against job cuts, closures, the pay freeze and privatisation. Teachers and firefighters are also in line to take action on a national scale.

NHS workers from West

Yorkshire to East London are defending jobs, services and conditions by mounting pickets. They follow a magnificent victory for campaigners fighting to keep Lewisham A&E open.

But the truth is that our NHS remains in mortal danger. If Cameron, George Osborne and Jeremy Hunt get away with it, this will go down in history as the government that dismantled and privatised the NHS.

Even if there were no other crippling cuts – of which there are very, very many – this callous attack would be enough to warrant a general strike.

Cameron has lied through

his teeth on the NHS. He claimed he would "cut the deficit not the NHS" – in fact the deficit remains high, while the NHS is facing historic cuts of £20 billion.

The Tory's 2010 manifesto said nothing about handing the NHS budget over to private healthcare multinationals and the likes of Virgin and Sainsbury to make a profit. But that is what they have done.

If Cameron, Osborne and co saw the rainclouds ruin their summer holidays on the question of Syria, then let's give them a storm of protests, civil disobedience and strikes to drive them out of office!

## Everyone to Manchester – 29 September

# Where we stand

THE CAPITALISTS' property must be expropriated, with not a penny paid in compensation.

Capitalism must be abolished across the globe and a world without class division, state repression or the oppression of women, subject races and nations, must be created. That is what revolutionary socialists call communism.

All power must pass from the capitalist elite into the hands of democratic councils of delegates from the working class, the peasantry and the poor directly elected by the masses and subject to instant recall. These councils must be supported by the armed working class and its allies.

The resistance of the exploiters must be broken by the force of millions acting together in a social revolution. Armed workers must forcibly break up the police and army that exist to support the rule of private property.

All production and distribution must be organised democratically and sustainably, without private ownership and the blind and brutal dictatorship of market forces.

Social inequality and the underdevelopment of whole continents must be overcome through the planned allocation of humanity's resources: raw materials, means of transportation, communication, technology and labour.

Imperialism, the highest and most violent stage of capitalism, means the exploitation of billions in all countries, it means blockades, invasions and occupations.

We support all resistance to imperialism and its agents and demand an end to the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq. We demand the withdrawal of all British troops from abroad including from Northern Ireland. We demand the dissolution of Nato and all imperialist pacts.

We support the Palestinians' struggle to free their homeland from Zionist occupation and to create a single country "from the river to the sea", in which Arabic and Hebrew speaking citizens can live in freedom and equality.

There is only one road to this freedom. It is the road of class struggle and revolution, the fight against all forms of exploitation and oppression.

We demand equal rights for minorities, an end to all racist discrimination and an end to the lies of the racists in the mass media, which whip up violence against black people and other oppressed communities and ethnic groups. We fight against all immigration controls: they are inherently racist.

We fight for women's liberation: from the burden of childcare and domestic labour, which must be socialised; from rape, physical and mental abuse, from unequal pay and discrimination at work.

Women alone must control when and whether they have children, not the state or the churches. This includes defending and extending the right to free abortion and contraception on demand.

Lesbians, gay men and transgender people must be defended against harassment on the streets, at work and in the schools. They must have equal legal rights to marry and bring up children.

We fight the oppression of young people and demand an end to their harassment by the police, the government and the press. Young workers should have equal pay and equal rights with other workers.

We fight for free, universal education, under the control of students, teachers and other education workers themselves. We fight for an autonomous, revolutionary

socialist youth movement.

We fight the catastrophe of climate change, resisting corporations which pollute the earth, governments that refuse to take action against the emission of greenhouse gases, and policies which put the profits of big oil, the auto industry and the power generators before the very survival of our species.

We oppose reformism and the pro-capitalist policies of the Labour Party. Capitalism cannot be reformed via elections and peaceful parliamentary means; it must be overthrown by the masses through force.

We oppose the control of the trade unions by unaccountable bureaucrats. Union members should have full democratic control. All officials must be regularly elected, and subject to instant recall; they must earn the average pay of the members they claim to represent. A rank and file movement to carry out this transformation.

In the fight against austerity, we call for a united anti-austerity movement pledged to oppose every cut, for local councils of action, and for mass industrial and direct action, up to and including a general strike to halt the assault on the NHS, the welfare state and education and to kick out the coalition.

We fight for a workers' government based on the fighting organisations of the working class and the socially oppressed.

We propose the unity of all revolutionary forces in Britain to build a new working class revolutionary party. Workers Power is the British section of the League for a Fifth International. It fights for a world party organised across national boundaries on a programme for world revolution.

## ★ ENVIRONMENT

# Why Cuadrilla is a fracking disaster

By James Copley

MILITANT PROTESTERS in the mid-Sussex town of Balcombe have temporarily disrupted energy firm Cuadrilla's exploratory drilling for oil. Perhaps more importantly, they have brought to public attention the controversy around hydraulic fracturing – or "fracking".

Through persistent acts of civil disobedience and camping out on the site of the drilling, courageous activists from No Dash for Gas have combined with local residents to drive their message home: fracking causes local earthquakes and subsidence; the earth cannot sustain more gas and oil burning.

On one side of the debate stands Green Party MP Caroline Lucas, who was arrested at a protest on 19 August. On the other is Tory peer and Chancellor George Osborne's father-in-law Lord Howell of Guildford, who briefly embarrassed himself and his party by suggesting that fracking should be conducted only in the "desolate" North East of England.

### What is fracking

Fracking involves pumping water and chemicals into the ground at high pressure to extract oil and gas trapped between gaps in shale and other rocks. It has been linked to increased risks of earthquakes and tremors, as well as the potentially health-damag-

ing pollution of the water table. Oil company BHP Billiton only recently settled a court case in Arkansas with residents who claimed that earthquakes caused by fracking had damaged their homes. It is a measure of how shockingly weak the regulations surrounding the industry are that even Cuadrilla thinks that they are too lax!

Our current reliance on fossil fuels and the huge rise in energy prices have combined to make fracking, normally an expensive method for extracting petrochemicals, into a profitable proposition. With good energy storage properties and a relatively low production cost, "black gold" remains capitalism's preferred energy source.

In addition to the opportunity for capitalists to make profits in an otherwise unexploited market, increasing political volatility, the UK's dependence on Russia for energy supplies and the possibility of oil-rich Scotland voting for independence have ensured that companies pursuing fracking opportunities have received the political support and encouragement of the state.

Prime Minister David Cameron has argued that, "We cannot afford to miss out on shale gas", claiming that fracking would cut energy bills, create jobs, bring money to local communities and not damage the countryside.

No Dash for Gas has done a fantastic job of raising awareness about the dangers of fracking, forcing a national debate to take place. They have also contributed to the debate about potential alternative energy sources. However, they lack a strategy for bringing an end to capitalism's reckless profit-driven exploitation of our natural environment.

### Political campaign

The tactics of militant direct action, of "climate camps" and the occupation of planned fracking sites, power stations and other actual or potential hazards to the environment cannot, by their nature, involve the millions of people affected by these issues.

For that, they need to be a component part of a mass political campaign, one in which the trade unions should reject the standard "good for jobs" blackmail and try to represent the interests of the working class as a whole, communities as well as the sectional interests of some workers.

In particular, we should argue for energy production to be nationalised under workers' control and without compensation to the former owners who have raped the world's resources for decades, and for workers in polluting industries to be re-skilled in the course of a planned shift towards sustainable and renewable energy.

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## CONTACT US

Workers Power is the British section of the League for the Fifth International

We can be contacted via email at:  
[office@workerspower.co.uk](mailto:office@workerspower.co.uk)

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London  
WC1N 3XX

## Editorial

# Cameron is wounded – let's finish him off

DAVID CAMERON broke off his fourth summer holiday in an attempt to stampede parliament into supporting military action against Syria. But Ed Miliband, whom the Tories had taunted with being “weak”, turned on him and soon it was the Bullingdon boy who looked weak. So will Miliband's Commons triumph be followed up by Labour changing tack and supporting resistance to austerity? Not likely!

The Labour party's conference this month will hear reports from the policy review, headed by Jon Cruddas, a supporter of Blue Labour, the right wing faction that advocates discrimination against migrant workers, ending benefits for the long-term unemployed and replacing the welfare state with volunteer-run services, in a move reminiscent of Cameron's Big Society.

While the results of the review are not yet known, the conference session on benefits is entitled “Something for something”, a tacit acceptance of the Tory argument that the one million who cannot find work after a year are “scroungers” getting “something for nothing”.

Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls has made it clear that, if elected, Labour would keep to the Coalition's planned cuts for at least two years – despite the party's official rhetoric that the cuts are damaging the recovery.

Ed Miliband has failed to support any action against cuts and denounced the big strikes to defend pensions in 2011. He is setting out to reduce union influence by making union members opt into individual membership – a move leaders say will massively reduce Labour's membership and income. This is all part of further eroding the working class character of the party.

So how are the unions squaring up? Last year's TUC passed a motion to consider the “practicalities of a general strike”. Whenever union members were consulted, they replied with a resounding “Yes” – notably last October in Hyde Park when Unite's Len McCluskey called for a show of hands.

So where is the commitment today? Unite's *written* response to the consultation says lamely, “It is not about setting a date for such a strike now,” and instead proposes a Jarrow-style hunger march and a “Carnival against the Cuts” next summer. The words “general strike” do not get a mention on the order paper; the nearest we get are the usual calls for “coordinated strike action”, “civil disobedience” and “mass industrial action”.

Of course we support such motions and must do our best to see them implemented. But coordinated strikes, centred on multiple trade disputes in order to duck the anti-union laws, have inevitably ended with unions settling separately when the more right wing leaders pull the plug. That's why the general strike remains a central slogan; it is the best way to launch a *political* attack on the government, bring it down and stop *all* the cuts.

The truth is the general strike motion embarrassed union leaders by last year. They want to forget it ever happened. Why? Because they do not believe that workers have the right to change government policy and bring the Coalition down – or rather, they fear the prospect of it.

However, there are clear signs that workers are still prepared to fight to defend their jobs, living standards and dignity.

National strikes look likely in education, the fire brigade and the postal service. If we can coordinate them, both nationally and locally, then we can deepen Cameron and Clegg's hole and drive home our advantage.

Local strikes have already broken out over a number of issues. Postal workers across the South-West have walked out over workload and victimisation, while strikes at Crown Post Offices are set to resume. Bakers at Hovis in Wigan are striking against zero hour contracts, and there are strikes against council pay cuts from Stirling to Brighton.

All these workers need active solidarity: no crossing picket lines and funds to encourage them to strike harder and for longer. Local anti-cuts groups and people's assemblies can help provide that. By electing strike committees and demanding rank and file control of their disputes, workers can ensure they decide when to strike, for how long and whether any new offer is sufficient to call off their action.

