

# Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



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For a workers' government

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## What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production. Society is shaped by the capitalists' relentless drive to increase their wealth. Capitalism causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.



Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class has one weapon: solidarity.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty aims to build solidarity through struggle so that the working class can overthrow capitalism. We want socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for the labour movement to break with "social partnership" and assert working-class interests militantly against the bosses.

Our priority is to work in the workplaces and trade unions, supporting workers' struggles, producing workplace bulletins, helping organise rank-and-file groups.

We are also active among students and in many campaigns and alliances.

### We stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. Free abortion on request. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Working-class solidarity in international politics: equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.
- If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!

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# Syrian revolt is against tyranny

By Rhodri Evans

According to Syria expert Joshua Landis, "Syrians have abandoned the regime in spirit, even if they have yet to defect in body."

"Sunni Syrians continue to go to work and turn up in their offices in the morning, but they hate the Assad regime in their hearts. Assad's army is being taken over by shabiha and security forces manned by Alawites. The massacres leave no doubt about that".

Even in the capital, Damascus, where Assad's control is strongest, shopkeepers have staged a week-long strike to protest against the massacre, by the army and pro-Assad Alawite sectarian militias, of more than 100 people in the village of Houla on 25 March.

The long rebellion is escalating into a sporadic civil war.

Well over 10,000 have died, and aid agencies say that at least 1.5 million peo-

ple displaced people in Syria — besides those who have fled over the border to Turkey — need help.

Some people on the left refuse solidarity to the Syrian rebellion, citing two arguments. They say that the rebellion is a catspaw of the USA and allied powers which want to see Assad ousted, or at least that the most important thing is to campaign against big-power intervention, and that solidarity for the rebels could only confuse that primary message.

They also say that the rebels are sectarians, as guilty of atrocities as the regime or more so.

It is true that there are increasing reports of Sunni-sectarian militias in the rebellion. Some element of that is probably inevitable, given the lack of a widely-recognised leadership for the rebellion, and the Assad regime's long-time manipulation of religious minorities (Alawite Muslims, Christians) to bolster itself.

It cannot be excluded that the Sunni-sectarian el-

ements will eventually dominate. The *Financial Times* reports that "some ultraconservative Islamist Salafi sheikhs in Saudi Arabia suspected of running their own network of supplies to fighters".

But an overview of the whole history of the rebellion leaves no doubt that its original driving force was revulsion against Assad's tyranny, stimulated by the examples of Egypt and Tunisia, and aiming for measures of democracy and freedom. Solidarity from the left and the international labour movement to the rebellion, and to its democratic, secular, and working-class strands, is the best antidote to the danger of Islamist or Sunni-sectarian diversion.

According to most reports, the Free Syria Army, with its base in the border areas in Turkey where many Syrians have fled, is still largely secular in orientation. The rebels' main military supplier is... the Syrian army, with many Assad-regime officials happy to coin profits from

supplying arms to the rebels at high prices.

Although only a friend of the dictatorship could object to measures against the Assad family's international assets, on many accounts the current sanctions hurt the Syrian poor more than they hurt the regime, which still has no trouble getting arms.

Big powers rule out military intervention less firmly than they used to, but the dominant bourgeois opinion is that intervention would cause them more trouble than benefit. If there is intervention, its character will have to be agreed and coordinated with the Turkish government, which clearly wants the Assad regime to go, but keeps quiet about the plans it must have to influence the opposition and shape a future regime.

**To refuse to support military intervention is one thing: to identify the possibility US intervention as the main danger, while Assad is killing thousands, is to betray the Syrian people.**

## Writer boycott: who wins?

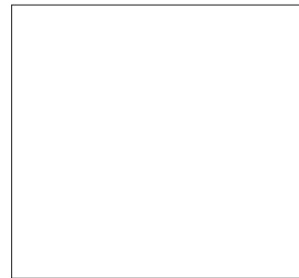
By Lucy Clement

The latest "success" of the boycott-Israel campaign has resulted not in pressure on the Israeli government, but in the silencing of women's voices from the Middle East.

The Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Texas Austin had been planning to publish a collection of women's writing as a tribute to a late faculty member. But, according to US website Inside Higher Ed, Huzama Habayeb, a Palestinian contributor based in Abu Dhabi, objected to the inclusion of two pieces by Israeli writers and convinced 13 of the original 29 writers involved to withdraw from the project.

The editors of the volume, not prepared to exclude the Israelis or to go ahead with a collection now unrepresentative of Middle East writing, took the decision to cancel publication.

Habayeb described the cancellation as a "victory in the struggle". But Kamran Scot Aghaie, co-ordinator of the publication, said it was wrong to assume that Israeli writers shared their government's opinion. Many US academics opposed the activities of their own government in the



Huzama Habayeb

Middle East. Aghaie, an Iranian-American, suggested that the equivalent would be to hold him accountable for the actions of the Iranian government in executing gay men.

The scrapping of this book puts no serious pressure on the Israeli government to end its oppression of Palestinians. The economic pressure is minuscule and falls in any case on the United States. And the people whose work will now not be circulated are — in twenty-seven out of twenty-nine cases — not even Israelis, but women from elsewhere in the Middle East!

**It is a peculiarly perverse consequence of boycott-Israel campaigning that its supporters should think it a "victory" to force the cancellation of a book bringing together women's writing across ethnic and national boundaries.**

● More details at: [bit.ly/mevoices](http://bit.ly/mevoices)

## Help the AWL raise £20,000

**As Marxists, we know that if you survive by selling your labour power to a boss, you're a worker. That's not fundamentally altered by the amount of money you sell your labour power for.**

Therefore, the squads of footballers currently in Ukraine and Poland for the 2012 European Championships are technically made up of workers and it is to them that we make this appeal. To Bro. Rooney, who earns £26,000 every day (the same as the median annual wage in the UK), to Bro. Ronaldo, whose prospective bosses at Manchester City propose to pay him £400,000 per week in order to lure him away from his current workplace in Madrid, and to Bro. Terry (£170,000 per week), we say — recognise your true class interests, comrades! Empty your pockets and support a working-class newspaper.

While we're waiting for them to get back to us, we turn to you — people who make less in a year than Wayne Rooney makes in a single day — for financial support. For workers' footballers on workers' wages, support *Solidarity!*

### You can help by:

- Taking out a monthly standing order. There is a form at [www.workersliberty.org/resources](http://www.workersliberty.org/resources) and below. Please post to us at the AWL address below.
  - Making a donation. You can send it to us at the address below (cheques payable to "AWL") or do it online at [www.workersliberty.org/donate](http://www.workersliberty.org/donate)
  - Organising a fundraising event
  - Taking copies of *Solidarity* to sell at your workplace, university/college or campaign group.
  - Get in touch to discuss joining the AWL.
- More information: 07796 690 874 / [awl@workersliberty.org](mailto:awl@workersliberty.org) / AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, 58 Riley Rd, SE1 3DG.

Total raised so far: £13,495

This week we have raised £289 — from fundraising, donations and one new standing order. Thanks to Aidan, North-east London AWL

# Spain's bailout won't cure euro-crisis

By Colin Foster

**The Spanish government announced on Saturday 9 June that it would seek a financial bailout from the European Union.**

Previously, for months, it had said that it had everything under control and there was no question of a bailout.

Eurozone finance ministers quickly said they'd lend up to 100 billion euros to the Spanish government to enable it to patch up dodgy banks.

Although Spain's budget-balance record was better than Germany's before 2007, and Spain's bank regulation was applauded in 2008 as exceptionally good, Spanish banks have eventually been brought

down by the collapse of real-estate prices in Spain.

Spain had a house-price boom before 2007 similar to the USA's, Britain's, and Ireland's, but its real-estate prices at first dropped much more slowly. Now they are plummeting. Big cuts in social spending are producing a downturn in Spanish employment and income, which in turn undercuts property prices.

The bailout will scarcely even alleviate this interlocking death-spiral.

Economist Megan Greene comments: "In the absence of economic growth, a bailout for Spain's banks will be followed by a bailout for the sovereign as well".

Spain has cajoled EU leaders into declaring that this bailout will come with

much easier conditions on the Spanish government than imposed on Greece, Ireland, and Portugal.

By demonstrating that the conditions are a matter of political choice, not of economic iron law, this result can only encourage activists in those other countries who are resisting the destructive "bailout" terms imposed on them.

The excuses are that Spanish government is already cutting ferociously, so they don't need to impose Greece-type conditions; that the bailout cash is coming from a special fund, either the European Financial Stability Facility set up in May 2010 or its successor, the European Solidarity Mechanism; and that it goes only to Spain's banks (via the Spanish gov-

ernment), not to the government to cover its own debt payments.

All these are thin, though they do show that the EU leaders have become anxious to convince global financiers that this bailout, unlike previous ones, will be generous and not destructive.

Yet Greene comments: "EFSF/ESM money for Spanish banks is unlikely to succeed in avoiding a bank run, however. Depositors in the EZ periphery are withdrawing their money from banks over concerns about their countries leaving the EZ and their savings being redenominated and devalued away.

**"A bailout for Spanish banks is very unlikely to allay these concerns".**

# Quebec: the movement spreads

**Ludwic Moquinbeaudry from the Quebec students' movement ASSE spoke to Solidarity**

**We are now focusing on the next big demonstrations. On the 22nd of every month we have had a big demonstration, and the next big demonstration will be June 22.**

We don't know if we will break the records of the past demonstrations.

We started the student strike [against tuition fee rises] on February 13 and for nine weeks the Government thought the movement would die by itself.

Seeing that that strategy was not working, they started negotiations, and

they tried to split the students. They expelled CLASSE from the negotiations, but the other student unions walked out in solidarity with us.

The Government declared they would increase subsidies to bursaries and loans. But we are fighting against the fee increase, not for more bursaries and loans, although we welcome them.

Then the night demonstrations started, every night at 8:30pm — this has been going on for the past 50 days. Some of these demonstrations have been huge.

Then the education minister, Beauchamp, stepped down on May 14 and he

was replaced by Michelle Courchesne. They passed Bill 78, which restricts our right to demonstrate and shuts campuses down until mid-August. The movement entered a new phase. It was no longer about the tuition fee hike, it became about our right to assemble and demonstrate, and freedom of speech.

We started the "Casseroles Movement" — every night people would bring out pots and pans and bang on them.

The government has not indicated that it wants to negotiate, and it is summer so a lot of students go home and get jobs to pay for their tuition... But with the Casseroles movement

the movement has gone out of the big cities and spread to smaller towns as well.

ASSE is a bottom-up union. Our members vote mandates in general assemblies, and these mandates are passed up to national Quebec congresses.

We are combative. We do not use lobbying tactics like the mainstream student unions, FECQ and FEUQ, founded at the beginning of the 1990s around the slogan "no more strikes".

**We have been surprised by the show of solidarity through the world towards the movement. It has been very good for the spirit.**

# Racist poison in Israel

**Anti-racist demonstration in Israel**

By Sacha Ismail

**"Garbage", "cancer", "poison". These are some of the words used by Israeli politicians to describe African migrants in the last month**

The country has seen racist riots, assaults and firebombings in working-class neighbourhoods of south Tel Aviv, encouraged and partly orchestrated by the "mainstream" right.

The real cancer in Israeli society is racism, running riot as Israel entrenches its domination over the Palestinians, Israeli society is further militarised, and Israeli politics shifts further and further to the right.

Politicians from the government party Likud were instrumental in starting the riots.

Meanwhile the Likud government has refused to condemn attacks on Africans and instead used them as an excuse to step up its anti-refugee agenda, including a 150 mile fence along the border with Egypt, a giant detention centre in the Negev desert and immediate attempts to deport all refugees from South Sudan,

Naturally, such measures will — in addition to directly producing a lot of death and suffering — boost racism and lead to further attacks on migrants who remain in the cities.

There are 60,000 African migrants in Israel, out of a population of almost eight million.

Yet anti-African racism

is even more widespread than anti-Arab racism, and seems to be rapidly becoming a new cutting edge for political reaction in Israel.

Likud MK Miri Regev described African migrants as "a cancer in the body" of Israel — and polls suggest just over half of Jewish Israelis agree with her. One third sympathise with the recent attacks.

Even among Arab Israelis, 23 percent sympathise with the attacks, though "only" 19 percent agree with the "cancer" description.

Left-learning and secular Israelis are much less likely to hold anti-African views. But neither the Israeli Labor Party nor the Histadrut union federation have spoken out in defence of the migrants.

There are activists in Israel attempting to stand up for migrants' rights.

When Workers' Liberty members visited Tel Aviv in 2010, we spent time at the African Refugee Development Centre (ARDC), which is fighting hard on these issues, as are many in the Israeli peace movement.

But they are swimming against the tide. The ARDC, for instance, recently lost a lease for a new office due to racist objections to them.

**African migrants, human rights activists and the left in Israel need solidarity.**

● African Refugee Development Centre  
www.ardc-israel.org

● For coverage of African refugees in Israel see <http://972mag.com>

# France: Socialist Party makes gains, but the Front National too

By Ed Maltby

**After the French legislative elections (second round on June 17) it looks as though President François Hollande's centre-left Parti Socialiste (PS) will control the National Assembly.**

Turn-out has been low, and the far left did badly in the election. The two largest revolutionary groups, the New Anticapi-

talist Party and Lutte Ouvrière, got around 1% each.

The "Left Front", a left-reformist lash-up of the Left Party (a leftwing split from the PS led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon) and the French Communist Party, got 7%.

This indicates that the great hope of the CP — of being able to participate in a ruling coalition and having a minister in a PS-dominated cabinet — may come to nothing.

The other big success in

the first round belonged to the far right.

The Front National (FN) dominated the Presidential race by forcing both Sarkozy and Hollande to play for racist votes by making concessions to the FN's xenophobic campaigns on immigrant rights and scaremongering about halal meat.

In the legislative elections they gained 13%.

In the northern town of Hénin-Beaumont, Jean-Luc

Mélenchon challenged Marine Le Pen (leader of the FN) but did poorly (only 12%).

Le Pen gained 42% of the vote and will now face the PS candidate, Philippe Kemel, in the second round.

**The NPA said: "The results for the FN are the fruit of 30 years of anti-social rightwing politics from the right wing as well as from the institutional left."**

# Syriza: judgement call for the Greek left

**Dave Osler**

**Only four months ago, tens of thousands of marched on Syntagma Square to stress their rejection of externally-imposed austerity, and dozens of buildings burned to the ground as rioters battled it out with police on the streets of Athens. But the mood in the Greek capital which I am currently visiting is completely different to what it must have been on that night in February.**

The picture is instead characterised by a strange sense of apprehension. It is almost as if politics is somehow on hold until the country goes to the polls in a crucial election this coming Sunday 17 June. The choice the electorate makes will be laden with implications for an entire continent.

Greece is likely to emerge with either a rightist government pledged to uphold the Memorandum of Understanding on Specific Economic Policy Conditionality, to give the Brussels and IMF-inspired cuts package its proper title, or a leftist government pledged not to implement it. It is also entirely possible that the current deadlock will not be resolved either way.

Whatever happens next, people are clearly nervous. A taverna waiter who insists that he is both a graduate and a former television actor assures me that Greece will haul through provided that more professional people do what he has done, and take jobs they would not have considered in the past. But he admits that he is only in employment be-

cause his dad owns the restaurant.

The friendly shopkeeper that I buy groceries and wine from acknowledges that business is bad. But the economy will pick up again, because it always does.

On a picket line outside a five star hotel, I meet a woman who has been locked out for 16 days after she and her workmates refused to accept a 20% pay cut. She is a floating voter and has in the past backed both the centre left PASOK and centre right Nea Dimokratia. She is thinking about voting for a leftwing party in the general election next Sunday. But only thinking about it, mind.

Many Marxists have described Greece as being in a pre-revolutionary situation, and I have even used that formulation myself. What has surprised me over the last week is that this is not reflected in an immediate transformation of working class consciousness.

## ISOLATED

**Indeed, some local far leftists do not believe that the "pre-revolutionary situation" label is immediately justified.**

The full implications of what has happened since 2010 have yet to sink in, they argue. Even after 17 general strikes and counting, Greek Trotskyist organisations have no more support at the ballot box than their British counterparts, and any signs of independent working class self-organisation outside official structures are embryonic and isolated.

Anarchists are more upbeat and eloquently describe some recent protests as "one night revolutions". But even they realise that we are currently going through a lull in the class struggle. What nobody can seriously doubt is that there will be highlights again.

PASOK — Greece's governing party until last year, let us not forget — is effectively dead in the water. In a country awash with political posters, I have yet to see a single one

supporting PASOK's own hybrid of Hellenic nationalism and moderate social democracy.

Any ordinary Greek motivated to look left because of concern for his or her living standards, and not schooled in the niceties of socialist politics, faced a bewildering range of choices.

On my reckoning, there are at least five slates dominated by self-described Marxists, from tiny Trot and Maoist sects to the still Stalinist KKE communist party, the eurocommunist formation Dimokratiki Aristera, and the more radical Syriza. The latter is clearly the best-placed leftist party.

Syriza is something of an unknown quantity. Many revolutionary socialists here, including SEK, the local equivalent of the SWP in Britain, and OKDE Spartakos, Greek section of the Fourth International, highlight its reformist limitations, maintaining that the Greek ruling class could happily live with a Syriza-led government. Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras may talk the talk, but is unlikely to walk the walk, they believe.

The two groups, together with around eight others, are putting forward their own slate this weekend. It is likely to secure the backing of just a fraction of one percentage point of the electorate, leaving the point of the exercise rather open to question.

But for many revolutionary socialists outside of Greece, Syriza is held in rather higher regard. For the first time in decades, a party at least formally pledged to uphold basic working-class interests in defiance of the dictates of capital is potentially poised to form a European government.

**Not to offer critical support seems foolhardy. I would not presume to second-guess the local comrades; ultimately only they know the terrain well enough to make difficult judgement calls. But from my observations I fear that they may be getting this one badly wrong.**

# Wisconsin labour defeated, thanks to Democrats

**Barry Finger**

**Organised money defeated organised labour. That is the Democratic Party's take on its humbling defeat in a recall election (6 June) called against incumbent Wisconsin Republican governor Scott Walker. That and the ever familiar lament that workers no longer seem capable of voting in solidarity with embattled public sector workers and their unions.**

38% of households with union members voted for the incumbent, as did a majority of non-college graduates. Walker carried the 10 poorest counties in the state by a 13% margin. The Wisconsin results paralleled voter-approved public sector pension cuts in San Diego, an initiative of that city's Democratic mayor, and San Jose.

Mass labour protests in Wisconsin ended in March 2012, when Scott Walker signed Act 10 ("the Budget Repair Bill"), turning Wisconsin's public sector into an open shop. Then trade union leaders told their members to go back to work and shifted their focus to recalls and elections. Support groups such as United Wisconsin followed suit, thereby initiating a two-pronged strategy: to reclaim the Wisconsin Supreme Court in the hope that the bill might be declared unconstitutional, and to reclaim the state senate and remove the sitting governor.

In the campaign Republicans outspent the Democrats seven to one. Two-thirds of their money was raised from out of state business donors who sought to turn this election into a test case for public sector union busting.

But the Democrats' candidate, Tom Barrett, did not mount a robust case for union rights. As mayor of Milwaukee he was not above invoking Walker's Act 10 collective bargaining restrictions to increase pension and health care contributions from city workers.

Barrett was not the first choice of the labor bureaucracy. That was a candidate seen by the Democratic establishment as being too progressive for the state, despite her refusal to commit to a firm stance against budget cuts and concessionary contract negotiations with public workers.

The Democrats were reluctantly pushed from below into a confrontation, by a labour bureaucracy more comfortable with doorbell ringing and manning phone banks than with the unpredictable prospects of mass street mobilisation that could easily escape their control. Pollsters, consultants, advertising campaigns and Democratic functionaries came to eclipse labour's influence. The extent of the Obama commitment could be measured by a single tweet.

In the event the Republicans captured the critical Wiscon-

sin Supreme Court post in April 2011. In August, the GOP managed to retain four out of six senate recall seats. Even that senate majority is too little too late. There is no legislative session planned before January 2013, that is, after the November elections, when Democrats may lose the majority due to Republican gerrymandering.

In the US, incumbent governors campaign on the records of economic growth and job generation that their "policies" purportedly engender. But state governments have a very limited arsenal at their disposal. Their success crucially depends on their ability to woo business from other states by offers of more generous subsidies, tax rebates, and every other imaginable means of financial inducement.

Capital adroitly plays state against state in a competition for the most business friendly playing field. Republicans offer capital a union-free environment; while Democrats reassure business that their traditional "friends of labor" reputation can be harvested to deliver labour docility.

Most state budgets must, by law, be in balance. While socialists and progressives favour taxes on investment property over labour, the entire dynamic of state politics militates decisively against this. Working people are steamrolled by a budgetary process that picks their pockets at every turn.

It should have been obvious that the local electoral arena is extraordinarily toxic to labour solidarity. The system is rotten ripe with possibility for an alliance between business elites and private sector workers against the public sector

## LITTLE

**And the Democrats did nothing to rewrite the playbook. Locally Barrett said little or nothing about raising state revenues by taxing the wealthy or corporations. Nationally Obama, following in the footsteps of Bush, cemented the predicate for this top-down Republican alliance.**

He could have stimulated the economy and indirectly recapitalised the banks from the bottom up by bailing out state and local governments and by placing imperilled pension funds, public and private, on the Fed's balance sheets. He could have expanded aggregate demand by an immediate moratorium on all federal payroll taxes. He could have devised a program of wide-scale mortgage relief. He could have spurred investment in new energy, infrastructure and education initiatives. He could have revived New Deal public works style projects.

But Obama chose, instead, to continue the Bush bailout of bank shareholders and Wall Street investment firms. He chose in effect to oversee a series of state and local budgetary crises that will be financed in no small part by asset stripping the public sphere. The structures of the casino economy remain fundamentally unaltered, the economy one bubble away from a plunge down the abyss.

In this every-man-for-himself political context, why not go with the party that has an authentic claim to that mes-

sage? If the Democrats cannot make government work for "us", why not keep it as small as possible?

In February 2011, thousands of university teaching assistants and striking public school teachers in Madison sparked an occupation of the capital after Walker unveiled plans to strip public-sector workers of collective bargaining rights and eliminate billions of dollars from education, health care, poverty and children's programs.

The protest sparked the imagination of tens of thousands — not only in Wisconsin, but nationally, foreshadowing the Occupy movement — precisely because it was a mass democratic uprising against the entrenched forces of austerity.

Power was in the streets and the spirit of social resistance and fightback was palpable, electrifying and contagious. Talk of general strikes, sick-outs and rolling walkouts heated the atmosphere. This was the only arena where concessions could have been extracted.

The political arena is entirely stacked against labour and its allies. It is a democracy-proof bubble of elite consensus, swaddled by an ever-obliging corporate media. Only through the credible threat of crippling civil disobedience could the movement have emboldened private sector workers and other layers of society to act in their own interests and to align their struggles with those of public workers. It is primarily through struggle and confrontation that movements cultivate an awareness of their own power and begin to break the spirit of servility that keeps its rank and file chained to a system that betrays and oppresses them.