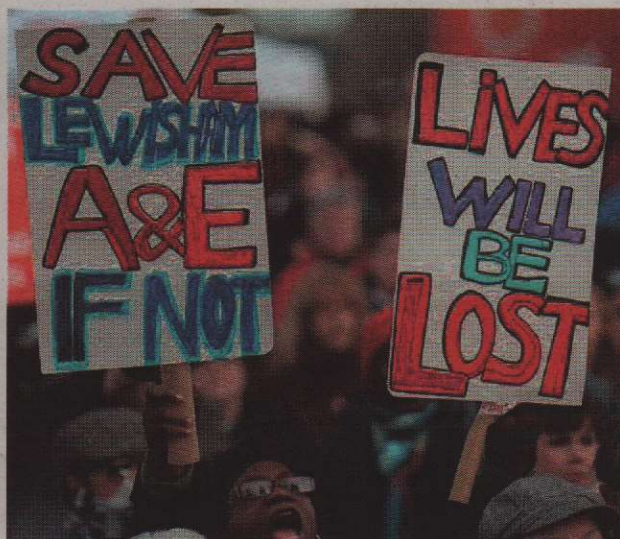
If we can succeed in linking up disputes and building solidarity, we can put the general strike back on the agenda. But we need to do more than this. There is a deep crisis of leadership in the labour movement, political as well as industrial. Labour has shown that the Coalition can be beaten but we cannot rely on them to defend us against austerity.

That is why we need a new mass party of the working class, one that campaigns for:

- Mass strike action to bring down the coalition
- A rank and file movement to transform the unions
- People's Assemblies in every town and city to coordinate resistance.

## ★ ANTI-CUTS

# Defend the NHS



By Dara O'Cogaidhin,  
mental health worker

ESTABLISHED IN 1948 to be a free and universal system of healthcare, the NHS reached the pensionable age of 65 in July and is sadly unwell.

Patient satisfaction has plummeted from an all-time high of 70 per cent to just 58 per cent in a year as operations get cancelled and waiting queues soar. Seven thousand nursing posts have been axed since 2010 and eight of London's A&E departments are slated for closure and downgrading as the coalition government aggressively pursues a £20 billion package of cuts.

Much of this disillusionment was based on the widely quoted figure of 13,000 “needless deaths” in the Keogh Report. This assumption has since been discredited because it is not based on any real comparison with normative rates. However, the effect of this smear campaign and the staff cuts on nurses' morale is real – according to the RCN, two thirds of nurses have considered leaving the profession this year due to stress.

### Privatisation

The NHS is being dismantled and privatised. Last year the government implemented the Health and Social Care Act, which saw Andrew Lansley's nightmare vision for the dismantlement of the NHS enshrined in law. Through a series of measures including the establishment of Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG), the Act effectively hands huge swathes of the NHS over to the private sector.

As of April, 211 CCGs replaced 150 primary care trusts as the commissioners of most NHS services in England. They now control around two-thirds of the NHS budget. The Act forces these

organisations to give private companies the chance to compete for contracts, leading to a race to the bottom in quality of service and staff conditions as private companies bid against each other for contracts. As the Bill was being debated and voted on in both houses, more than 200 parliamentarians held financial interests in businesses involved in healthcare. So that's what “democracy” looks like!

Lansley's Act can be seen as the consolidation of the previous government's steady encroachment of market principles and practices into the provision of healthcare.

Back in 2002, Labour's Alan Milburn championed the Bill that created Foundation Trusts that are run much like private businesses and whose success is judged on “financial viability”. Foundation Trusts can turn 49 per cent of their beds over to profitable private patients and charge for a range of services. Milburn is one of 10 previous health ministers who have taken lucrative consultancies with private healthcare companies.

### Private Finance Initiative

Hospitals throughout the country are facing bankruptcy. Barts Health Trust in East London, Britain's biggest NHS Trust, has announced it is losing £2 million a week. The trust is saddled with a ruinous PFI debt of £1 billion costing £115 million a year, i.e. £2 million a week.

But instead of cancelling the PFI and taking the buildings back into public ownership, consultants PwC has been parachuted in and proposes to cut up to 1,600 jobs, saving £30 million this year alone, meaning meeting minimum ward staffing levels will become an impossibility.

In just three years £7 billion of new NHS contracts have flooded the private healthcare

market. Virgin Care runs more than 100 services across the country, Serco has won a £140 million contract to run community healthcare in Suffolk and Sainsbury's now owns over 250 pharmacies across the UK.

The shameless transfer of cost-effective public services to the profit-hungry private sector represents an accelerating reversal of what the NHS was created to achieve: making healthcare a right, and no longer something that could be bought and sold.

### Fightback

As Tory MPs and delegates gather in Manchester on 29 September, tens of thousands of NHS workers, campaigners, trade unionists and service users affected by the cuts will march against the dismantling of the NHS.

As union leaders dither over what action to take next, we need to build a movement that transcends its current fragmentation and coordinates local grassroots struggles against cuts to the NHS.

There are positive signs for a successful fight: Lewisham Hospital won a victory against health minister Jeremy Hunt's plans to close its A&E service as the High Court ruled it was “unlawful”.

This followed a concerted campaign by Save Lewisham Hospital – comprised of campaigners, health workers and community groups – to defend their services. Last January 25,000 local residents marched against the plans, following door-to-door leafletting by activists.

However, Lewisham Hospital continues to be threatened with partial closure to bail out the South London Hospital Trust, which has PFI schemes consuming 18% of its income. This shows that we have to be vigilant – but also that local victories cannot be secured until we have won nationally.

Strike action against attacks on jobs, pay and working conditions is also a key feature of the resistance. The strike by Unison members in the Mid-Yorkshire Hospital Trust against “down-banding” pay cuts is one such example. Leeds Pathology staff are also taking strike action against new shift patterns leading to inadequate staffing levels and a large drop in take home pay. Local strikes by health workers, bolstered by public support, could begin to redevelop a militant anti-cuts movement to stop the Tories' slash and burn of the NHS. We need to coordinate action now.

# Why we need a revolutionary youth organisation

As the Revolutionary Socialists, the new group formed by former Socialist Worker Student Societies, hold their first national meeting, **KD Tait** asks why young militants need their own organisations to take up the struggle for socialism

ACROSS THE world young people are in the forefront of mass movements for democracy and human rights, and against the exploitation and oppression of a system which enriches the 1 per cent at the expense of the 99 per cent.

From the teenage women stitching Nike shoes for poverty wages in China to the radical school students in Chile fighting the cops and demanding free education, young people are in the vanguard of struggle. The Arab Spring has overwhelmingly been a movement of young people. This disproves the lie that ours is an apathetic 'ipod generation'. But the fate of the revolutions in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia also proves we can't rely on established parties to look after our interests.

When we fight and even die for freedom, the result, all too often, is that the fruits of our struggle are picked up by these parties and politicians. Revolution gives way to counter-revolution; our networks, that mobilised hundreds of thousands, prove unable to seize the power to really change the world. Repeated mobilisations without fundamental change eventually lead to despondency and disillusion.

We need to organise ourselves to make change permanent. We don't need to reject politics – we need to reject every attempt to patronise and manipulate us. We need to find our own way – our own political strategy and way of organising – that can bring about a radically liberating, equal and revolutionary society.

The surge of support for Left Unity – the appeal for a new working class party to fight the cuts – has the potential to make a real difference for millions looking for a party that finally puts their interests first. Everyone's talking about uniting the left – uniting revolutionary groups, uniting independent activists, uniting disillusioned Labour party members. This is a welcome step forward.

But no one's talking about young people.

It was young people who first stood up to the millionaire Tory rulers. We stormed the Tory HQ, its broken plate glass a symbolic statement of



The fire last time: students set light to Tory Party HQ in 2010

intent: if you wreck our future, we'll wreck your system.

Nine days later 100,000 young people walked out of schools and colleges against the Tories' attempts to make them pay for the capitalist crisis. Week after week we besieged parliament while it was debating abolishing the EMA and imposing a huge tuition fee hike that would put higher education beyond many working class young people.

But fast forward to 2013. Many of those young people are among the one million 16-24 year olds without work, education or training. Many are working in compulsory workfare schemes. The minimum wage has been frozen for the youngest workers.

In Britain young people can be exploited full-time at 16, but can't vote until two years later. In contrast to some countries in Europe, in schools we aren't allowed to democratically elect our own representatives or build our own organisations. And at work bosses pay us lower wages and we have little or no union representation. In the classrooms, the factories and the home, young people are bullied and exploited.

But despite – and because – of this, young people are often the first to say enough is enough, and fight to change things for the better.

It was the young people in the Socialist Worker Student

Societies (SWSS), who stood up to the bullying SWP Central Committee over the outrageous way the latter treated complaints of rape and sexual harassment. And it was young women members, who levelled these complaints, despite threats of expulsion, and whose rebellion has shaken the bureaucratic centralism of the party to its foundations.

It is these young SWSS members who are setting out to build an autonomous revolutionary socialist youth organisation in Britain.

## Why so radical?

In the first place it's because young people haven't been ground down and demoralised by decades of defeats. We haven't been pressured to buy into the system with the pretext that this is the price for providing for families and children. Neither are we so quick to look to the existing leaders for answers.

We aren't bound by as many ties to the reformist sell-outs perpetuated by parliamentary and trade union leaderships as previous generations, because we have not travelled the same cycle of illusion and disillusion that they have. Of course this lack of hard experience has its downsides and we will have to join unions and learn to fight these pressures, but meanwhile our radicalism is a great boost to the labour and social movements.

Capitalism and democracy promise a lot but deliver little. A good education leading to a decent job is a fast receding prospect for most of us. The government and millionaires who own and control the media manipulate the "democratic" process until there is nothing left. And young people are not afraid to say so.

This relative independence from the dead hand of capitalist socialisation is our greatest strength. Defending and extending this independence to our forms of political organisation is the key to making sure that we can campaign in joint struggles without being manipulated as a stage army.

## What is to be done?

In wealthy countries youth unemployment is rocketing under the economic crisis. Youth unemployment rates of 50 per cent are common; 20 per cent is the new norm. In the exploited countries outside of Europe and North America, young people are used to drive down wages and denied freedom of thought and action.

Young people see an environment being devastated by capitalism that threatens a future of epidemics, floods, droughts and famines – which the system is unable and unwilling to do anything about. We see "humanitarian" invasions and occupations that leave hundreds of thousands dead or homeless. We see

racism from the police or from fascist gangs, persecuting people because of the colour of their skin, their religion or their culture.

Where should we look to change this?

Most young people are part of the working class. It's the working class that collectively produces all the wealth in society – but has no say over what is produced or how the wealth is shared out. The fact that working class people do not own the means of producing what they need to live, but at the same time must work together to produce all the things society needs to function makes our class the only social force with both the capability and necessity to struggle for a world organised in a completely different way.

**UP TO one million workers are employed on zero hour contracts in Britain. These contracts give people no guarantee of work, but force them to be available to work at their employer's convenience.**

**Working an average 19.5 hours a week, these contracts are becoming the norm in hotels, catering and leisure. In the care sector more than 300,000 people are employed on terms that offer zero job security.**

**The following figures provide some idea of the scale: Nine out of ten McDonalds and Sports Direct staff, 80**

Young people have to be part of this struggle for a world where things are produced according to what people need and not for profit for the millionaires – this is the struggle for socialism. We can bring our own methods, which take the best of the old and new; we can develop our own organisations which defend our right to think through politics for ourselves, develop our own tactics and strategies but fighting every step of the way with our older brothers and sisters and our parents in the working class.