The Democrats, as is their wont, swarmed to the front, offering to defuse the situation by negotiating givebacks in return for the maintenance of public sector collective bargaining rights. A grateful union bureaucracy seized this opening. The American trade union movement has reduced labour to the level of special pleaders, of lobbyists often indistinguishable in the public eye from any number of other special interest groups.

The more labour supports the Democrats, the more labour is treated by them with scorn and contempt. The less it supports them, the less it accommodates the status quo, the more it is respected and feared. Where labour's loyalty is taken for granted, the capitalist parties close ranks to the right. Where labour resists, Democratic politicians find their dedication to bipartisanship to be suddenly conflicted.

Labour's response will, unfortunately, be to double down on Obama, as if endlessly pressing the reset button will change the outcome. The Democrats, in turn, will double down on corporate fundraising, leaving union concerns and social justice behind.

**It is not organised money that defeated organised labor in Wisconsin. It was a long-festering, self-inflicted wound called the Democratic Party.**

# Campaign to save the NHS!

The Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) that will control the NHS budget under the Tories' new system have to serve just 75% of the population in their given geographical area. CCGs will attempt to use this flexibility to dump the most expensive, high risk patients.

A recent investigation by a local Primary Care Trust found that a GP practice formerly run by Dr Charles Alessi, the new chair of the National Association of Primary Care (the pro-Health and Social Care Act lobby group), de-registered 48 elderly patients because "their demand for GP time and other resources was high".

The investigation found that they were motivated purely by financial reasons. When the PCTs are disbanded next year, who will police the GPs who want to dump expensive patients?

The cuts and privatisation will take their toll on waiting times. To give a few examples:

- In November 2011, MP Margaret Hodge revealed that over 50% of stroke victims were denied scans within 24 hours of their stroke because of staff shortages and a lack of equipment.

- The Health Service Ombudsman recently accused the NHS of failing to meet "even the basic standards of care" for the over-65s.

- A King's Fund report says elderly patients are more likely to wait longer in A&E and less likely to get access to intensive care wards or receive surgery after traumatic injuries.

Those who can afford to will increasingly choose to pay privately. Now NHS hospitals can treat up to 49% of patients as private. The specialist cancer hospital, the Royal Marsden, currently has around one third of its beds occupied by private patients. The private medical insurance market sector report shows that this sector is growing at 7.8% a year.

As private patients skip the queue for treatment, the waiting times will increase for the less well off.

Some treatments are being denied outright on the NHS. In April 2011 the Federation of Surgical Specialisms Association raised concerns that elective surgery was being routinely denied due to cutbacks.

Such surgery includes types of hip, spinal, ENT [ear, nose and throat], dental, bariatric [obesity] and even some cancer surgery.

The surgery being denied is largely for painful and debilitating but non-life-threatening conditions.

These cutbacks coincide with the "fat and fags" policies that are being adopted by NHS Trusts where patients are denied access to fertility procedures, knee and hip operations, fat-loss surgery and breast reductions if they are overweight or smoke. "Lifestyle rationing" is supported by 54% of GPs.

This logic may well extend into addictions. This reactionary approach stresses individual responsibility for what are in reality social problem

Our society is built upon sado-masochistic principles where the most ruthless psychopathic personalities are rewarded with great wealth and power. It is hardly a surprise if the rest of us engage in our own low level sado-masochism by eating, smoking or drinking ourselves into an early grave.

A socialist society may have fewer fat people, fewer smokers and fewer drug addicts, but it will not end our innate sado-masochistic tendencies to indulge in unhealthy

## Bosses: 10% rise NHS: 7% cuts

Pay for the average top boss — chief executive of one of the top 100 companies on the London Stock Exchange — rose 10 per cent last year.

Meanwhile NHS budgets are being cut by 7% a year. Given an ageing population and more expensive medical technologies, that means a bigger-than-7% cut in provision.

With the Government's Health and Social Care Act, some of the NHS budget is being siphoned off into private health companies' profits and into extra bureaucracy to administer the new market mechanisms.

Top-100 bosses' pay has grown from 47 times their workers' average age in 1998 to 139 times today. There was a wobble in 2008 and 2009, but in 2010 and since top pay has roared ahead again, at the same time as cuts and pay freezes multiply.

**The resources exist to avoid the cuts. The labour movement should mobilise to pull back the loot from the ultra-rich and redirect it to social provision.**

pleasures. Health services should be the social safety net to provide help when things have got out of hand and people look for help.

### THE MARKET

**"It appears, therefore, that there is a certain quantitatively defined social need on the demand side, which requires for its fulfilment a definite quantity of an article on the market. In fact, however, the quantitative determination of this need is completely elastic and fluctuating." Karl Marx, Capital Vol.3**

Marx's stark warning describes the capitalist tendency, driven by the profit motive to commodify more and more areas of human life. Everything will be bought and sold at the market place. At the same time, as Marx explains, the market distorts real social need.

Every worker knows it — you spend what you earn. If workers win decent pay rises then they spend more on luxuries. When times are tight we shop more at the pound store and cut back. But our real needs are never known, we are buying and selling machines. If they opened the doors to the world's department stores and allowed us to shop for free, then we would get a sense of our real social need.

For the last 63 years the NHS has been such a "free department store" for healthcare services. Although the NHS has often suffered from underfunding, the healthcare needs of the population have been served with world-beating efficiency.

The privatisation and commodification of healthcare under the Health and Social Care Act, driven on by cuts in the healthcare budget, will increase inefficiency as private individuals line their pockets with a diminishing supply of NHS money. It will also distort the real demand for healthcare.

Patients will be under-treated — and some over-treated — depending on the play of market forces.

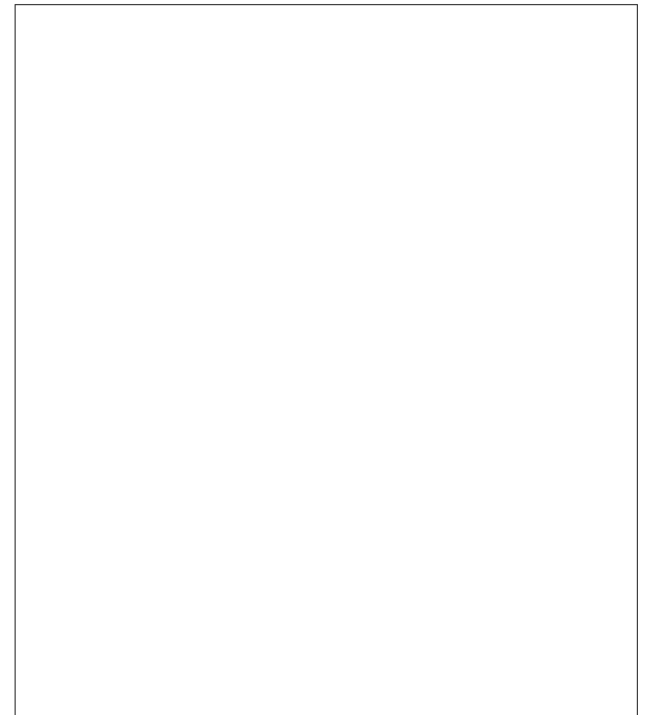
### OVER TREATMENT

**Bizarrely the market also distorts demand so that some patients are over-treated. The technical term for this is "Health Related Group drift" (HRG-drift).**

The HRGs are complexes of conditions (e.g. 80 year-old woman with schizophrenia and diabetes who needs treatment for a broken leg) which are given a price tag (tariff) paid under the "payment by results" system from the PCT/CCG to the health provider. The problem is that the provider is responsible for carrying out the assessment and selecting the HRG for the particular case.

This introduces a conflict of interest. Clinicians with an eye on the budget tend to bump a patient up and try to get the higher tariff. Health economist Alyson Pollock claims that this is universal practice in the USA.

Anecdotal evidence from healthworkers who have written into AWL health bulletin *Red Pill* suggests HRG-drift is rife when dealing with overspill from acute mental health inpatient wards into private sector beds. Private sector providers often place a patient in a higher risk category in order to justify treatment in a high-cost secure ward.



As well as the additional cost of treatment, patients who enter the system via this route often need to step down to an open ward before they are discharged, thus extending their stay in hospital.

The problem is made more complicated by the huge conflict of interest that is now involved in the commissioning process. The TUC's False Economy research group has discovered that in 22 CCGs over half of the GPs were shareholders or had other financial interests in private health firms and other non-NHS health providers. In 10 CCGs a majority of the doctors are directly profiting from services that they commissioned to an organisation that they themselves run in partnership with Virgin Care.

Increasingly it will be difficult to tell whether our doctors are giving us the care that we need or the care that will bring them most money.

### ORGANISE

**Despite the supine attitude of the union leaders in failing to organise effective strikes over pensions, there are signs that workers' organisation in the NHS is growing.**

The doctors' strike on 21 June may be the spark to get national action back on the agenda of the unions that organise in the NHS — Unison, GMB, RCN and Unite. If the government tries to do a deal with the doctors then union leaders will be put in a very difficult position — not least because the zero increase in contributions for low members is made up by increased contributions by doctors and management.

Workers in the health service must show their solidarity with the doctors and prevent the government from splitting the movement. But to make solidarity more of a reality our union leaders need to call more strikes.

Meanwhile a number of disputes are brewing, largely in outsourced companies.

- Cleaning and catering staff employed by Serco in the Derriford Hospital, Plymouth, are being asked to take a huge cut in hours, resulting in losses of up to £7000.

- Cleaning and catering staff at Great Western Hospital in Swindon have been on strike for weeks over bullying, victimisation and harassment of staff.

- Surgeons at the Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital in Shropshire are working-to-rule and have imposed an overtime ban after arbitrary closure of a ward.

- Action at Addenbrookes Hospital in Cambridge continues. Compass cleaners and caterers have been served with a change in shift patterns and consequently an up-to-21% pay cut. These workers are calling for their union, Unison, to release an industrial ballot.

We can expect campaign groups to spring up to oppose ward and hospital closures. The Keep Our NHS Public conference on 23 June offers us an opportunity to discuss building a national campaign network that can link up the struggles of workers within the NHS with the community campaigns that exist to protect the NHS.

We need a united, open, democratic, dynamic campaign that can link up all these struggles if we are to reverse the Tories drive to a US-style health system and re-establish the principle of comprehensive, state-of-the-art healthcare free at the point of need.

**The alternative is that the bodies of the sick and vulnerable will be plundered for private profit as the market runs amok through our health and wellbeing.**

## Lobby Labour Conference!

**The NHS Liaison Network has called for a lobby of Labour Party conference (Sunday 30 September–Thursday 4 October in Manchester), on the day of Ed Miliband's speech. The lobby will call on Labour to make a proper commitment to reverse Tory reforms and rebuild the NHS.**

**The Network is asking for unions, NHS campaign groups, student unions and others to sponsor and build the lobby.**

- More information: [nhsliasion@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:nhsliasion@yahoo.co.uk)



## Europe: the bankers vs the people

### “Central banking is very political”

Daniela Gabor is a lecturer at the Bristol Business School and an expert on the economics of banking. She gave *Solidarity* her views about Greece and the eurozone crisis.

**If a left government is formed after 17 June, and it repudiates the memorandum, the Troika is likely to cut off the bail-out funds. Would a Greek government run out of cash?**

Greece has had a big budget deficit. The Greek economists I talk to say that if Greece stays on the austerity plan, then it will have a primary surplus [a budget surplus if you don't count its debt payments] by the end of 2012.

However, a government which did not continue the austerity policies would probably increase wages and so on, and that would reverse the trend. The government would have to find money to finance the deficit.

Governments can finance deficits in a variety of ways, but two are to borrow on global financial markets and to get the central bank to print money. Greece has difficulty raising money on financial markets, and it has difficulties getting money from the European Central Bank, so probably it would have to get out of the euro and print its own separate money in order to have some leeway on financing the deficit.

**How would the European Central Bank prevent the Greek government creating extra credit for itself at the Greek central bank?**

Money is created in the eurozone by banks going to the European Central Bank, providing collateral [financial assets pledged to guarantee their credit], and getting cash in return. Since the crisis the national central banks have been allowed to do something called Emergency Liquidity Assistance.

Traditionally, when there is a crisis which affects the banking sector, and a crisis of confidence, then the central banks lend against lower-quality collateral in order to stabilise the system.

When, recently, the ECB said that four Greek banks could no longer get liquidity [cash] from the ECB, the Greek central bank was allowed to accept from those banks lower-quality collateral that could not be used directly with the ECB, and so inject liquidity into the Greek economy — the ECB's governing council only needs to approve ELA access above a certain threshold, partly because the national central bank assumes all the credit risk associated with ELA liquidity injections.

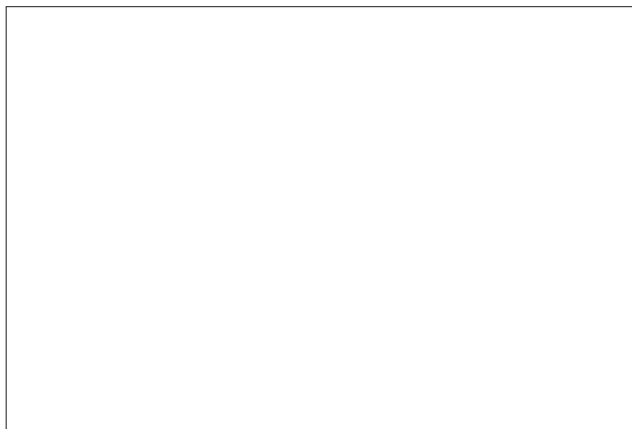
Little of the liquidity in the system today is actually notes and coins. Mostly it's accounting transactions like that.

**But at some point the ECB would have to take a political decision to intervene against the Greek central bank creating more credit for the Greek government?**

The ECB makes lots of political decisions anyway. Central banking is a very political activity. The ECB can tell the Greek central bank that it cannot create any more Emergency Liquidity Assistance liquidity.

For me, every day that the European Central Bank refuses to intervene in sovereign bond markets in order to stabilise them, it makes an explicitly political decision. This is because a central bank's mandate in crisis is to improve funding conditions for banks. The eurozone efforts towards financial integration have led to this paradoxical outcome where banks' ability to fund themselves on financial markets depends on the quality of collateral they can produce — and in a crisis, that collateral is only made of sovereign bonds.

Yet not all sovereign bonds are the same — where a government has increased deficits, be it because it resorted to fiscal stimulus during a crisis, or because it had to bail out banks, its debt (sovereign bonds) becomes less attractive (it requires higher haircuts) to use as collateral. So European banks will start dumping the debt of a sovereign that appears under threat and move to the highest quality sovereign (i.e. Germany) to ensure that in the event of a eurozone break-up, they have the kind of collateral that would be most acceptable.



**Syriza is trying to force a change of direction in Europe**

The only institution that can prevent this downward spiral is a central bank — its ability to print money allows it, in theory, to make credible commitments that it will preserve the role of a government bond as marketable collateral. Yet the ECB, with the institutional and political constraints it operates under, refuses to assume this role. This refusal is political.

Instead, the LTROs [cheap three-year loans to commercial banks] that the ECB resorts to every time there appears to be an impending collapse of the eurozone implicitly rely on private European banks to preserve the role of sovereign bonds as marketable collateral (i.e. to preserve their value). But banks are reluctant to demand government bonds if confronted with the possibility that austerity will not work (and we know it rarely does). This is why the February 2012 LTRO only had very temporary effects on the Spanish sovereign bond market.

**Then what if the Greek central bank says sorry, but we need to create this liquidity anyway?**

I think that is far-fetched. I don't think the Greek central bank can extend liquidity to Greek banks without ECB approval above the allowed (ELA) threshold. Anything like that would mean moving towards a system of parallel currencies where you would have Greek euros created by the Greek central bank, and an exchange-rate between those Greek euros and ECB euros. I think the ECB would say that the new euros issued without its explicit approval could not be legal tender.

#### BLACKMAIL

**Greeks are being told that if they elect a left government, then the bail-out funds will be cut off, and the next day everything will fall into a bank hole. Could the experience of the Irish bank strike in 1970 be relevant here? All the banks were shut by a strike for six months, no-one could get cash from their bank, and yet the economy continued reasonably normally, with people using cheques and IOUs.**

Some people discuss a system of parallel currencies. You keep the euro for bank deposits and for foreign transactions, and you introduce some form of IOUs that will cover other transactions. This “Greek euro” will start depreciating. It's another way of achieving an internal devaluation. It's not clear to me that the Greek government would want that. But Goldman Sachs thinks it's possible, and Deutsche Bank too. But if a left government is elected in Greece, it will immediately have to impose capital controls, and suspend convertibility between cash and bank deposits.

**And the left government would nationalise the banks.**

That's another way of solving the problem. Nationalising the banks might be useful. It raises questions about the Greek banks' subsidiaries in Eastern Europe; but never mind, I don't think the Greeks will really care about financial investors at that point. It will probably mean that Greece will not have access to financial markets for quite a while.

**The European Union leaders say that they have a firewall in place, so Greece can default and drop out of the euro, and they can make sure that everywhere else is all right.**

It could be true, depending on what the ECB decides to do. The perceptions of liquidity in different markets are very important. I can't see how a firewall can stabilise government bond markets without ECB intervention. If you tell banks that you don't know what is going to happen to the value of the collateral they have on their books — sovereign bonds — then the banks will try to get rid of any bonds that are not German.

Unless the ECB completely changes track and says that now, with Greece out, it will commit to stabilising govern-

ment bond markets by buying large amounts of government bonds, the firewall can't work. The order of magnitude is too big. I really doubt there will be such a dramatic change, but who knows what a Greek default would trigger. It's a very unpleasant scenario for Greece, to have to go away in order that the ECB policies should finally change.

Of course the ECB does not only have external pressures. It also has internal disagreements on the course it takes. The central bankers of the eurozone sit on the ECB council, and we know that the German central bank is much more concerned about compliance with austerity than anything else.

**The costs to German capital of “contagion” following a Greek exit would be enormous...**

Germany has benefited from the troubles in the sovereign bond markets of the peripheral countries. If you have discrimination in collateral markets [i.e. some financial assets are accepted as collateral to be exchanged for cash, but some aren't] then you will have a flight to the safest instrument, so Germany is benefiting [i.e. the German government can borrow very cheaply]. The German government can now sell bonds almost at negative interest rates.

But the German banks have cross-border exposures, and I can't see how a collapse of the eurozone would not affect German manufacturing and German exports.

**You see a continued spiral of governments having difficulty in bond markets, and banks having difficulty because the quality of their collateral (the government bonds they hold) is worsening?**

Yes. Spain is going that way. Spain is much more significant in terms of cross-border holdings of sovereign bonds than Greece is. Greece's situation is a worry in the first place because of the social implications, but also because of the precedent it sets. As regards the EU leaders, I think they care not much about the Greek people, but more about what it shows about how the EU deals with unexpected situations.

**85% of the people in Greece say they want to stay in the eurozone. They want the EU to cancel the imposed cuts, and they say that doing that would be better from the point of the view of the whole eurozone too.**

Syriza seems to be betting that the European politicians will be so concerned about the consequences of a Greek exit that they will allow a change of direction. It's a gamble. If Syriza is elected, it will have to keep up its anti-austerity policies and at the same recognise that the Greek people do not want to be pushed out of the euro. But if Greece leaves the eurozone, one of the benefits is that it will have an independent central bank that is able to redesign the banking system and provide support to its government. The difficulty will be to contain the inflation that may accompany the devaluation, particularly since I don't see how, immediately, Greece is going to have a big increase in export competitiveness.

**There is no likely equivalent for Greece to the soybean export boom which boosted Argentina after it defaulted on its debt in 2001.**

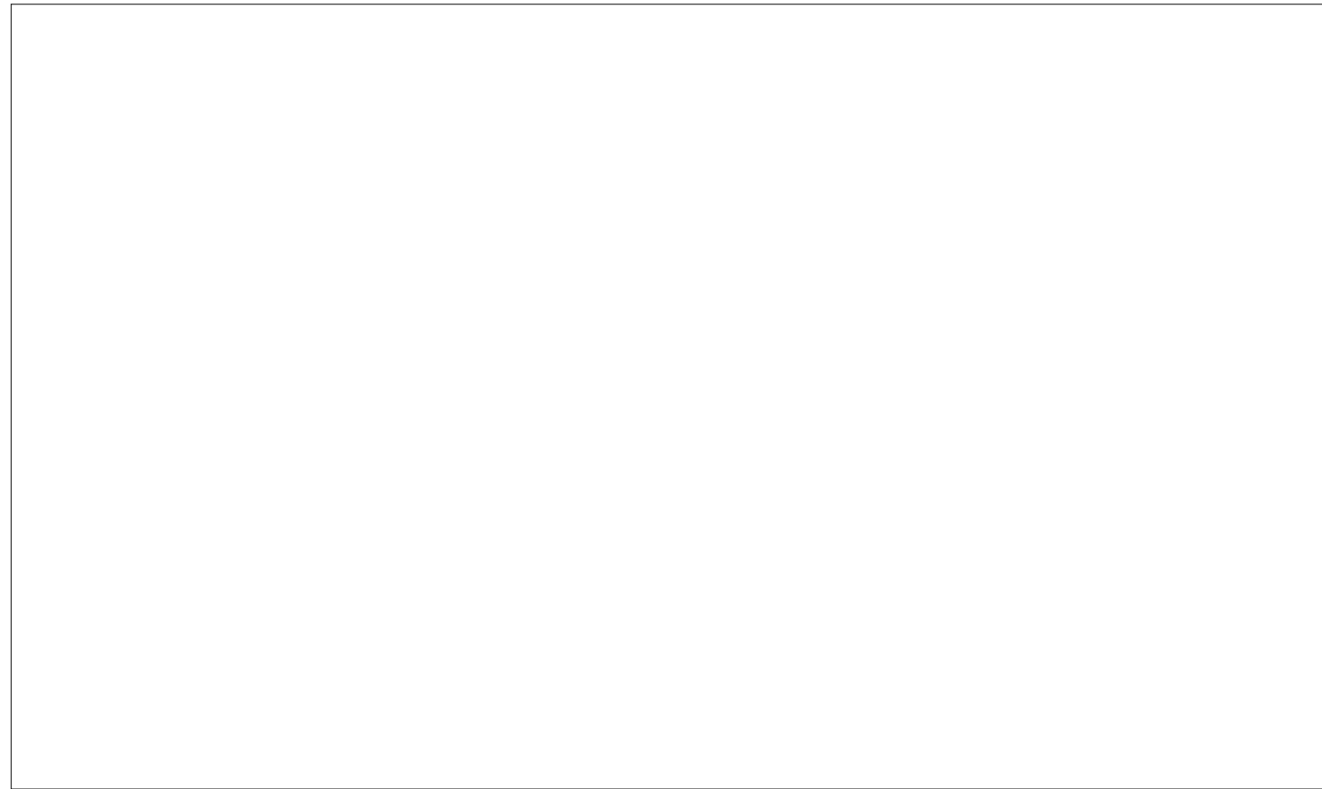
Greece is definitely not Argentina. Apart from the soybeans, Argentina has a much more significant industrial base than Greece has. But Greece will be confronted with some of the problems Argentina faced in its crisis — how to prevent capital flight, how to devalue and whether to follow the deeply unpopular Argentinian restrictions on withdrawal of bank deposits (i.e. the convertibility between bank deposits and cash).