We can have solidarity without subordination. We can build a movement based in the schools and colleges, in the workplaces and on the estates. We can campaign for a world without racism, war and exploitation, without sexism, inequality, cultural deprivation and the destruction of our environment.

To do this today we will be most effective if we build our own revolutionary organisations, prepared to work alongside every progressive ally, but reserving our right to decide on our own how we can win socialist liberation for our generation and those to come.

This will transform our radical actions from spontaneous uprisings, that all too often miss their target and see others reap all the rewards, into a conscious struggle for the power to change the world – alongside a revolutionary party which spearheads the working class struggle for self-emancipation.

**Join the Revolutionary Socialists:**  
[www.revsocs.wordpress.com](http://www.revsocs.wordpress.com)

## Zero

**per cent of Wetherspoon's staff and Cineworld's entire part time workforce are employed on zero hour contracts that maximise value and minimise cost for the employer.**

**The numbers of those employed on these terms have swelled 32 per cent in the last year. The government claims that more and more jobs are being created, but the truth is that job creation is almost entirely down to bosses replac-**

# What is the secret of exploitation?

WHEN PEOPLE complain that they are being “exploited” at work, they usually mean that they are being treated unfairly or being ripped off.

Most of us have worked in the kind of jobs where unpaid overtime, cancelled breaks and deductions from pay have to be swallowed if you want to keep your shifts.

But if we want to understand what makes capitalism tick, we need to go further than this simple idea of unfairness – because it implies that there can be a fair wage, a job where we aren’t exploited. Is that true?

Karl Marx said no. He was the first to analyse how the capitalist system works in depth, and how exploitation was central to it. That was what made him different from many anticapitalist thinkers who have followed him.

Simple theories of exploitation say capitalism can be made fair by obliging the worst capitalists behave by laws or by trade union action. This can restrict what Marxists call super-exploitation, all the practices mentioned above and many more.

But Marxist theory shows how exploitation can only be abolished by overthrowing the capitalists and getting rid of their system.

## So how does the Marxist theory work?

Capitalists invest money in factories, raw materials and hiring workers to produce goods for sale. When goods are sold they make a profit. The capitalists’ money, repeatedly invested in production and recouped in the form of profits, is called capital. It grows constantly through this cycle.

Marx set out to discover where this expansion of capital came from. To do this he looked at the basic unit of all things produced – the commodity.

Capitalism is a system where almost everything we produce and use – from a Big Mac to a pair of Nike trainers – take the form of commodities. Commodities are produced to be bought and sold before they are used.

Every commodity has two essential aspects to it. On the one hand, it must be useful – it must satisfy a need. Here its physical qualities are important. Does it taste, look or sound good, or keep you warm or clean?

This is what Marx calls its “use value”. It is a necessary element of



a commodity, since without it the final buyer, the consumer, won’t need it and won’t buy it.

But having a use value is not sufficient to make something into a commodity. For this it must possess another kind of value – one which can be compared with all the many and varied kinds of commodities. Only in this way can it be exchanged, through the medium of money, with other goods on the market. This value which enables us to compare is what Marx calls “exchange value”. It is what lies behind the commodity’s price.

But the money value given to differing commodities is not arbitrary. A Big Mac is not worth as much as a pair of Nike trainers. But each commodity’s value rests on something that is common to them all. So what do a hamburger and a pair of trainers – and the vast range of goods and services on sale – have in common which allows them be

compared with each other and exchanged with each other?

## Labour power

Marx looked for the answer in labour – mental and manual work. But every individual’s labour, every craft and skill differs from every other. What can be measured is the average amount of time an average worker spends on a particular piece of work.

So where’s the exploitation? It lies in the fact that the worker is not paid for her/his actual labour, let alone for the products of that labour. What the worker sells is a special commodity – the ability to work, what Marx calls labour power.

The capitalist uses this to transform all the other inputs into production – raw materials, power, machinery, etc. – into a number of commodities. When these are sold it is revealed that the capitalists’ original investment has grown substantially. Where did

this increase come from?

Like all commodities, the ability to work has a price: wages. What decides its basic level, below which it cannot fall? Whatever it costs to get the worker back to work, day after day, able to perform. On the other hand wages cannot be so high that the worker escapes from the necessity to sell this commodity. In short wages are determined by the amount needed to produce and reproduce labour power.

To the individual worker, only if wages begin to fall below the level of what is needed to live normally or the average rate for the job, does this begin to look like exploitation. Otherwise it seems like a “fair day’s work for a fair day’s pay”.

But all is not as it seems. Labour power is a unique commodity. It alone has the ability to create extra value out of all the other inputs. It creates this value in the very process of being used up and put to work.

This sounds very mystical. But when you think about it, it becomes obvious. What would a fridge full of raw hamburgers, jars of pickle and stacks of sesame buns be worth without workers there to cook, package and serve them? What would an idle factory with palettes laden with labels, cloth and thread, and motionless sewing machines be worth unless labour power set them all going? Answer: the same as the capitalist paid for them. Only labour power can increase their value.

But workers are not paid the whole value that they create in production. They are only paid the amount needed to reproduce their labour power.

## The root of exploitation

The extra value that workers create is expropriated (stolen, except of course that it is perfectly legal) by the buyer of labour power, the owners of the workplace – the capitalist. This “surplus value” is the sole source of wealth for the capitalists. It is the secret behind the constant growth of capital, behind the capitalists’ profits.

Whereas a worker at best “accumulates” some personal and household possessions, some savings and a retirement pension, the capitalists accumulate the entire vast means of production and distribution: the factories, offices, supermarkets, land, and expand

their wealth through the banking system. We built it, they own it.

The capitalists don’t do this because they are good or bad. They invest capital and make a profit neither out of their goodwill to “provide jobs” or “get the economy going” (as they always claim), nor out of a wicked desire to exploit people. It’s more than just greed. The individual capitalist is compelled to extract the maximum surplus value from their workforce because of competition with other capitalists. The weak get swallowed up, while the strong get bigger.

That means not just taking the profits and spending it all on yachts and banquets in posh houses. It means ploughing some of it back into the business to build more factories and better machines, and create new products. And so competition drives development and further industrialisation and expands its capacity therefore to produce even more... capital.

That is why Marx’s critique of capitalism is not a moral or ethical one. These are just the natural dynamics of an economic system based on private ownership of the means of production and market competition.

Anita Roddick, who owns the chain of Body Shops, may sponsor the non-violent direct action group the Ruckus Society and avoid animal testing, may or may not be a “nicer” person than Phil Knight, who owns Nike. But both share a drive to have their commodities on sale on every high street and to maximise profits.

This competitive drive to accumulate, to make profits is absolutely opposed to the interests of the worker. The capitalist can increase surplus value only at their expense: either by getting more work out of the worker for the same wage or by reducing wages.

In this ceaseless struggle, workers have one trump card – the fact that without their labour no surplus value will accumulate and no profits will be made. If the individual worker is powerless, the workforce united is powerful. When bosses push workers too far, they go on strike and remove the source of profit – their labour.

Out of the need to resist the capitalists’ remorseless hunger for surplus value comes the need for a collective resistance. Out of capitalist exploitation comes the class struggle.

# Tolerance for Zero Hours

ing full time staff on permanent contracts with temporary and part time staff.

## Who benefits?

Zero hour contracts are good for bosses and bad for workers. Shift patterns are manipulated, leaving workers with no reliable income from week to week. This forces workers to put up with unsociable hours, unpaid overtime, and humiliating, degrading and danger-

ous working conditions. If they don’t they can have their hours cut to zero – a way for bosses to sack uncooperative workers without having to go through the legal formalities.

To strengthen the bosses’ right to put their profits before social responsibility, the Tories have scrapped legal aid for employment tribunals. This means if you’re unfairly sacked or discriminated against at work, you’ll have to pay £1,200

to make a claim.

Bosses defend these contracts by saying they provide the flexibility that workers want, but a 2013 study by the National Institute Economic Review showed that the number of workers who want to work more hours than their boss will provide is spiralling. This “underemployment rate” has soared from 6.2 per cent of the workforce in 2008 to almost 10 per cent in 2012.

The problem is particularly acute amongst young workers. Already hammered by an unemployment rate which has hovered at 20 per cent for more than three years, while 30 per cent under-25s in work say they want to work longer hours. Workers identifying as Black or Black British face higher than average rates of under- and unemployment.

The increase in underemployment is a feature of the

economic crisis, which means bosses try to maintain profit rates by making fewer workers do the work that was previously shared out amongst bigger workforces.

Zero hour contracts are a good reflection of the way in which the bosses’ control of the economy is used to make working people pay for the crisis. Profits are defended by sacking workers, increasing the amount of work employees

are required to do in a given amount of time, keeping wage increases down, and using unreliable shift patterns and the fear of unemployment to extract as much work as possible from the workforce.

Labour’s Andy Burnham wants to ban zero hour contracts. So do we.

But we want more: give every worker a permanent contract; reduce the working week to 30 hours without loss of pay, so we can share the available work around; and restore legal aid so workers can fight for their rights against tight-fisted bosses.

# No to imperialist bombs, ye

In the face of imperialist attacks on Syria, revolutionaries should be against intervention and demanding aid without strings, including weapons, for the Syrian people against the Assad regime, argues **Marcus Halaby**

ON 21 AUGUST, reports emerged that hundreds of people had been killed in a chemical weapons attack in Eastern Ghouta, a rebel-held agricultural region just outside of the Syrian capital Damascus.

With up to 1,700 dead, this atrocity is just the latest in a long series of crimes committed by the dictatorial Ba'athist regime of Bashar al-Assad, which has shot, clubbed, stabbed, shelled, strangled, tortured and fired missiles from fighter jets at an average of about 110 people per day since the outbreak of a popular democratic revolution against the regime in March 2011. More than 100,000 people have died since then, and one million Syrian children have become refugees.

It did not take long, however, for people to cast doubt on the Assad regime's culpability. Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman, Alexander Lukashovich, suggested within hours that the chemical attack was a "planned provocation" by the Syrian rebels.

Nor has this scepticism been confined to the Assad regime's habitual apologists like Respect MP George Galloway, who suggested that Israel had given chemical weapons to "al-Qaeda" in Syria, and that the Eastern Ghouta atrocity was a "false flag" operation to discredit Assad and bring about a

Western military response.

Left Labour media figure Owen Jones, in a 25 August article for *The Independent* opposing Western intervention, said that we could not be sure "who fired the chemical weapons at eastern Damascus", and that "initial doubt that Assad's thugs could be responsible were hardly the preserve of conspiracy theorists".

He went on to ask why the regime would use nerve gas on its population while UN inspectors were present in the country, while it had the "upper hand" in the civil war and while the threat of Western involvement had apparently waned.