Even though the Greeks don't want to abandon the euro, both macroeconomics and the politics of a left-wing government tell us that it makes little sense to keep the euro outside eurozone — why would Greece not want to have its own independent central bank and remove some of the restrictions on economic policy it had inside the eurozone? Even outside the eurozone, Greece would have the same dilemmas as inside it, so long as it decides to keep the euro.

I don't see how political pressure will change the way the ECB deals with the Greek central bank. It may make the European Union leaders relax some of the austerity demands, but that's all.

I think the EU leaders hoped they would not be confronted with a Greek government saying it does not want austerity but it wants to stay inside the eurozone. That is the worst of both worlds for EU politicians. They have to make an explicit decision to kick Greece out, or to move away from austerity, with all the implications about their fiscal compact and their constitutionally-enshrined rules for primary surpluses. It's a huge headache.

**But I can't see how, if Greece stops payments on its debt, the ECB will respond by relaxing the rules on what the Greek central bank will do.**



**Greek steelworkers. Official European trade union solidarity has been very limited. That needs to be radically changed**

# A turning-point from neo-liberalism?

**Hugo Radice is a Marxist economist, a Life Fellow at Leeds University, and author of many works including *100 Years of Permanent Revolution*. He spoke to *Solidarity* about the eurozone crisis.**

## **What concessions do you think are likely from the EU on “growth strategies”?**

The first talk about EU growth strategies goes back to early 2011, with a few left-wing economists, for example the Euro-memorandum group of left Keynesian economists. It has taken a very long time for that viewpoint to get a hearing.

I don't think the Germans have much choice now, because pretty much everybody else is calling for growth strategies. Mechanisms have been identified, particularly the European Investment Bank. The other elements of growth strategy would require more radical measures, for example the issuing of Eurobonds, which would mean the eurozone taking collective responsibility for each individual country's borrowing. That is likely to take much longer.

The Project Bond Initiative announced by the EU on 22 May is tiny by comparison with the scale of the crisis. The more important idea in circulation is that of stretching out the terms of deficit reduction — giving Greece, for example, more time to meet the conditions attached to the bail-out. Even if the European Investment Bank does get moving, even if the EU budget were deployed, that will take time to implement.

## **If a left government is elected in Greece and repudiates the memorandum, what do you think will happen?**

In the past when countries have defaulted on their debt, like Argentina in 2001-2, investors had already covered their backs. If Syriza does win, and it cancels the austerity plan and stops debt payments, there will be a great deal of disruption in day-to-day financial transactions between the EU and Athens. There would have to be some sort of emergency solution, and I suppose we'd get something like the summit after the Lehman Brothers collapse in September 2008.

There will be a huge amount of pressure between now and the Greek election, both on the softer elements in Syriza to make it back down, and on the whole Greek electorate, with dire warnings. The Greek ruling-class strategy is to ensure that New Democracy comes first in the poll, by whatever means they can do that, and then ND forms a coalition with Pasok and the Democratic Left.

Yet Greece is three per cent of the EU, and the total amount of money involved in the Greek crisis is peanuts compared to the resources of the whole eurozone. It would be a simple matter for Germany alone to stump up the cash to resolve

Greece's crisis.

The consequences of a forced break-up of the eurozone are far too dangerous for the ruling classes for them to allow it for lack of transferring a few billion more euros.

The ECB made a high profile decision in December, when Mario Draghi decided to provide unlimited three-year liquidity [three-year loans of cash] to all the banks in the eurozone. There is a precedent for the ECB to make the sort of high-profile political decision it would have to make if Greece elects a left government.

## **What immediate scope is there for the ECB to make concessions?**

The ECB also acts as a clearing-house for intra-eurozone trade — this is the so-called Target 2 system — and Germany is in credit in that system to the tune of 700 billion euros, while Greece and Spain are debtors. One way of easing things for Greece would be to postpone settlement on those balances.

The word credit is derived from the Latin *credo*, I believe. If you believe it's all going to get sorted out in the end, then there are really no limits to the extension of credit. But we have to go back a bit to summer 2011. One of the main things that caused the crisis to deepen in the second half of 2011 was the withdrawal, in effect, of American investors from European markets.

A lot of the liquidity provided to European banks until then was coming from America, especially from money-market funds, who could make more money by purchasing European bonds with higher yields than US Treasuries. In the summer of last year, US investors became seriously worried and began to pull their money out. That was a major reason why the European banks then faced deteriorating credit conditions up to the point of the ECB rescue in December.

## **There is talk of the EU having a “firewall” sufficient to block “contagion” if Greece is suspended, expelled, or exits from the euro. Is that so?**

I'm not sure that the claimed EU “firewall” (to protect the rest of the eurozone from financial panic if Greece is forced out) would work. Once Greece is forced out, the whole mystique of the eurozone is broken.

If you are to get fiscal solidarity between eurozone, then you need a wide-ranging political change of heart in which eurozone governments and political elites agree to move away from competing with each other and using the old nationalist arguments to blackmail their working classes. Without that, I think the euro is finished.

The fiscal pact as designed by the Germans in December

lacks any legitimacy because it needs to be underpinned by some sense of solidarity, and it isn't. In contrast, in the USA the federal government has a whole range of mechanisms which redistribute the fiscal burden.

There is a fundamental flaw in the December pact. It is based on the notion of the structural deficit, and a rule that the structural deficit must be limited to 0.5% of GDP. But the structural deficit cannot be measured. The idea of making legally binding an indicator which can't be objectively measured is farcical.

Among the big bosses in Europe, the bosses of the major corporations, there must be an awareness that if the eurozone starts unravelling, they will face huge upheavals. Europe is too integrated to pull apart now. I think they will keep muddling through, and concessions will be made to Greece to keep it in the eurozone. The mystery is why they are taking so long to deliver the concessions.

There will have to be a substantive fiscal pact and an agreement to shift a substantial part of budget decision-making to the European level. That then raises the question of the balance between the apparently democratic structures of the European Parliament, and the intergovernmental structures and the Commission. There would have to be a major reworking of the European treaties.

## **What should the left elsewhere in Europe say?**

What do the social-democratic forces of Europe do? After 30 years of retreat before neo-liberalism, this will be the moment of truth. There is a possibility, particularly if the SPD wins in Germany, of moving for a Social Europe Mark Two, but maybe I'm been wildly optimistic.

Trade union movements have remained essentially trapped within a national Keynesian framework in each country. There are contacts, the European TUC and so on, but the links are very much on a bread and butter level, sharing experiences about the evolution of collective bargaining and so on.

**It would take a huge change in the nature of trade unionism across Europe, and in this country more than most, for trade unions to be willing to re-enter the political arena, after having abandoned it for most of the last 20 or 30 years.**

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# Greece: the fight for workers' control

Theodora Polenta discusses the challenge posed to the left by the possibility of a Syriza victory in Greece's election on 17 June.

**The revolutionary left has a duty to prepare the workers' movement about the consequences, including a deterioration of living conditions, when Greece is forced out of the EU. We must do that without surrendering to today's blackmail from the pro-memorandum forces: accept the cuts, or face empty shelves in the shops, no petrol, no money in the banks, etc.**

The blackmail is powerful because there is a large element of truth in it. Better to face that squarely than to wriggle round it or pretend that an exit would be smooth.

Antarsya's and KKE's support in the "here and now" for exit from the EU and the euro, and their making exit a matter of principle, is a serious mistake. They do not understand (because if they understood they had an obligation to explain) that an "overnight" shift from a strong currency, the euro, to a "new" currency, the drachma, will cause shocks to the economy — abrupt deepening of the recession and economic chaos at least for a few years — even if it is done by a workers' government.

In such circumstances, an unprepared leftist government risks having its support wiped out with great speed. That could pave the way to the worst enemies of the movement, the far right.

The left should plan for the event of Greece under a left government being expelled from the eurozone or the EU. Yes, an exit would lead to economic chaos. But so (more slowly, but more lastingly) would obeying the troika's current demands. Memorandum policies will lead to at least a decade of depression in Greece.

And (1) European solidarity can reduce the risk of Greece being forced out of the euro or can slow it down; (2) if Greece is forced out, then strong measures of workers' control can much reduce the bad consequences for workers' living conditions; (3) decisive measures of workers' control and workers' power in the case of exit can push forward European solidarity and create the conditions to remake economic union with Europe.

## AXES

**The main axes of independent agitation which Marxists should develop should be the following:**

- Workers' control, including taking over workplaces shut down by their owners, and including workers' control of food distribution with rationing.

In Britain, World War Two brought great difficulties. It also brought an *improvement* in the nutrition of working-class people, despite the cutting-off of most food imports. That was achieved by measures of control (rationing — i.e. even "reactionary-bureaucratic" control, when exercised in a state with functioning bourgeois democracy and relatively strong trade unions).

The line of argument developed by Lenin in *The Impending Catastrophe*, written in September 1917 as Russia faced economic chaos, is very relevant here. The detail of the pamphlet is shaped by the circumstances of World War One, but it opens up a discussion of what Marxists propose in a situation of economic catastrophe.

Lenin argues that control and regulation is necessary.

It may be done in a reactionary-bureaucratic way (which doesn't really offset the catastrophe for the majority) or a revolutionary-democratic way.

We argue for the revolutionary-democratic way (in other words, workers' control).

This is closely tied up with the issue of the workers getting organised so as to be able to exert democratic control over economic life.

"The war has compelled all the belligerent and many of the neutral countries to resort to the regulation of consumption. Bread cards have been issued and have become customary, and this has led to the appearances of other ration cards. Russia is no exception and has also introduced bread cards...

"At a time when the country is suffering untold calamities, a revolutionary-democratic policy would not confine itself to bread cards to comfort the impeding catastrophe, but would add, firstly the compulsory organisation of the whole population in consumers' societies, for otherwise control over consumption cannot be fully exercised; secondly, labour service for the rich making them perform without

● **How Greece would be expelled from the eurozone: discussion of how the ECB will move against a left government. [www.workersliberty.org/expel](http://www.workersliberty.org/expel)**

● **The Greek left and Syriza: discussion of Antarsya's stance. [www.workersliberty.org/antarsya](http://www.workersliberty.org/antarsya)**

● **Lessons from Trotsky on Greece. [www.workersliberty.org/greece-trotsky](http://www.workersliberty.org/greece-trotsky)**

**Greek working-class protests have been developing for over two years. Are the workers ready for the next stage?**

pay secretarial and similar duties for these consumers' societies; thirdly, the equal distribution among the population of absolutely all consumer goods, so as to really distribute the burdens of the war equitably; fourthly, the organization of control in such a way as to have the poorer classes of the population exercise control over the consumption of the rich".

"The measures to combat catastrophe and hunger described above boil down to all-round encouragement (even to the extent of compulsion) of 'unionisation' of the population, and primarily the democrats, i.e., the majority of the population, or, above all, the oppressed classes, the workers and peasants..."

"What if the unions of employees, clerks and domestic servants were invited by a democratic state to verify the income and expenditure of capitalists, to publish information on the subject and to assist the government in combating concealment of incomes?"

- Workers' militias. In the event of a Greek exit from the euro — whether forced or negotiated, under a left government or under a right-wing government — a military coup becomes a larger threat. The question of workers' and popular committees or councils forming workers' defence squads and workers' militias is urgent to fight capitalist sabotage, the fascist gangs of Golden Dawn, and the threat of a military coup by the state.

- Cross-Europe mobilisation. Syriza talks about this in a way, but mainly by asking Greek workers to be hopeful about shifts in the EU elites (Hollande's election, etc). The shifts are real but small.

## ACROSS

**What is needed just to start with is a systematic campaign of conferences, demonstrations, protests, etc. The ultimate aim is to open the fight across Europe. A government of the Left in Greece can be a catalyst across Europe.**

Along with the rest of the labour movement in Europe, especially in the South, we must fight a common battle aiming at the overthrow of capitalism in a number of countries. Even if the struggles do not involve the whole of the EU, they could embrace a number of countries which are struggling with the debt crisis in southern Europe and Ireland.

The common struggle of the Greeks, Portuguese, Spanish, Irish, Italian workers can have spectacular results and could lead to the unification of our forces under a voluntary socialist federation.

It is of paramount importance for the Greek working class movement to initiate an internationalist common struggle with the European workers to smash the imperialist EU and establish the United Socialist States of Europe. Ultimately our future is in the hands of the European and international working class: without the victory of the socialist revolution, small Greece can scarcely have better chances than vast Russia...

Some elements of Syriza are beginning to pose the real questions. An article published by the left stream tendency of Synaspismos (the biggest group in Syriza) candidly describes the dire economic situation of Greece — public funds drained, basic facilities and welfare provision underfunded.

The funding of Greece's anaemic exports has been shut down, and the tourist industry is in crisis. A further abrupt decrease in exports and tourism would lead to further deterioration of the economy.

The article concludes that Syriza should start thinking outside the box. The key is the determination of a Syriza gov-

ernment to immediately cancel the memorandum and all anti-working-class legislation. Syriza should mobilise the working class and the anti-memorandum neighbourhood community movements via the formation of people's assemblies in every square of Greece and in every workplace: in the public sector and councils, in factories and workplaces, in squares, neighbourhoods, towns and cities.

Syriza should mobilise immediately, in a united front, the working-class youth, neighbourhood community activists, pensioners, and unemployed in order to ensure the implementation of its anti-memorandum promises.

## REAL

**The revolutionary left should warn of the danger from a popular front government of the Allende type managing a bourgeois regime within the context of the most aggressive capitalist crisis.**

The revolutionary left should not remain blind to the popular hopes invested to a government of the left, but it should stress that a real government of the left should be a workers' government based on the organs of workers' power (workers' committees, popular assemblies, workers' defence squads).

The revolutionary left needs to keep in mind that the parliament is only one of the strongholds of the system, and not the most important. The most important strongholds of the system are the ownership of production and the private property, the factories, the banks, the forces of repression, the army, the courts and the media.

Blueprints for challenges to all the capitalist system's strongholds have been sketched during the last two years anti-memorandum struggles: factory occupations, bank occupations, occupations of the Finance Ministry and of the Office of National Statistics. Power workers refused to implement government orders of cutting off electricity for households that did not pay the regressive property tax. Striking workers at *Eleftherotypia* have issued a workers' newspaper.

In the confrontations triggered by the creation of a left government committed to dismantle the memorandum, workers' control and self-organisation will be of paramount importance.

The labour movement does not choose the time to make a historic move.

Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras has declared: "Power is not gained through an election, it is a constant struggle, even if a left government is formed. The power does not only lie within the parliament and the prime minister, but lies as well within the banks, the armed forces, the big business, big capital, the media. It was not enough for example for Allende in Chile to form a left wing government. The multinational corporations and the army overthrew him".

It is the duty of the revolutionary left to ensure that we understand and adhere to the consequences of this statement, and press Syriza to act accordingly.

And the final words belong to Lenin: "It all boils down to the same thing: the rule of the bourgeoisie is irreconcilable with truly revolutionary democracy. We cannot be revolutionary democrats in the twentieth century and in a capitalist country if we fear to advance towards socialism..."

**"But socialism is now gazing at us from all the windows of modern capitalism; socialism is outlined directly, practically, by every important measure that constitutes a step forward on the basis of this modern capitalism".**



## An open letter to the Socialist Workers' Party

# “Neither plague nor cholera!”

### The Left

*Socialist Worker* is backing a vote for the Muslim Brotherhood candidate in the forthcoming Egyptian presidential run-off.

At the start of June Egyptian activists rallied to remember Khaled Said, a young man killed two years ago by Mubarak's police, sparking protests that eventually brought down the dictator. At Said's grave, Laila Marzouk, his mother, said she could not bring herself to vote for either of the remaining candidates in Egypt's presidential election: “I will not choose between the plague and cholera.”

Many of the young activists, trade unionists, leftists and feminists who made the uprising against Mubarak are also dismayed at the choice.

Yet *Socialist Worker* comments: “The choice is clear. A vote for Shafiq would be a vote against the revolution. A vote for Mursi is a vote against the legacy of Mubarak and for continuing change. Now it is time to put Mursi to the test—and to continue struggles over jobs, wages, union rights and for radical political change.” (2 June 2012)

But a vote for the right-wing religious sectarians, and fighting for “radical political change,” are in flat contradiction.

The SWP-linked Revolutionary Socialists of Egypt appeal to, “all the reformist and revolutionary forces ... to form a national front which stands against the candidate of counter-revolution”, and demands that the Muslim Brotherhood declares its commitment to the following:

“1. Formation of a presidential coalition which includes [Nasserite] Hamdeen Sabbahi and [‘liberal’, salafist-backed Islamist] Abul-Fotouh as Vice-Presidents. 2. The selection of a Prime Minister from outside the ranks of the Brotherhood ... and the formation of a government across the whole political spectrum in which the Copts are represented. 3. The approval of a law on trade union freedoms ... in contrast to the draft law proposed by the Brotherhood to the People's Assembly. 4. The Brotherhood's agreement with other political forces on a civil constitution which guarantees social justice, [etc]”

Workers' Liberty does not advocate voting for Ahmed Shafiq. He is a representative of the old regime and shares political responsibility for the crimes of the Mubarak era.

But no socialist should advocate a vote for the MB, either. The Brotherhood is a right-wing, anti-working-class, reli-

gious party. Voting for it contradicts our basic policy of fighting for the independent working-class politics. Worse: the Revolutionary Socialists' four point programme attempts to line-up all left and liberal Egyptian society behind a fantasy programme to press the MB to become an entirely different organisation, or at least to display some pretences and gestures, and link the left into an “agreement” with it.

Since the Brotherhood is the strongest party in Egypt, with a big base in the bourgeoisie as well as in poorer classes, and the left is relatively weak, the “agreement” could only be on the Brotherhood's terms.

SW's positive case for backing the MB in the election seems to rest on the fact that the Islamists oppose the old order, and have a mass base.

The MB is against the old order, but in the name of something at least as bad! If you don't believe what the MB might do, just look at Gaza where their sister party, Hamas, is in power. Hamas has smashed the journalists' union, broken teachers and health workers' strikes, broken up opposition protests with guns, stamped on all organised dissent — including competing Islamists — and imposed conservative social legislation, for example imposing a new ‘modest’ dress code for schoolgirls.

Hamas has not brought democracy — it has brought its own, authoritarian one-party, clerical rule. It has made a revolution — but *its* revolution, which is a revolution also against the labour movement, democracy and women's freedom.

### UPRISING

**And the idea that voting for the MB will represent the continuation of the Egyptian uprising against Mubarak is a re-writing of history.**

The MB played a marginal role in the revolution that overthrew Mubarak. At first it refused to participate in the mass demonstrations, only joining — eventually — for fear of losing support.

The MB is not a new, fluid formation created by the uprising against Mubarak. Far from it. It has a long history, going back to 1928. In 1946 Tony Cliff, who would later found the SWP, called it “clerical-fascist”: that is how most left-wingers thought of it.

In the 1960s, with the contribution to its ideology of Sayyid Qutb, it became more, not less, insistent on imposing the rules and institutions of an imaginary ideal Islamic past on workers, women, lesbians and gays, free-thinkers, and religious minorities.

Illegal or semi-legal for many years in Egypt, and well-rooted now in the wealthy classes, it has learned canniness and tactical flexibility. It knows when and how to display itself as “moderate”.

In the last year the MB has attempted to avoid confrontation with the military, which is still hanging on to power. In February, for example, the MB rejected calls for a national

strike to bring down the ruling military council. Its counter-campaign was “A day for cleaning Egypt”, when it sent its people to clean up litter instead of striking. MB Secretary-General Mahmoud Hussein condemned calls for a general strike, urging the population to double their work rate in order to “rebuild the country and not bring it down.”

### PRO-MARKET

**The MB is running Mursi because its preferred candidate, Khairat al-Shater, a millionaire businessman, was disqualified. “We have sought to reassure people that a free market in Egypt is the only way forward,” says Mahmoud Ghazlan, a spokesman for the Brotherhood.**

If Mursi wins, his intention is to immediately strike deals with the IMF and World Bank — as always, such deals will be against the workers.

In the presidential first round Mursi ran a right-wing, religious campaign, aiming for the votes of the salafist (ultra-conservative Islamist) movement. He called himself the only true Islamist in the race, led chants for the implementation of Islamic law, portrayed his political program as a distillation of Islam, occasionally interrupting proceedings with pauses for mass prayer.

Now the MB are shifting their presentation. Murad Mohammed Ali, speaking for the Mursi campaign, states: “We no longer present Mursi as the candidate of the Islamic current but as the candidate of the revolution.” The MB has not changed its political nature. It has chosen to change its “image”, and dissimulate. But the Revolutionary Socialists take this dissimulation as good coin, and boost it by “demanding” that the Brotherhood continue it.

It is true that the MB has a mass party — led by professionals and rich businessmen, but backed by many workers. The Marxist tradition in such conditions is pretty clear: we don't vote for such parties. Would SW like to revise our past and vote for Peron? or Bhutto's PPP? or the New Deal Democrats? or the Liberals in Britain when they still had the mass workers' vote?

Our job is not to prettify the MB, hold our noses and hope for the best. Our job is to organise those who want to fight. By advocating a vote for the Brothers the SWP/RS discredit themselves among the — numerous — opponents of both the old order and the MB already mobilised in Egypt.

In the late 30s Trotsky made this appeal against lesser-evilism and for independent working class politics: “The whole of [Marx and Lenin's] revolutionary thought was directed towards this: that the fetishism of two camps would give way to a third, independent, sovereign camp of the proletariat, that camp upon which, in point of fact, the future of humanity depends.”

**Neither Mubarak's henchman, nor the Muslim Brothers, but independent working class politics!**

## A double coup?

By Martin Thomas

Earlier this year the left saw the equivalent of a small dinosaur walking down the street. *Labour Briefing* magazine had, as its front page, Jean-Luc Mélenchon's slogan “Prenez le pouvoir” — “take the power”.

Mélenchon wouldn't have known it, but for the inner core of *Briefing*, and for older readers, the slogan evokes a lot.

The people who launched *Briefing* in February 1980 were veterans of the Revolutionary Communist League of the 1970s, a would-be Trotskyist group distinguished from others by its slogan “Labour Take The Power”. For them that meant a call on the Labour Party, not just to take office, but to smash the bourgeois state and install workers' power. They talked about revolutionary cells in the army.

*Briefing* had “Labour Take The Power” as a streamer on every front cover. Its meaning mutated. In the 80s it meant ardent applause for figures like Ken Livingstone and Margaret Hodge “taking power” locally (headlines: “London's Ours!”, “Fortress Islington”), and explanations that if they faltered against the Tories, that was because of the Labour rank and file not putting enough “power” behind them.