In fact, this scepticism is far wider of the mark. Coming almost a year to the day after US President Barack Obama declared that the use of chemical weapons in Syria would constitute a "red line" that would "change his calculus" if crossed, and almost two years to the day since Obama called upon Assad to step down from power, this act looks almost like a calculated blow to the credibility of the US, already weakened by its failure to manage or encourage a "peaceful" transfer of power in Syria, such as those that took place in Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen after the popular uprisings in those countries in the "Arab Spring" of early 2011.

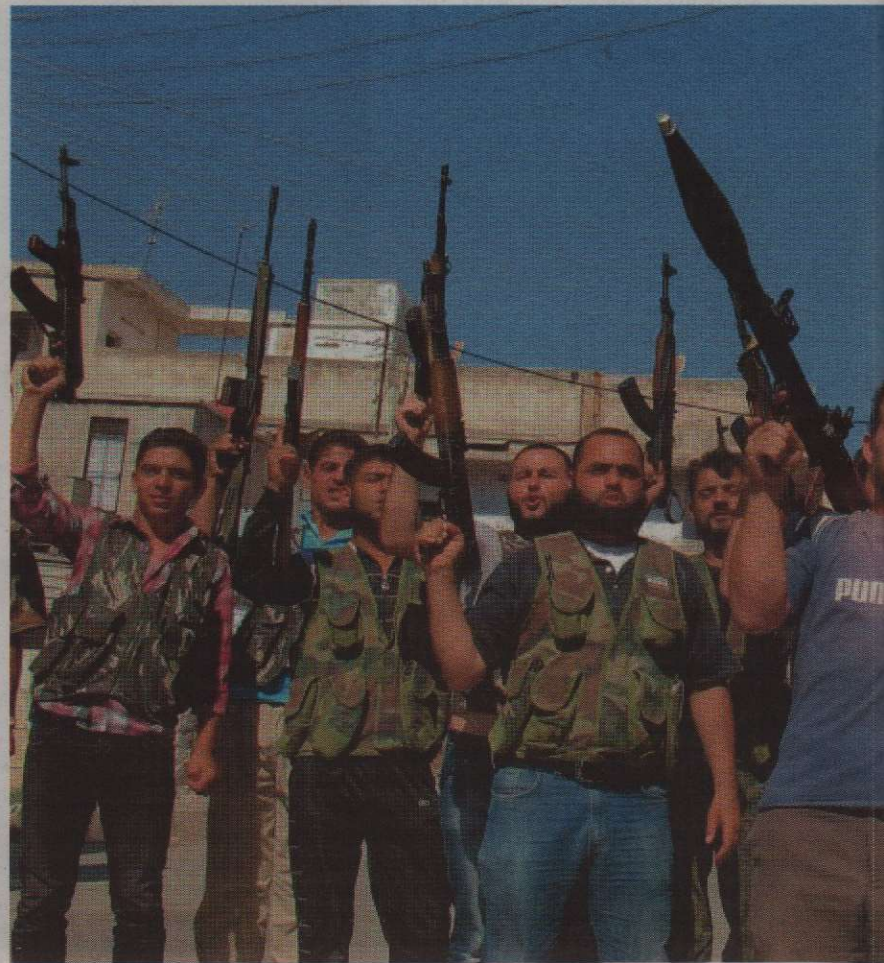
Knowing that the continued support of Russia, China and Iran is

secure, and that the West is more troubled by the apparently unpredictable consequences of a rebel victory in Syria than by popular revulsion at the Assad regime's mass slaughter, the Syrian regime has calculated that it can strike a blow like this in broad daylight, in full view of the world and its own people – and get away with it. Bashar al-Assad has called Barack Obama's bluff.

## Defend the revolution

Socialists should always condemn attacks on civilians, but we should choose sides in revolutions and civil wars according to the declared goals of the revolutionaries – not according to the methods that they use to fight for those goals. In Syria, a popular movement for democracy confronted the tanks and bombs of Assad's dictatorship. A large section of the people took up arms to defend themselves, and parts of the army broke with the regime to join the popular uprising.

In any civil war there will be progressive and reactionary elements; there never was nor ever will be a "pure" revolution. Should we abandon the Syrian people's struggle for democracy because some Islamist reactionaries have carried out atrocities of their own in the name of the revolution, albeit on much a smaller scale than the regime?



No: we should stand shoulder to shoulder with all those fighting for the downfall of a brutal and tyrannical regime, a progressive goal in itself. The military defeat of Assad and the victory of the revolution

are inseparable.

Having spent the last two and a half years exploiting Syria's revolutionary civil war to shore up Obama's "democratic credentials", and to embarrass his Russian and Chinese

# Egyptian coup demonstrates the

**Marcus Halaby**

THE MASS MOVEMENT that erupted onto the streets of Egypt's cities on 30 June 2013 against the Muslim Brotherhood-led government of President Mohamed Morsi was just as much an expression of popular anger and the continuing revolutionary will of the Egyptian masses as were the protests that brought down the dictatorship of Hosni Mubarak on 25 January 2011.

It was no less legitimate on account of the presence in its ranks of a few so-called "feloul" (remnants and supporters of the old Mubarak regime) than were the January 2011 protests on account of the presence some Salafists and a part of the Muslim Brotherhood's rank and file.

And Morsi's removal on 3 July 2013, by General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, was no less a coup than Mubarak's removal by Mohamed Hussein Tantawi on 11 February 2011. It was certainly no less intended to frustrate the popular will, by pre-empting the

threat that the people on the streets might bring down Morsi's government through their own collective strength and with their own methods.

This time, however, Egypt's generals had learnt their lesson. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) under Tantawi sought to placate the people in revolt in order to salvage what it could of the army's privileges and power, under the cover of elections and a managed transition to a militarised "democracy". Sisi's coup, by contrast, has struck a blow against the Egyptian army's historical enemy, the Muslim Brotherhood, in order to bring the revolution to an end altogether. SCAF is as much an enemy of the masses who came out onto the streets in June 2013 as Morsi's government was. It may yet prove to be more deadly.

The new regime's decision to release Mubarak from prison, the reappearance on the streets of the formerly discredited police and security services, the declaration of a state of emergency and the killings of hun-

dreds of Muslim Brotherhood-led protesters by the army's special units all demonstrate that SCAF, far from "defending the revolution" against the Islamists (as some pro-army liberals and secularists would have it), has cast itself in the role of the revolution's gravedigger.

## The importance of leadership

These events demonstrate in the clearest possible terms the fatal weakness of the revolutionary movement that began in January 2011, one that many on the international left celebrated as a strength: its lack of leadership.

A diverse movement confining itself to simple, negative slogans ("the people demand the downfall of the regime"), but lacking at its core a mass working class party able to articulate the objective interests of the masses that it had awakened to political life, proved capable of bringing millions of people into action. It even proved capable of "bringing down" two presidents in succession. But on

neither occasion was it capable of transferring political power into the hands of the revolutionary people. In the absence of such a party, power, or the prospect of power, passed naturally into the hands of the only forces organised and coherent enough to wield it: the Muslim Brotherhood and the army.

Despite the myth of the "Facebook revolutions", real, mass organisations inevitably came to the fore. The absence of a revolutionary working class party allowed reactionaries to fill the breach. The "Arab Spring" gave way to a political winter.

For its part, the Muslim Brotherhood leadership – slow to join the protests against Mubarak despite the presence in them of many of its own supporters, quick to support calls for "dialogue" even before Mubarak's removal, and equally quick to lend its support to the SCAF-led political process and constitutional referenda – was always more enthusiastic about the prospect of a Turkish-style military-Islamist alliance than the gener-

als themselves were.

Having chosen to support SCAF's attempt to impose an undemocratic and deeply flawed constitutional process aimed at freezing out most of the forces that made the 25 January revolution, the Muslim Brotherhood naturally thought that it had earned its just reward for its services rendered in the form of Morsi's election as president.

Seeking to secure his position, and that of those parts of Egypt's capitalist class on whom the Muslim Brotherhood depends for support, Morsi then moved to attack the real democratic gains of the revolution: the rights to protest, to strike, to organise and to express political opinion.

In addition to sectarian attacks by the Brotherhood's supporters on Coptic Christians and Shi'a Muslims, the Morsi government's failure to release the hundreds of revolutionaries still held in prison by the military and its imposition of the dictates of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the Egyptian people

# es to the Syrian revolution



President François Hollande's calls for military action.

## No to military intervention

Socialists are perfectly right to oppose the preparations for Western military action now underway. The Western powers have absolutely no intention of aiding the Syrian people in their struggle to overthrow a vile dictatorship. Indeed, as US academic Edward Luttwak pointed out in an article in *The New York Times*, Obama's real policy in Syria – one that he fully supports – has effectively been based on the premise that “America loses if either side wins”.

Only two days before the Ghouta atrocity, US General Martin Dempsey said in a letter to a congressman that while the US was easily capable of destroying Assad's air force, this would fail to secure US interests without troops on the ground. Citing the usual bogeys around “ethnic rivalries”, he argued, “the side we choose must be ready to promote US interests” if the balance shifts in their favour, and that the currently diverse and fragmented Syrian opposition did not fit that bill.

Israel's rulers in particular are far happier with the manageable situation of a weakened Assad, who has not once fired a shot in anger at Israel to recover the Syrian Golan Heights, under Israeli occupation since 1967.

A democratic Syria, liberated from the Ba'athist dictatorship, would inevitably become a centre of solidarity with Palestinians, Lebanese and others engaged in resistance to Israel's on-going occupation and

colonisation of Arab lands.

As with the bombing of Libya during that country's revolution and civil war in 2011, and indeed the invasions and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, any Western-led bombing of Syria will involve civilian casualties and will only serve the interests of the same rulers who support dictatorships elsewhere in the Arab world, including in Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

However, to oppose Western military intervention in Syria without also showing solidarity with the Syrian revolution, and without equally opposing the actual “external intervention” by Russia and China that has been taking place in Syria for the last two and a half years, is to abandon the Syrian people.

Why? Because the Syrian people, who have risen against a dictatorship and who still maintain a mass democratic movement against it despite its attempts to divert their entirely justified struggle into an armed inter-communal conflict, have every right to expect international solidarity, no less so than the Palestinians or the people of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain or Yemen.

For this reason, we should not restrict ourselves to the Stop the War Coalition's official slogan “Hands Off Syria”, a slogan that could and will be supported by any pro-Assadist and by any closet Islamophobe for whom Assad is either a “lesser evil”, or for whom there is “nothing to choose” between the regime and the diverse range of popular forces arrayed against it.

## Aid, including weapons, without strings

Rather, we should be demanding aid without strings to the Syrian people against the Assad regime: not just food, shelter and medical aid for Syrian civilians (almost a half of the country's population has required life-saving medical attention in this conflict), but the sort of heavy weaponry the fighters need to protect themselves and their communities from their own government's blood-stained air force, militias and conscript army – weaponry that could turn the war around in their favour.

We should demand that the countries of the EU open their borders to all Syrian refugees who wish to come here, and lift the current regime of travel restrictions on Syrian nationals intended to prevent them from claiming asylum.

Most importantly, we should open up a campaign within the British and European labour movements in solidarity with the Syrian resistance to the Assad regime, along the same lines as the long-established campaigns of solidarity with the Palestinian people and the more recent campaigns in defence of the emerging labour movements and democratic struggles in Egypt and Tunisia.

Doing this will mean doing a far greater service for the Syrians than Obama, Cameron, Hollande et al ever could by bombing their country, and far greater than could ever be achieved merely by opposing our own governments' war preparations, while washing our hands of our internationalist obligations.

rivals in the Arab world without giving any serious aid to the Syrian revolutionaries, the US is now apparently preparing for a military strike on Syria to recover its lost prestige and deterrent power.

Britain's prime minister, David Cameron, predictably trying to follow Obama's lead, was defeated in parliament on his government's support for intervention, although the French parliament is still to debate

# need for a workers' party

ensured that its initial popularity soon gave way to mass opposition.

Around 17 million people took to the streets against Morsi's authoritarian rule, more than had protested against Mubarak, and this time around penetrating into the rural regions in Upper Egypt that had previously not seen major protests. People once again demanded the fall of the regime and the continuation of the revolution.

The generals, however, saw in this an opportunity for revenge for Mubarak's overthrow. And they were aided by an unholy alliance with older bourgeois liberal figures, like Mohamed ElBaradei, and the newer leaders of the Tamarod (“rebel”) movement, for whom the idea of using the military to oust Morsi was a natural strategy, rather than a dangerous betrayal of the revolution.

## The fight continues

Everyone who stood against Tantawi and Morsi to defend the gains of the 25 January revolution must now

also stand in its defence against Sisi's junta, and demand an end to all repressive measures and the release of all political prisoners, including Morsi and his supporters.

It should be clearly understood that the army's attempt to crush the Muslim Brotherhood's mass base is merely a prelude to the use of a new round of elections, just as fraudulent as those that brought Morsi to power, to mask the restoration of a military dictatorship.

Equally, it should be clear that the leadership of the struggle for democratic rights, for free and fair elections, women's rights and the rights of Egypt's minorities, cannot be entrusted to political forces that defend the capitalist system, whether “liberal” or Islamist, or for that matter to the apparently more radical youth organisations that act as their satellites. The “civilian” components of Egypt's capitalist class, liberal and Islamist alike, have proven to be far too weak and far too afraid of the people to effectively challenge the power of the army. Only a force

completely independent of them will be capable of doing that.

And the biggest obstacle that it will have to overcome will be the repressive institutions that the 25 January revolution left in place, protected first by SCAF and then by Morsi. The revolution cannot go forward until the hold of the generals over the rank and file of Egypt's conscript army has been broken decisively by the action and appeals of the exploited classes from which its soldiers are ultimately drawn.

The statement that “the army and the people are one hand” will only have any real meaning once the soldiers refuse orders to fire on the people, remove the officers who issue these orders and establish a new form of discipline by electing new officers, accountable to elected soldiers' committees in the barracks. But as the continuing tragedy in Syria demonstrates, this breaking of the army will only be possible if the masses – and the youth in particular – try to arm themselves in self-defence, to impress upon the soldiers the need to

choose sides.

And in turn, this will mean that Egypt's working class – the backbone of the revolution – will have to establish its leadership over the other popular classes that constitute its natural allies, by creating permanent councils of elected and immediately recallable delegates to represent the workers, youth, women, students, farmers and urban and rural poor that have been drawn into struggle.

## For a revolutionary party of the working class

It has been the absence of any such institutional expression of the will of the revolutionary masses, one that could form an alternative source of power to that of the official institutions of state that has meant that the democratic gains of the revolution have had to be defended time and time again from the encroachments of the old state apparatus.

And in turn, such institutions would not be able to stop at these objectives. To secure “dignity” and social justice,

those other objectives that first brought the people onto the streets, they will need to combine at a national level and struggle alongside the revolutionary soldiers for the creation of a government of the workers and peasants. Beginning with the confiscation of the vast empire of commercial and industrial enterprises owned or controlled by the military, it will also need to nationalise the banks, the factories and the land.

That is to say, the Egyptian revolution, beginning with the tasks of establishing representative democratic government, will have to pass on from these tasks to the tasks of overthrowing capitalism. This will not happen spontaneously, as the result of an unconscious process, but will require the socialist groups and the emerging workers' movement with its independent unions to form a party capable of articulating these goals and winning the mass of the workers and the exploited to fighting for them. This is what we mean by the strategy of permanent revolution.

# First cracks in a 'broad party'

Martin Suchanek attended the Syriza Congress in July as an international observer from the New Anticapitalist Organisation (NAO) in Germany. He reflects on the party's latest development and lessons it may hold for others

IN LAST year's elections in Greece, Syriza (The Coalition of the Radical Left) narrowly failed to gain the largest proportion of votes that would have given it the opportunity to try to form a government pledged to reject the crippling debt repayments and austerity dictated by the EU and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

That radical pledge was the principal reason for Syriza's electoral base growing by leaps and bounds in the years of the Greek crisis: from 4.6 per cent in 2009 to 16 per cent in May 2012 and 26.9 per cent the following month. Its tally of seats rose by 19 to 71.

At that time, it seemed that proposing a rejectionist coalition government of the workers' parties was almost within Syriza's grasp. The right wing New Democracy-led coalition, under Antonis Samaras, looked weak and the situation in the country was still highly unstable. Another election, in short order, was a distinct possibility.

Moreover, since the elections, in little more than a year, Syriza has doubled its membership. The 3,552 delegates at the July Congress in Athens represented between 35,000 and 40,000 members.

As a result, leftists across Europe began to look to Syriza as a model for the sort of party that could really challenge austerity governments inflicting social misery across the continent. It should be a "broad party", in other words it should include both reformists and revolutionaries. And above all, it should be capable of winning seats and challenging for power.

## Tacking to the right

Today, however, Samaras is still in office. True, the government faced a major crisis when it tried to shut down the state television company, but it weathered that storm as it has others. For the time being, it has stabilised the situation. In no small part this is because Syriza has not fought for a strategy of direct action and mass resistance against austerity. It has not set out to act as a leadership of the class struggle. Indeed, its leader, Alexis Tsipras, whom the German media dubbed "the most dangerous man in Europe" before the elections, pledged to act as a loyal, parliamentary opposition as soon as they were over. He has been as good as his word.

Since then, Tsipras has been backpedalling on the pledges of 2012, explaining away the radicalism of the slogans he used then, and re-interpreting the ambiguities he carefully embedded in them. Now he makes it clear that he has no intention of unilaterally repudiating Greek debt or the memorandum with the Troika (the European Commission, the IMF and the European Central Bank), but rather wants to renegotiate their terms. Above all, he wants Greece to stay in the Eurozone.

In January, at the prestigious US



Protester outside the occupied Greek state television station ERT this summer. The banner at the top reads: 'ERT is and will remain open'

Brookings Institution, Tsipras asked, "Is there really a reason for somebody to be afraid of the left in Greece today? I heard the person who spoke before me saying that I represent the radical left. But how are we really radical?"

He then went on to characterise as "scaremongers" those who say that Syriza, if it comes to power, will "rip up our agreements with the EU and the IMF, take our country out of the Eurozone, break off all of Greece's ties with the cultured, with the civilised West".

This policy represents the reformist majority within Syriza, the former Eurocommunists of Synaspismos. They control the party apparatus and a majority of its MPs. Electoral success has brought hundreds of full-time jobs and juicy privileges for the leaders of the party.

Nonetheless, it would be wrong to think that this has meant a decline in the popularity of Tsipras. Syriza and Tsipras still embody the hopes of millions because they are seen as the only realistic alternative to the present government.

## Congress

The July Congress itself was planned to present Tsipras and Syriza as a future party of government, an "Alternative for Greece" with a programme for government. Central to this, Syriza was to be refounded as a unified party. Since its foundation, Syriza had been an alliance of 14 organisations or parties. For more than a year, it has also recruited individual members and this has been the main area of rapid growth. There are now around 500 local branches organised on a district or a workplace basis.

It is worth noting that the left, both

reformist and revolutionary, was strongly represented at the Congress, making up about a third of the delegates, and that an increasingly sharp political polarisation between left and right was evident.

Tsipras's opening speech stressed Syriza as a party "ready for government". He avoided any reference either to the important ongoing workers' mobilisations, such as the occupation of the ERT television station and the 16 July general strike, or the impending cuts and redundancies in the public sector.

On certain major points, the Tsipras leadership did succeed in moving Syriza firmly to the right. Instead of cancelling the debts and setting aside all payments, there is now to be a "renegotiation" and an "examination" of "legitimate" and "illegitimate" debts. Greece will stay in the Eurozone, even if that means that not all the cuts can be reversed.

The banks and major corporations are not to be nationalised but "regulated", abandoning the demand for the nationalisation of major companies and private banks under the workers' control, and the amalgama-



Alexis Tsipras

tion of all banks into a central bank.

The slogan of a "left government" will now be replaced by "a government in which the left is central". The right wing even tentatively floated the idea of a government of "national" or "social" salvation but soon realised opposition to this would be too strong. The left wing of the party, by contrast, continues to argue for a left government with only the left parties, KKE and Antarsya.

In his speech, however, Tsipras only excluded a coalition with the fascists (Golden Dawn) and any parties that collaborate with them. Decoded, that means he is prepared to form a government with Pasok.

## Fundamental contradiction

The party leadership had a consistent majority with around two-thirds of the votes. However, for Tsipras and the centre-right reformists, it was not just a matter of gaining congress majorities on key questions. Their main concern was to transform the party, which has grown massively because millions of workers hope that it will end austerity, into one that is "fit to govern". Such a government will be obliged to save Greek capitalism; to do that, the leadership has to remove the internal obstacle to this: the organised left.

This reveals the fundamental contradiction of the "broad party" model. Quite simply, a party, led by reformists who wish to govern within the framework of a capitalist economy and legality, must inevitably abandon its pro-working class promises, disillusion its own social base and, indeed, attack it.

The consequences of pursuing such a policy should be remembered, espe-

cially on the 40th anniversary of the military coup in Chile that overthrew the elected government of President Salvador Allende.

Tsipras and co set out to ensure that the left should lose the right to retain their own organisations, both within the party and publicly. The left were stigmatised as trying to hang on to "privileges" at the expense of "ordinary members". In fact, the right to organise as distinct political tendencies or factions is not a privilege and it does not limit the rights of the rank and file at all. What it does limit is the power of MPs and party officials who otherwise can act as the sole legitimate faction.

Tsipras was also determined to strengthen his own position by being elected party chairman directly by the congress. This would free him from control by the central committee. In this he was successful, though without the near unanimity he had anticipated. On the question of the dissolution of the inner party groups, however, the left won a partial victory; they have only been "requested" to dissolve and in a few months this "process will be evaluated".

## Questions left unanswered

Nevertheless, the tactics of the left were weak. Concentrating too exclusively on the issue of the dissolution of their organisations meant that key questions of the class struggle in Greece were scarcely mentioned. These included the need to overcome the limitation of collective action to one-day general strikes, which will never bring down the government. This vital objective can be achieved only by an all-out indefinite general strike.