Thirty years on, *Briefing* has bio-degraded. The front-cover streamer was reluctantly dropped in 1995. With the decline of *Tribune*, it has enough of the “Labour-left” market to continue, although the content is often pallid. Its editorial team has become a sort of rest-home for older Trotsky-

ists disappointed by experience in activist groups but continuing to “tick over” in the Labour Party.

Throughout the central figure has been Graham Bash. The magazine has long been produced in his house, which is also his business office, and one editor summed up by describing Bash as “the proprietor”.

Now Bash has proposed that *Briefing* become the official journal of the Labour Representation Committee, a Labour left current whose best-known figure is John McDonnell MP. The proposal has stirred a row, because it looks like a double coup, one within LRC and one within *Briefing*.

LRC, sadly, doesn't have enough life and activities to fill a monthly magazine, so making *Briefing* its official journal would mean LRC's public profile de facto shaped by an editorial team on *Briefing* — probably weighted towards the strand in LRC which is Labour-oriented, but “propagandist” rather than geared to organising and working with other Labour groups like CLPD. It would marginalise other strands in LRC.

The proposal is opposed within LRC by many *Briefing* people, because they see it as a move to settle recent clashes within the *Briefing* team by pushing out one subgroup and replacing it with people from LRC.

**LRC would do better to approach a range of left journals — *Briefing*, *Solidarity*, *Socialist Appeal*, and (why not?) *Tribune* — to ask them to give LRC a regular page to publicise its campaigns and declarations. *Solidarity***

would surely say yes.

• More on *Briefing*:  
www.workersliberty.org/openwindows

## Songs of Liberty & Rebellion

### 9-5ers Anthem

While perhaps less accessible than some of hip-hop's more obvious "protest songs" (Public Enemy's 'Fight The Power' or KRS-One's 'Sound of da Police', for example), this brooding, imagery-heavy piece from Aesop Rock's seminal album 'Labor Days' finds the rapper in his most explicitly "political" register.

The "We the American working population" chant (performed acapella on the recorded track) is a stark, no-frills attack on the shackling effect of work on human creative potential, and contrasts brilliantly with the dense, figurative content of the song's other verses.

Even in the verses, couplets like "Trying to guard the fortress of a king they've never seen or met / But all are trained to murder at the first sign of a threat" brilliantly encapsulate the alienating irrationality of working, and indeed killing, to serve the interests of "a king [you've] never seen or met".

One perhaps couldn't imagine chanting "let's display the purpose that these stilts serve" on a picket line, but I think "we hate the fact that eight hours a day / Is wasted on chasing the dream of someone that isn't us" would sound pretty powerful shouted across a barricade.

*The Ruby Kid.*

(Hip hop artist The Ruby Kid will be speaking about protest songs with author Dorian Lynskey at Workers' Liberty's Ideas for Freedom on 30 June. [www.workersliberty.org/ideas](http://www.workersliberty.org/ideas).)

It's the Year of the Silkworm.  
Everything I built burned yesterday.  
Let's display the purpose that these stilts serve.  
Elevate the spreading of the silk germ.  
Trying to weave a web but all I believe in is dead.  
Nah brother, it's the Year of the Jackal.  
Saddle up on high horse.  
My torch forced Polaris embarrassed.  
Shackle up the hassle by the doom and legend marriage.  
I bought some new sneakers,  
I just hope my legacy matches.  
It's the Year of the Landshark.  
Dry as sand, parched, damn, get these men some water.  
They're out there being slaughtered  
In meaningless wars so you don't have to bother  
And can sit and soak the idiot box, trying to fuck their daughters.  
Man, it's the Year of the Orphan.  
Seated adjacent to the fireflies, circling the torches on your porches.  
Trying to guard the fortress of a king they've never seen or met  
But all are trained to murder at the first sign of a threat.  
Maybe it's the Year of the Water Bug.  
Cockroach. Utter thug specimen.  
Fury spawned from dreaming of your next of kin.  
I'm still dealing with this mess I'm in.  
I've been the object of your ridicule.  
You've been a bitch lieutenant.  
God, it's the Year of the Underpaid Employee  
Spitting forty plus a week  
And trying to rape earth in my off time.  
You bored dizzy, I can't keep myself busy enough  
So you can run, run, run,  
And I'ma let you think you won.  
Everybody...

We the American working population  
Hate the fact that eight hours a day  
Is wasted on chasing the dream of someone that isn't us  
And we may not hate our jobs,  
But we hate jobs in general  
That don't have to do with fighting our own causes.  
We the American working population  
Hate the nine to five day-in/day-out  
But we'd rather be supporting ourselves  
By being paid to perfect the pastimes  
That we have harboured based solely on the fact  
That it makes us smile if it sounds dope...

## A forum and a voice

The 16 June "Local Associations" conference of school teachers will discuss a statement from its organising committee resolving to "build a network of local associations and school reps that will enable teacher trade unionists to exchange information, debate and discuss strategy... and organise solidarity".

Tom Unterrainer suggests why and how.

**A rank and file network needs the maximum amount of democracy and accountability as it seeks to test and extend such mechanisms within the union as a whole. On a national level, it should be based on delegates from representative groups of workers – most importantly, workplace groups.**

If we aim towards delivering action that works, the network should think beyond "how do we get the union to fight?". It should ask, "how do we get the most effective action possible?". This means thinking through and arguing out strategies for action, as the Local Associations meetings did at NUT conference [Easter 2012]. But it also means considering what needs to be done — what further organisational steps need to be taken — to ensure maximum impact for any of our actions.

The NUT is not the only school based union. So it makes sense to involve and attempt to organise non-NUT members into the network — other teachers, support, technical and site staff. The network should encourage and accept representation from these workers if we are to build the capabilities we aspire to.

The network should have regular national and regional meetings with representative delegates, but it should also use as wide a range of communications as possible to consult, canvass and organise those involved. This means using social media, email lists, blogs and websites but also regular leaflets and newsletters so that we can extend our reach into schools and other workplaces.

A rank and file network should emphasise all of the above, but it should also seek to win influence for its ideas and strategies within the structures of the unions.

The plan is not for a "conference machine", an "electoral front", a "resolution pushing" initiative, or a political faction of proclaimedly socialist activists. Such groups already exist in the NUT and other unions.

In the NUT, the Socialist Teachers Alliance and the Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union have done valuable work and will no doubt continue to do so. A new initiative, based on workplace and Association delegates, and including delegates from other unions, can cover terrain that they don't cover.

All too often, the "rank and file" members of a union are considered to be a "problem" that needs to be resolved somehow, or they are treated as a stage army, waiting in the wings to respond to calls from national headquarters.

For example, in the pensions dispute much has been made of the claim that the rank and file membership lacked the confidence to support a more regular or intensive pro-

### Time to really respect the members

gramme of action.

The response of the rank and file NUT membership to the 30 June and 30 November strikes suggests that this was not the case. Of course, a great deal of effort was expended by NUT divisions and associations and school reps to mobilise: but that is how confidence is built.

The flipside to the idea that the union must proceed only with long delays, because the members won't move faster, is the idea that members will respond when the call finally comes, without wanting to know exactly what each action aims to achieve, or what should come next.

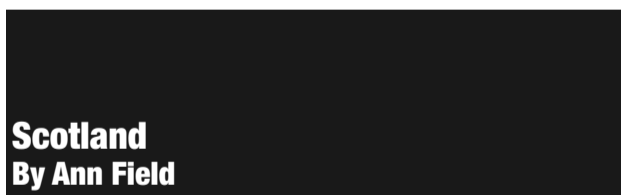
Thinking of the membership as a "mass" that needs "shifting" does not effectively address the very real organisational problems we face. The membership of any union is uneven, diverse in confidence and experience. The better organised bring along the less well organised, or sometimes are leapfrogged by them as younger members get moving.

The activists and organisers need a say in how and when they fight. If the strongest sections of our movement are mobilised one day and packed off back to work the next to await further instructions, then over time our strength will be squandered.

The "views of the membership" are not truly represented in survey after survey, because those surveys put the members in a passive role — ticking boxes on prescribed alternatives so that later the leadership can reveal to the members what their true majority views were — and give signals to the members that the leadership is timid and fumbling.

**Nobody should expect a miraculous "levelling up" of confidence and experience — it has to be organised, fought for and extended across the board. We need a form of organisation that can properly develop and campaign for the views of rank and file activists, and which which can take its own active initiatives in local battles.**

## How to get union unity... break up the unions?



### Scotland By Ann Field

**An article in the current issue of Scottish Socialist Voice, newspaper of the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP), proposes that the existing British trade union movement should be broken up into its national components.**

The article begins with a lament for the opposition to Scottish independence expressed by unions at the recent congress of the Scottish TUC.

This hostility to Scottish independence is attributed to the fact that the STUC's biggest affiliates are all "signed-up supporters of the Labour Party ... British-based organisations ... run by London-based bureaucracies."

But, continues the article, there is a deeper problem: "The social, economic and political circumstances that brought both the trade unions and the Labour Party into history more than a hundred years ago no longer apply."

What opponents of independence fail to understand, claims the article, is: "The capitalist no longer has a country. Capital roams the globe in search of profit and recognises no national authority over it."

Consequently, the British state is simply too weak to stand up to international capitalism: "Far from the British state being able to control British capital, it is international capital that dictates the terms on which the British state is allowed to accommodate capitalism's global players."

The labour movement can therefore challenge global capital only by "becoming genuinely international and capable of working across national boundaries."

Hence: "The division of British into Scottish, English, Welsh and Irish trade union movements may well provide an example of post-independence co-operation across national boundaries that might yet prove to be an international template for such co-operation on a much wider base."

This is truly breathtaking stuff.

If the global nature of modern capitalism means that British trade union movement is wasting its time trying to "put British socialist shackles on the City of London", then how much more futile would it be to try to put "Scottish socialist shackles" on the Edinburgh financial markets in an independent Scotland?

What would be the benefit of regressing from a single unified multi-national trade union movement (i.e. one that brings together Scottish, English, Welsh and Irish workers) to four separate units (which would necessarily be weaker)?

Isn't it just a bit absurd to advocate (quite correctly) greater international trade union solidarity while simultaneously advocating the break-up of an existing inter-national trade union movement along national lines?

And isn't the article the nail in the coffin of the SSP's claim that its advocacy of the break-up of the British state should not be equated with a call to break up the British trade union movement?

**The article's author is John McAllion, an SSP member, regular contributor to the Morning Star, and signatory to the ISG's "Radical Independence Conference". It can be found at:**

• <http://scottishsocialistvoice.s3.amazonaws.com/pdfs/voice396.pdf>

## Newcastle Metro strike solid

By Ed Whitby

On Thursday 7 June, members of rail unions RMT and ASLEF staged the first of two planned 24-hour strikes in response to a decision by Deutsch Bahn Regio (the company which runs the Newcastle Metro) to enforce a pay cut by refusing to award pay rises in line with the Retail Price Index.

The picket line at South Gosforth station, where

**Metro workers strike on 30 November. Tnext**

most drivers start the day, was upbeat, and the Metro ran no services all day.

In a parallel dispute, Metro cleaners (employed

by private contractor Churchills) have voted unanimously to strike over minimum wage pay, victimisations, and a demand

for free travel passes (which those directly employed by DB Regio and Nexus receive)

The cleaners will strike from midnight on Sunday 10 June until midnight on Tuesday 12 June, with picket lines and protests at Haymarket station in Newcastle on Monday 11 June.

On 26 May, activists from the local Anti-Cuts Network took part in a "street party on the Metro" with RMT activists in sup-

port of the cleaners as part of UK Uncut day of action. ACN activists also supported the RMT and ASLEF picket lines on 7 June.