That inevitably raises other issues: the fighting unity of all the workers' parties, trade unions and workers' organisations; councils of action; and self-defence against fascist attacks and police provocations.

Then there is the question that a "left government", even if it were installed as the result of a new election, would face massive obstruction, sabotage and threats to overthrow it. How would it defend itself and carry through its programme?

More generally, this raises the necessity for a workers' government, not necessarily based on winning a parliamentary majority, but in the context of an unlimited general strike. Such a government would have to base itself on the mobilised working class and all its democratic fighting organisations, strike committees, popular assemblies, etc.

Such a government could, indeed would be obliged to carry out a transition to the direct power of the working class. For only such a state power would have the strength to rescue Greece from social devastation and inspire the workers of the rest of Europe to follow the Greek example.



# The purpose of the Class Struggle Platform

In the process of forming a new party, one of the key stages is establishing its political basis. Dave Stockton comments on the debate in Left Unity over contending platforms and explains the advantages of a class struggle approach

OVER THE summer a discussion has developed in Left Unity on what the fundamental character of the new party we seek to build should be. These centre on three platforms – the Left Party Platform (LPP), the Socialist Party Platform (SP) and the Class Struggle Platform (CSP) – which will be put as resolutions to the 30 November founding conference.

Members of Workers Power in Left Unity submitted the third of these not in order to form some sort of a tendency or faction – legitimate as that might be at a future stage. The platforms are justified if they stimulate a discussion on what sort of politics Left Unity should issue from its founding conference.

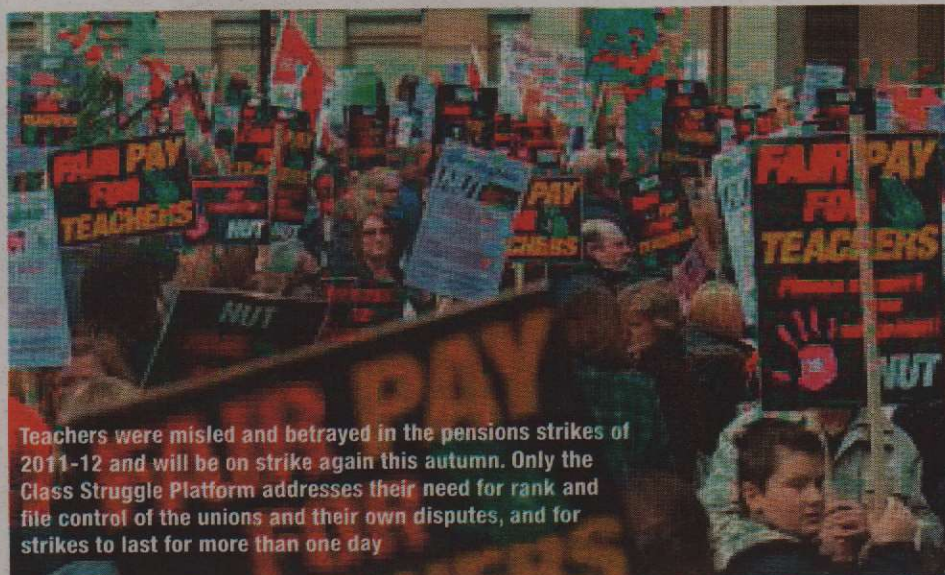
We see our platform as a proposal, very much open for amendment or compositing with other drafts, and not as any sort of ultimatum. We hope that it may be possible to agree on a whole series of important guiding principles for our day-to-day political work in the struggle to defend the NHS and all the other post-1945 social gains that are under attack.

Central to this is the need to confront the failing strategies being pursued by Labour and major trade union leaders.

If we do this, we believe Left Unity can draw in many more members and make a real impact by taking these policies into the broader labour and anti-austerity movement. In the process, this activity will generate a comradeship spirit, which in turn will form a solid basis for continuing the debate on exactly what sort of party Left Unity should become, what our ultimate goals are and what methods we must adopt to realise them.

## Broad party model

The LPP and SP offer contrasting models for building a new Left Party. In its motivation, the LPP refers positively to Syriza in Greece (see opposite) and the Front de Gauche in France, and envisages Left Unity becoming what it calls a “broad party”, that is, a left reformist party. In the LPP, socialism is regarded as one of



Teachers were misled and betrayed in the pensions strikes of 2011-12 and will be on strike again this autumn. Only the Class Struggle Platform addresses their need for rank and file control of the unions and their own disputes, and for strikes to last for more than one day

a spectrum of progressive goals, not an overarching or all-encompassing one.

It talks of “an alternative set of values of equality and justice: socialist, feminist, environmentalist and against all forms of discrimination. Its politics and policies will stand against capitalism, imperialism, war, racism and fascism.”

The problem with taking the above “broad parties” as some sort of model is that they all have at their core former Stalinist parties that inherited a substantial electoral base and parliamentary representation. Many, such as Die Linke in Germany, also benefitted from electoral systems that allow representation for minority parties.

Trotskyists describe these parties as “left reformist” because they envisage ending private ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange by winning a majority in parliamentary elections, even if this needs to be supplemented by mass mobilisations, direct action or even general strikes.

The origins of this combination of “Marxist” theory with reformist practice go back to the pre-1914 Second International and the post-1918 Labour Party in Britain. It was reborn after the Second World War with the Communist Party’s *British Road to Socialism* in its various versions. To this, the LPP adds something of a rainbow coalition of ‘isms’: feminism, environmentalism, antiracism, anti-impe-

rialism, anti-capitalism, etc. – not dissimilar to Respect, of which the LPP’s authors, Kate Hudson and Andrew Burgin, were members.

We strongly agree that all these areas of struggle need to be an integral part of what Left Unity fights for, but we think they should be integrated into a full socialist programme. In addition, we do not think that these struggles should be left to parallel, but separate movements, which accompany the class struggle at a respectful distance.

On the contrary, the campaigns should be closely intertwined with the class struggle today and their aims should enrich the definition of socialism.

## Reform or revolution?

The SP envisages a more traditionally socialist, working class, “Clause IV, Old Labour”, even Marxist party, albeit one that still does not explicitly identify itself as revolutionary:

“The [Left Unity] Party is a socialist party. Its aim is to bring about the end of capitalism and its replacement by socialism.

“The [Left Unity] Party aims to win support from the working class and all those who want to bring about the socialist transformation of society, which can only be accomplished by the working class itself acting democratically as the majority in society.

“The [Left Unity] Party aims to win political power, to end capitalism, not to manage

it. It will not participate in governmental coalitions with capitalist parties at national or local level.”

We agree with every one of these propositions as far as they go and could see them embodied in our final programme, defining its goal. Nonetheless, they leave major questions unanswered.

For example, although the platform assures us that socialism means an end to private ownership of the means of production and the introduction of democratic planning, it does not say how the capitalist class is to be deprived of this ownership.

Equally, we are assured that “a fundamental breach” with capitalism is necessary but the obvious question, “Do you mean a revolution?” is left unanswered. Instead, the platform repeatedly talks about democracy in a general and abstract, that is, in a classless, way. This ducks the question of whether the party is to advocate workers’ democracy, let alone whether a dictatorship of the proletariat, as Marx defined it, is necessary to break the resistance of the exploiters.

In short, despite its constant reaffirmation of socialism, it leaves open the question of reform and revolution. This is justified in the initial period when the party is only just opening a discussion on its programme and the crucial task is to draw into LU large numbers who used to support Labour or have never been in a socialist group.

We need young people who have become politically active in direct action campaigns like Occupy or UK Uncut. We need militant rank and file trade unionists like the Sparks. It is with all these people that we need to discuss our programme and its goals.

For this reason, we believe our founding conference in November will not yet be able to define itself as a revolutionary Marxist Party. However, we do not believe it should define itself, overtly or covertly, as a reformist party either. That is not to say that the question, reform or revolution, is unimportant, or can remain unanswered indefinitely.

Far from it. We agree with Rosa Luxemburg:

“People who pronounce themselves in favour of the method of legislative reform in place of, and in contradistinction to, the conquest of political power and social revolution, do not really choose a more tranquil, calmer and slower road to the same goal, but a different goal.” (*Reform or Revolution*, Chapter 8)

We do not believe that a left reformist party is some sort of necessary stage in the development of a new working class party. Nor is such a party sufficient for immediate tasks such as “defending the NHS” until such time as a revolutionary crisis demands “something better”, that is, a revolutionary (Leninist) party. We believe the latter is a party for all seasons, not just for the stormy times of the revolution.

There are also practical obstacles to the scenario of building a broad, plural, reformist party. The left trade union leaders, the Labour Representation Committee (LCR), left MPs like John McDonnell and the Communist Party of Britain-Morning Star (exactly the UK versions of the forces at the core of the European “broad” parties) are all vehemently opposed to Left Unity or any sort of breach with Labour – yet.

The Socialist Workers Party and the Socialist Party, the equivalents of those forces in France and Greece who built anticapitalist or new parties, have not even been sought as

participants in the project. All this makes the perspective an impracticable utopia as well as not being desirable in itself.

## Why class struggle?

What we need to build is a party of grassroots activists that can address, and help the working class solve the strategic confusion that the British Labour Movement is in at the moment. This means a party that dares to say what is necessary, whatever the present leaders of the resistance try to limit us to. It means a party that sets out to build new fighting organisations – or transform existing ones – that are not under the domination either of a sect or of a handful of union general secretaries.

Over the year ahead, huge challenges face the working class – most centrally the destruction of the welfare state. We believe that at the November conference we can agree a limited action programme of policies and demands which address these challenges and which present an immediate alternative to the failed strategy of the trade union and labour leaders.

Neither the LPP, which seeks to build a party that encompasses, rather than challenges the current misleaders of the movement, nor the SP, which stops at the level of abstract principle and says nothing about the immediate struggle, provide a guide for action today.

This is why we decided to put forward the Class Struggle Platform, which campaigns for:

- Mass strike action to bring down the Coalition
- A rank and file movement in the unions
- Democratic mass people’s assemblies in every town and city
- Action to smash the EDL and defend Muslims from pogroms and fascist violence
- International solidarity against austerity, unemployment, racism and war
- Drawing in tens of thousands into a new mass party.

The full version of the Class Struggle Platform can be read at <http://leftunity.org/the-class-struggle-platform/>



# Bolshie Women

## Do working class men benefit from women's oppression?

**PUT SIMPLY** – YES. Working class men derive a material benefit from the social oppression of women. They benefit from the free labour that women do in the home, such as cooking, cleaning, washing, shopping and caring for children and sick relatives. In the UK, working women do on average 17 hours more domestic work per week, excluding shopping and childcare, than men. Almost one in five men admit to doing nothing at all around the home, despite the fact their partner also works.

In the developing world, the gap is even greater. In Turkey and Mexico, women spend between 4.3 and five hours more per day than men on domestic work – adding up to a maximum of 35 hours per week.

As Frederick Engels described it in *The Origins of the Family Private Property and the State*: “The modern individual family is founded on the open or concealed domestic slavery of the wife, and modern society is a mass composed of these individual families as its molecules. Within the family (the husband) is the bourgeois and the wife represents the proletariat.”

As a result of what Marxists have called “domestic slavery”, i.e. unpaid labour, where child-bearing and care interrupts a working life, working class men receive on average higher overall pay and more secure employment. This is true despite equal pay legislation. Women workers are concentrated in low pay, insecure, non-unionised and part-time employment. In OECD countries, men earn on average 16 per cent more than women in similar full-time jobs. In the UK, significantly more women in employment work part-time (43 per cent) compared to men (13 per cent).

Men also benefit from higher social esteem and greater sexual freedom. The famous double standard can still be seen in the media and in everyday life. And in many parts of the world it is not just a matter of vile sexist words for “unfaithful” women but of physical brutality and often murder.

In many parts of the world – most starkly in developing countries – women are second-class citizens within society, with harsh restrictions placed on their movements, clothes and sexual expression. In many countries, women are not seen as equal to men under law. Even in countries like Britain,

the failure of police, the authorities and even left-wing organisations to take rape seriously or to believe complaints highlights this fact.

## Do working class men collude with the ruling class to oppress women?

Yes – if they do nothing to fight sexism. The benefit they gain provides a material basis for male sexism within the working class just as in other classes. The working class is no more spontaneously immune from sexism than from racism. Which is why for years sections of working class men fought against women joining their unions, refused to support a working class women's fight for equal pay, or even just idly watched TV while their partners washed up.

Fighting spontaneously generated bourgeois ideology (embedded in sexist customs and habits) on all these questions is necessarily a conscious task of socialist and militant trade unionists.

The bourgeoisie uses this spontaneous sexism to divide the working class, in the same way it tries to divide the class on the basis of racism and homophobia. Which is why it is so important that the workers' movement and socialists identify the roots of oppression; it is not just an idea without any material basis, or it wouldn't retain its hold in society.

This enables us to see that without uprooting these conditions – the nuclear family with women burdened with the bulk of domestic labour – and without fully socialising this work, the struggle against sexism will be a “labour of Sisyphus” repeatedly done only to be repeatedly undone by capitalist society. In short, we have to rip up the roots of women's oppression as an integral, vital and conscious part of abolishing capitalism.

Refusing to acknowledge that these benefits to men really exist, as the Socialist Workers Party does, not only rejects the daily experience of women across the world, it also prevents the development of the strategy, tactics and organisational means to overcome women's oppression: to create class unity on a higher, revolutionary level.

In a recent *Socialist Worker* article, ‘Are we all divided by privilege?’, Esme Choonara rightly rejects the bourgeois academic idea of ‘privilege theory’, which argues that all men are complicit in sexism, or

are sexist by definition; but at the same time she also categorically claims that “working class men don't benefit when women are forced to carry a heavier caring responsibility due to cuts in the welfare state.” Well, they do in the sense they aren't the ones shouldering a heavier burden.

This is the historic position of the SWP, dating back to Tony Cliff and relating to their tailing of the economic (trade union) struggles of the working class in the belief that socialist consciousness arises spontaneously from them. They fear that if they recognised the material basis for men's sexism this would somehow “justify” or even reinforce these divisions. But tailism always leads to following spontaneous consciousness of workers, rather than giving a leading to political, i.e. class, consciousness.

## Does recognising sexism's roots mean that working class men and women can't unite?

Not at all. What it means is that to achieve this requires a struggle. Hard political arguments have to be had to show that actively combating sexism is in the best interest of the class as a whole. For working class men also suffer from the oppression of women, from the divisions and weakness it engenders in their struggles and organisations, as the bosses try to pit sections of workers against each other to push wages down. Essentially, the oppression of women also holds the male worker down.

Working class organisations, trade unions and reformist parties – but also, as we have seen, far left ones – do not automatically or spontaneously oppose women's oppression just as they do not spontaneously become socialist. It requires a conscious struggle by a revolutionary party with the right policies and programme to fight sexism, racism, and reformism.

These political arguments do crop up spontaneously during heightened class struggle – a woman worker out on the picket line fighting for her livelihood is much less likely to go home quietly to face the dishes. During the Great Miners' Strike, women went from organising communal kitchens and support groups to fighting with the police on the picket lines and being powerful public speakers, rallying support for the mining community at mass meetings across the country.

# Royal Mail privatisation sparks CWU strike ballot

Postal workers should vote yes to fight not just cuts but privatisation too, argues a CWU postal rep



**IN LATE AUGUST** rumours from government sources surfaced in the press that the Coalition could announce the float of Royal Mail on the stock market in September, aiming to start selling shares to investors in October. In response, officials in the postal union (CWU) have lit the touch paper to a strike ballot, promising to release a timetable on 2 September – and not a moment too soon.

The Tory-led government is getting nervous about the sell-off and wants to ram it through quickly before resistance can take off. Surveys show that the great majority (73 per cent) are opposed to the sell-off. The CWU's campaign “Save our Royal Mail” has begun to gain momentum with petitioning and protests, the latest in Lib Dem Business Secretary Vince Cable's Twickenham constituency. High street stalls are mushrooming and tens of thousands have signed petitions.

## CWU ballot: Vote Yes!

Even more worrying for the Tories is the threat of a strike. Postal workers' anger at Royal Mail bosses' attacks on pay, pensions and workload hikes – all aimed at increasing profits to help privatisation – have seen the biggest rash of local strikes (including a few wildcats) since 2009. From militant individual offices like Bridgewater, on strike for eight days and counting, to bigger actions like the Plymouth-wide strike set to start on 9 September, the determination to fight at the union's grassroots has forced the move to a strike ballot.

The main tactic of the Tories and Royal Mail bosses such as CEO Moya Green is summed up in the screaming headline of the most recent issue of the staff magazine *Courier*:

“YOUR FREE SHARES”. The promise that 10 per cent of shares will be given free to staff (worth £2000 each), plus offers of a pay rise (below inflation and not legally binding after privatisation anyway), are the carrots being dangled in front of us.

The stick is the threat that if workers strike and scupper a stock market sell-off, privatisation will still happen but with no free share giveaway. The great majority of workers see through this and the strings attached – a raid on our pension fund and signing up to a no strike deal. A national meeting of all unit reps on 12 September will likely kick-start the balloting period.

## Rank and file control

The ballot should see a yes vote, but there is no room for complacency. Activists will need to campaign all-out for a big turnout and yes vote – and insist that the union's leaders do the same. The many delays on the ballot, and periods of silence and inaction from the top, have led to some members questioning whether to just take the money and run – there is widespread mistrust of the leadership after the last strikes in 2007 and 2010 were run down and ended in rotten deals.

CWU General Secretary Billy Hayes and Deputy Dave Ward should be actively fighting for a yes vote from the front to prove to members they are serious. Instead they have been conspicuous by their absence, sitting in Wimbledon HQ at the beck and call of Royal Mail, waiting for negotiations. The fighting wing of the union, like Bridgewater, needs to seize the initiative and get organised. A national rank and file meeting, independent

of union officials, could hammer out a strategy to win, and set up a network to campaign for grassroots control of any action.

One thing to debate is the leadership's current strategy. By ruling out industrial action against privatisation itself, the campaign against it has become limited to petitions, postcards and protests – but the Tories have shown no sign of backing down. And these tactics won't stop the creeping privatisation “from below”, where TNT is setting up a rival delivery network.

CWU leaders' claims that nervous Tories are looking for ways to “kick privatisation into the long grass” are just wishful thinking, as is the hope that a Labour government will reverse privatisation. Only now, after seeing which way the wind is blowing, has Labour come out against the “dangerous” privatisation – by setting up its own campaign instead of joining the union's. Without relying on Labour, we should demand they back our campaign and strike, and reverse privatisation if elected – such a pledge would help damage privatisation's prospects.

Meanwhile the ballot has become focused on securing a 10-year deal on pay, pensions and jobs in the event of a sell-off. This will never happen except in the event of an all-out fight that ultimately threatened the stability of the Coalition, bringing out other sections of workers. That should absolutely be our aim – but make no mistake, it is not the aim of Hayes and Ward. If we win this fight, we will be able to fight privatisation full stop – not just for better terms and conditions under it.

<http://saveourroyalmail.org/>

# The Dublin lockout of 1913

In 1913 Dublin workers waged a heroic battle against their employers, the church and the police. Despite being defeated, argues **Bernie McAdam**, the lockout lives on as the most inspirational act of working class resistance in Irish history

DUBLIN AT the turn of the 20th century was probably the most impoverished city in Europe bar Naples. Chronic unemployment, squalor and poor sanitation gave Dublin one of the highest infant death rates in Europe. The 1911 Census showed that 26,000 families, a third of the population, lived in tenements, with 20,000 crammed into single rooms.

Yet Dublin was the capital city of a country forming part of the UK, which led the world in industrial development. Dublin's plight represented the untrammelled rule of rapacious capitalists and British imperialism.

The city played an inferior role to Belfast and North-East Ireland's manufacturing prowess, where Protestant privilege was deliberately nurtured as a compliant base for Britain's rule in Ireland. So Dublin missed out and struggled to sustain employment within its commercial and transport services.

## Larkinism

Out of the cauldron of rising nationalist and class anger in Ireland, a young workers' movement was about to flex its muscles. It was soon to have a leader in Jim Larkin, ably assisted by James Connolly. "Larkinism" became a catchphrase for militancy. A socialist and militant trade unionist, Larkin had organised strikes in Belfast in 1907, uniting Catholic and Protestant workers. He was now to cut his teeth in Dublin.

As an organiser for the National Union of Dock Labourers (NUDL) Larkin's tactics of escalating strikes soon brought him into conflict with the conservative NUDL secretary James Sexton. Despite three successful strikes in Dublin in 1908, Larkin continued to meet union executive hostility, and defiance eventually led to his suspension.

Larkin immediately set about organising the breakaway Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU). The first aim was to recruit from all the major ports in Ireland, a mission accomplished except for Belfast. By the end of 1911 the ITGWU had recruited thousands of unskilled workers, increasing its membership to 18,000.

Throughout 1911 a strike wave had rolled across Ireland, as in Britain. Again in 1913 the year opened with over 30 strikes in Dublin alone. The ITGWU could now boast a membership of 30,000. Larkinism had succeeded in unionising nearly all before it with the exception of the Guinness brewery and Dublin United Tramway Company (DUTC).

## The lock out begins

William Murphy was Ireland's leading capitalist, owner of the Irish Independent newspaper and the DUTC. He was also involved in the Home Rule movement. Most employers were cautious, fearful even of his determination to root out Larkinism. Many had already tasted the ITGWU's tactics ranging from picketing and refusing to touch "tainted goods" to sympathy strikes.

Murphy, with the British Liberal government's support, was not prepared to



Irish Citizen Army, ITGWU HQ, Liberty Hall

accept ITGWU membership in his companies. Victory required the state's protection of scab labour, which in turn provided the necessary confidence for other employers to fall in behind Murphy.

On the 19 August 1913 Murphy locked out union members from the DUTC. Larkin immediately brought out the rest of the tram workers. The state quickly showed its hand by arresting Larkin and the entire ITGWU leadership for seditious libel and conspiracy. He was released but defiantly broke his bail conditions to attend a demonstration.

The police were intent on driving all shows of union protest off the streets and major street fighting between pickets and police broke out, resulting in two pickets being murdered by police and over 200 badly injured. Another two were to die later. Larkin was rearrested. By the end of September 400 other bosses had swung behind Murphy; around 25,000 workers were locked out.

## Irish Citizen Army

By November the ITGWU – with Larkin arrested now under the leadership of James Connolly – organised the Irish Citizen Army (ICA). This was launched on Larkin's release, which had been secured by a massively popular campaign against the backdrop of police brutality and the bosses' refusal to negotiate. This union militia was to play a major part in the Easter Rising of 1916 against British rule. For now its role was defending workers from the armed police and scabs.

The lockout came at a time when Ireland was promised Home Rule, a limited form of autonomy within the Empire. The formation and arming of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) was designed to stop this. In response the nationalist Irish Volunteers were formed with the support of the Irish Home Rule Party and the secretive Irish Republican Brotherhood. The former detested Larkinism, while the latter refused to take sides. The ITGWU and ICA were not even invited to the launch of the Irish Volunteers.

All the forces of middle class Catholic Ireland, with their limited Home Rule agenda, supported Murphy. The Catholic Church whipped up a hysterical campaign against workers' families' sending their children over to trade unionist supporters in Britain for fear of "abandoning their faith".

Arthur Griffith's Sinn Fein attacked

Larkin as an imported English evil. The nationalist and republican groups saw only the need for an all-class movement to secure Home Rule or independence. James Connolly saw through this when he declared, "Only the Irish working class remain as the incorruptible inheritors of the fight for freedom in Ireland."

## TUC betrayal

The lockout continued until mid-January 1914. Despite sympathetic strikes by rank and file rail workers in Britain, plus Larkin's popular 'Fiery Cross Crusade' speaking tour, the TUC refused to deliver any solidarity action apart from financial aid.

This pressure from below undoubtedly lay behind the unprecedented call by the TUC for an emergency conference to discuss the lockout. Unfortunately the TUC leaders made sure this was not a rank and file delegate conference but one stuffed with full-time officials and one which delivered no action but plenty of criticism of Larkin's conduct.

The lack of official solidarity action was crucial in undermining the Dublin workers. Their defeat was assured after this TUC betrayal, backed by a spineless Labour Party. As defeat loomed, the ITGWU ordered a return to work, with many now blacklisted or at best getting their jobs back on humiliating terms.

## The limits of syndicalism

Larkin and Connolly were both shaped by the syndicalist movement that swept across France, USA, Britain and Ireland before the World War I. Syndicalism in its various guises stressed the role of economic action in abolishing capitalism. "One Big Union" was the mechanism that would usher in socialism. Militant syndicalism at its most positive gave us the sympathy strike, the picket line and occupation right up to the general strike and workers' defence guards.

There was a negative side though. In Britain, widespread sympathy with Dublin was not given a political direction by the many militants challenging the union bureaucrats. A rank and file movement that could deliver unofficial action failed to materialise.

British syndicalism cut itself off from the struggles of all the oppressed at a time when women's rights and Irish independence were key political battles. When imperialist war was declared syn-

dicalism was unable to mount any serious resistance.

In Ireland Larkin and Connolly were the official leadership of the workers. Their militancy was unrivalled and their republicanism later ensured no support for imperialist war. The ITGWU paper, the Irish Worker, was a crucial weapon in exposing the bosses and building union as a prelude to the socialist commonwealth. Larkin and Connolly were not opposed to parties and had set up the Labour Party, but building the party played second fiddle to the building the union.

Their idea of the party was as an electoral back up to the ITGWU, not a party for political action. The union would guide the party, which through elections would help neutralise the state. Unknown to Connolly at the time, Lenin and the Bolsheviks were building a different kind of party that was preparing the working class for power by smashing the state.

Relying on the union was in effect relying on the spontaneous development of the working class movement rather than, as Lenin had warned, recognising the need to bring trade unionism under revolutionary leadership. This required a professional cadre party fighting for a revolutionary action programme around the burning political questions of the day.

## Permanent revolution

In Ireland the absence of a Leninist party was particularly felt after the execution of Connolly by the British in 1916. Connolly had bequeathed a magnificent revolutionary heroism but no revolutionary party. After the Rising, the Labour Party degenerated even further and the cause of labour had to wait for a united Ireland, which of course never came.

Even in the pre-war period Connolly and Larkin accommodated to the sense of "inevitability" regarding Home Rule, conceding the right of the nationalist bosses and middle class to lead the struggle against British imperialism. This illusion – and Larkin and Connolly's failure to link the national and class questions through a programme for permanent revolution – impeded their Labour Party from leading a revolutionary struggle for national independence both before and during the lockout.

Victory for Dublin may have seemed inconceivable without TUC support but a mobilisation of workers and small farmers around the questions of workers' rights, national independence and the land could have turned the tide. A revolutionary party could have taken the initiative in turning spontaneous anger of the masses into a conscious struggle for power.

The most positive lesson of 1913 is the magnificent solidarity and militancy shown by Dublin workers. What would we all give today for a Larkin or a Connolly that could inspire workers to stop the unrelenting austerity attacks rather than the present crop of do-nothing bureaucrats? Their vision of a workers' republic remains unfulfilled but their fighting spirit is still a beacon for all workers.

## Syria: stop the war – arm the revolution!

By Dave Stockton

THE DEFEAT of the Cameron-Clegg coalition in the House of Commons on Thursday 29 August by 285 votes to 272 was a historic occasion: the first time a British government was defeated on the issue of making war in over three centuries. It was also the first time the Parliamentary Labour Party has refused support a foreign military intervention by British imperialism since the Suez fiasco in 1956.

The humiliating defeat for Cameron was also suffered at the hands of 29 of his own backbench MPs.

Labour's amendment, though hardly a principled or complete rejection of UK involvement in a US missile attack on Syria, laid down conditions that delayed, though did not actually block such action in the future. It stated: "This House... will only support military action involving UK forces if and when the following conditions have been met." These were:

- That UN weapons inspectors should report upon the conclusion of their mission
- That "compelling evidence that the Syrian regime was responsible for the use of these weapons" should be provided
- That the UN Security Council should have "considered and voted on this matter"
- That a "clear basis in international law for taking military action on humanitarian grounds" be established
- Finally that the prime minister "report to the House on the achievement of these conditions" for a vote.

The defeated government motion had already been watered down in the light of Labour's declared intention to amend it to require a further Commons' vote, and to vote against it if this was defeated. Cameron's motion still stated



that it "may, if necessary, require military action" but promised a recall of parliament before action could be taken.

### Humiliation

When even this was defeated, David Cameron's surrender was total and humiliating. After all, of all the Western leaders he had been agitating for intervention the longest, and done so in the most belligerent terms, pressuring the plainly hesitant Obama to take action because his "red line" of chemical weapons had been flagrantly crossed. Now, deservedly humbled, he stated: "It is clear to me that the British Parliament, reflecting the views of the British people, does not want to see British military action. I get that and the Government will act accordingly."

The other Tory leaders were furious. Michael Gove (reportedly with prime ministerial ambitions himself) threw a temper tantrum with the Tory backbench rebels, shouting, "you're a disgrace, you're a disgrace," and had to be "calmed". Cameron's spin doctors –

the equivalents of Blair's master of the dark arts, Alistair Campbell – released a foul-mouthed unofficial briefing from Downing Street, calling Ed Miliband him a "f\*\*\*ing c\*\*\* and a copper-bottomed s\*\*\*", suggesting that he had reneged on a gentleman's agreement to support them.

Labour's response, met with a sheepish Downing Street confirmation, indicate that it was more a question of Miliband being non-committal and Cameron imagining that Labour would ultimately support a call to arms as so many Labour leaders have done in the past.

Nevertheless it does seem that Miliband's tough stance only came after being warned by the Labour Whips' Office, that there would be a major rebellion from the party's MPs, including resignations from the shadow Cabinet, if he gave Cameron any sort of support for military action.

A further domino – this time the big one – fell when two days later President Barack Obama stepped into the White House Rose Garden to

announce that he would refer the matter of missile strikes against the Assad regime to both Houses of Congress before any action was taken.

So who can claim the credit for this dramatic turn of events?

Stop the War Chair Jeremy Corbyn MP has said the vote was "the results of the last 10 years of lobbying" by the anti-war coalition. Certainly the vote in the Commons was the coming home to roost of the actions of New Labour's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and to some extent Cameron's own escapades in Libya. Indeed the debate in the Commons was something of a collective act of contrition and atonement for the Iraq War. Blair was the whipping boy for the collective guilt of an entire generation of politicians.

But it cannot be claimed that the victory over British imperialist intervention in Syria – if it endures – was a product of a powerful and massive antiwar movement. Stop the War is but a shadow of its former self and the US antiwar movement is even

more enfeebled.

Rather it is a product of the experience millions felt over the disastrous wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the blatant lies they were told by Bush and Blair. Many MPs, Tories as well as Labour and Lib Dems, testified to this mass disbelief.

Of course the great international movement of millions in February and March 2003 alerted public consciousness to this. But it did not stop the war – not least because its leadership would not pass from protests to strikes and mass civil disobedience to obstruct the war effort and bring down the warmongering government.

### Solidarity

"Hand off Syria" – i.e. stopping a US attack in the coming months is not the only struggle we have to wage, not the only duty that this situation imposes. We do indeed have a duty as internationalists to the oppressed and brutalised population in Syria, the victims of a regime that has now put Saddam Hussein's in

the shade.

Even if our rulers' crocodile tears for the victims of Assad are to be rejected as a pretext for their actions, the apologists for Assad and for his Russian and Chinese backers and defenders are no less repulsive. We have to stand by the Syrian revolutionaries and do all we can to bring them aid in their struggle

The western imperialists claimed for months that they were friends of the Syrian uprising and its democratic aspirations, but did little or nothing to aid them. Their Saudi and Gulf state allies did – but they armed exclusively the Islamist forces they thought would best serve their interest. The Turkish government was a little more liberal in who it armed.

But none of these powers gave the rebel fighters, especially those in the main urban centres of the original insurrection the weapons they need to bring down planes and helicopter gunships or to stop tanks.

We should argue that the British, French and Americans, instead of launching Tomahawks, quite simply hand over weapons to the rebel armed forces, anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles. We should also argue that the Labour movement finds the means to collect and provide funds for weapons, not just for medical aid for those elements in the revolution closest to the working class and small farmers.

If the Syrian revolution fails, if as well the present military regime in Egypt establishes a new dictatorship, then the forces of counter-revolution in the region and the wider world will take a big step forward. We must strain every sinew to prevent that from happening.

- No US missile attacks on Syria!
- Victory to the Syrian Revolution!