A further strike on 21 June, which will see both the drivers and cleaning workers walk out, is expected to shut down the entire Metro system.

**Workers are clear that they will not accept pay cuts, and poverty pay while bosses make profits and take bonuses.**

## Reviving action

By a delegate

The congress of the University and College Union (UCU, 8-10 June) voted to resume industrial action over pension cuts for workers in "pre-1992" institutions.

A work-to-rule will be reinstated with immediate effect, and a sustained programme of industrial action in autumn will be worked out over the summer and decided upon at a special conference in September. Congress also voted to recognise that the suspension of the work-to-rule, carried at a pre-1992 conference in January, was a mistake.

The resumption of industrial action is excellent news and happened in

spite of the General Secretary conducting endless plebiscites and empty consultations, and trying to bully congress delegates into voting against resuming industrial action over by dishonestly and erroneously claiming members had mandated us to do so.

**It is also promising that the UCU has decided to draw up a credible strategy of escalating industrial action to win the dispute, something Workers' Liberty has consistently argued for, and gives us all hope that the union has moved away from its non-strategy of one-day protest strikes separated by long periods of inactivity.**

## Buses to strike

By Darren Bedford

Bus worker members of the Unite union have voted to strike to win a £500 across-the-board bonus for the increased workload they face during the 2012 Olympic Games.

38% of Unite's 21,000 bus workers members returned their ballots, and voted by a ratio of nine to one to strike. In some companies, such as Go Ahead Docklands Buses Ltd., the vote to strike was unanimous. At Metroline Travel Ltd., where over 1,000 workers participated in the ballot, 96.7% voted to strike.

A statement from the union said: "The strength of the vote in favour of strike action demonstrates

both the anger felt and determination of our members across the entire bus network to achieve a fair and justifiable settlement to this dispute."

**Unite must take industrial action within the next 28 days to keep the ballot live.**

## Living wage win for cleaners

By Ruben Lomas

**Cleaning workers at St. George's Hospital have won the London Living Wage, as well as pushing back bosses' plans for job losses and cuts.**

The cleaners, who are employed by Ocean Con-

tract Cleaning Ltd., began their campaign defensively when bosses proposed a reduction in hours for all workers and layoffs for some. Organising through the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the cleaners began a campaigning of petitioning, leafleting, and protests, which soon built up enough momentum to not only stop the attacks but go on the offensive to win pay increases to the London Living Wage that

Ocean bosses had initially refused to grant.

Ocean attempted to hamstring the campaign by giving formal recognition to Unison, even though only one of the cleaners was a Unison member. Unfortunately, Unison are now claiming credit for the victories despite the campaign being led by IWW members.

**For a statement from St. George's workers on this issue, see [bit.ly/MxpMkY](http://bit.ly/MxpMkY)**

## Job Centre strikes escalate

By Ollie Moore

**Members of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) working for the Department of Work and Pensions in job centres in Merseyside and Hatton have taken further strike action in a long-running dispute over job cuts.**

Workers struck from Wednesday 6 June to Friday 8 June, escalating action in a dispute which had previously seen them stage brief, three-hour walkouts.

**Workers want the reversal of significant job cuts and an end to understaffing caused by transferring Job Centre staff out to new call centres.**

## Birmingham Uni strike ballot

By Darren Bedford

**Over 2,000 non-academic workers at the University of Birmingham could be balloted to strike in a battle over pay.**

The management's latest pay offer is just 1.2%. Union officer Dawn Sant said: "The university needs to recognise that whether someone is on a band 100 — a wage of £13,294 — or the salary of the vice-chancellor they all have to pay the same for a loaf of bread and bottle of milk, pay their rent, mortgage and

ever-increasing utility bills. "The cost of basic food and childcare is increasing rapidly but wages are not keeping up."

The union has pointed out that other institutions have offered pay increases closer to 2%, which they say brings workers closer to "living wage" pay levels.

**At Birmingham, below-inflation pay increases have meant that real terms pay for non-academic staff has deteriorated every year since 2009.**

## London faces fire cuts

**£65 million could be cut from the budget of London's fire service over the next two years, potentially leading to station closures.**

Fire Brigades Union official Paul Embery said: "Re-

ductions in frontline resources inevitably impact on public safety.

**"We would vigorously oppose any cutbacks which undermined the Brigade's ability to respond quickly to emergencies."**

## Recycling centre workers protest against cuts

By a GMB member

**Refuse workers in Sheffield will strike again in a battle with private waste management and recycling company Veolia over cuts.**

Veolia want to reduce recycling centre opening hours and shed 18% of its workforce, despite making money from the schemes it runs for Sheffield City Council.

Workers, organised in the GMB union, have al-

ready taken seven days of strike action against the cuts.

**They will rally outside the council's meeting at 12pm on Wednesday 13 June to demand the cuts are withdrawn.**

## Demand real debate in Unison

**Unison leader Dave Prentis is now also a member of the Board of the Bank of England**

By a Unison member

**Unison leader Dave Prentis has called for his union's upcoming conference (Tuesday 19-Friday 22 June) to be a "uniting conference" that acts a launchpad for the union's campaigns to build the 20 October TUC demo, and for its new campaigns on pay and "against austerity".**

In other words, Prentis (who recently joined the Board of Governors of the Bank of England) wants to use the conference to paper over differences and silence dissent around the defeat of the pensions battle, due largely to the capitulatory actions of his own leadership.

In a report from a recent National Executive Committee meeting, left activist Karen Reissman also records Prentis saying that the union should "celebrate [its] success" over local government pensions — though the deal on which Unison members will be balloted still involves working longer, paying more, and getting less.

Unison activists should use the national conference (which is immediately preceded by the local government sector conference) to demand a real debate in the union about how the pensions fight was conducted, and why workers who want to fight on — such as those Unison members in the NHS who voted to reject their pensions deal — are being prevented from doing so by the union bureaucracy.

Unison is also planning to spend a further £100,000 of members' money appealing an Employment Tribunal decision that four elected union officers were subjected to "unjustifiable disciplinary action". The four, who are members of the Socialist Party, were subjected to a sustained political witch-hunt within the union.

**To sign the petition to support them, visit [tinyurl.com/defendthefour](http://tinyurl.com/defendthefour)**

**CHANGE THE WORLD: ORGANISE AT WORK**

**What left-wing students should do when they graduate**

**A NEW PAMPHLET FROM THE AWL — [TINYURL.COM/ORGANISEATWORK](http://TINYURL.COM/ORGANISEATWORK)**

# Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

## Greece challenges ECB

By Theodora Polenta

**The left can win in Greece's election on 17 June. And if it does, a left government's pro-worker policies will predictably cause screams of outrage from the bosses in Greece and the EU. ECB and EU bosses will probably quickly kick Greece out of the eurozone.**

Yet Syriza is not preparing its own supporters and the working class generally for the consequences of confrontation with the Troika, the markets and the Greek ruling class.

Some Syriza leaders argue that when they form a new government, the Troika's bluff will be called and they will be forced to back down and make big concessions. They point out that the EU leaders are terrified of a Greek default and exit from the euro. This would cause a new financial crisis and deep recession throughout the EU, with countries like Spain, Portugal and Ireland also possibly forced out of the euro.

This is true, but events have their own momentum. If the country leaves the euro-zone and the EU, either by the decision of Brussels and Berlin or by an initiative of the Greek people, and there is a relative delay in revolutionary support from the European workers' movement, then the first question is whether Greece has already broken from the capitalist system or remains still a capitalist country.

**An isolated capitalist Greece will be in ruins. In the case of a revolutionary break from capitalism the only survival strategy is the revolutionary socialist: we have to re-organise all social relations with an emergency program.**

• See inside, p.8. Greece: the fight for workers' control

Spanish miners have set up road blocks... and met the full force of the repressive state

# Solidarity with Spanish miners!

By John Cunningham

**Spanish coal miners, located mainly in the northern region of Asturias, went on indefinite strike against the austerity measures of Spanish prime Minister Mariano Rajoy at the end of May.**

Fuelled by massive property speculation — a bubble which has now well and truly burst — the dictates of the IMF and the deteriorating capitalist crisis, the Spanish economy nosedived into recession in the second half of 2008 and since then millions of jobs have been lost. With 30 billion euros of cuts, as well as huge tax increases, Spain also now has one of the highest unemployment rates in the EU.

The miners responded angrily to the news that government subsidies to the mining industry are to be cut by over 60%. This will almost certainly destroy the industry and leave communities dependent on coal utterly destitute. About 8,000 jobs are at stake, with unions estimating that another 30,000 will be affected indirectly.

Miners from the two major trade union federations, the Comisiones Obreras (CCOO) and the Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT), are united in their opposition to the government measures and the strike has drawn 100% support. Many other unions across the country have pledged

support; already transport workers have taken action alongside the miners and a one-day general strike is planned.

Roadblocks and railblocks have been set up in the area. A number of miners have staged "stay-down" strikes. On 31 May miners demonstrated on the streets of Madrid, where they were attacked by riot police using tear gas while in other clashes police have used rubber bullets. Some of the reports filtering through the media blackout suggest that in some areas of Asturias there is almost a state of civil war.

Clearly this is a dispute which has the potential to run for a long time.

Asturias, the main mining region, has a long history of industrial militancy. "Red Asturias" was one of the main oppositional areas to General Franco. During the British miners' strike of 1984-5 Spanish miners were generous in their support for their overseas comrades.

**In the same way that the British miners were once considered the vanguard of the labour movement, the Spanish miners are seen by many to be giving a lead to the rest of the Spanish trade union movement. This strike could provide the spark to ignite the whole Iberian peninsula.**

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## Solidarity committee set up

**Former miners and trade union supporters in the UK have set up the Spanish Miners' Solidarity Committee.**

Initially based in Sheffield, the Committee has pledged itself to campaign nationally in the UK labour and trade union movement and in the mining community for solidarity with the striking miners and their families in the Spanish Asturias, Aragon and León coalfields.

UK supporters of the Spanish coal miners know only too well the consequences — economic, social and political — of butchering the coal in-

dustry.

Today there are just a handful of deep mines in the UK. This is all that remains of an industry that even 30 years ago employed more 200,000 men.

In its place, there is only mass unemployment, poverty and social deprivation and decay. That future faces the Spanish miners if they are defeated.

The Committee wants to raise funds for the families of the striking miners. They have already won the support of socialist film-maker Ken Loach who has said, "Not for the

first time, it is miners who fight on behalf of all working people. This crisis causes such misery through mass unemployment and attacks on working conditions and the social wage. The responsibility lies with the ruling class and those who defend an intolerable, unjust system. Good wishes and solidarity."

**Two representatives of the committee will travel soon to Spain for discussions with Spanish miners and their families.**

• More information: [Spanishminerssolidarity@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:Spanishminerssolidarity@hotmail.co.uk)

## Banning families

By Ira Berkovic

**Tory Home Secretary Theresa May plans new legislation to make it easier to deport refugees and asylum seekers by clamping down on their right to stay in the UK if they have family connections here.**

The "right to family life" is enshrined in Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, and means that (for example) refugees can legally remain in the country if they are married to a British national. May is now claiming that the right is "not absolute".

May's new proposals will mean that the spouses of UK nationals will have no automatic right to live in the country unless their spouse is earning more than £18,600. If a couple has children, the figure is higher (£24,800 if there are two children involved, and a further £2,200 for every additional child).

The new law would mean that working-class families could be faced with effective exile from the UK (either seeking asylum or refuge elsewhere or returning to the country of origin of the foreign national) or the breakup of their family.

Some 25,000 families could be affected by the new laws every year.

The response from Theresa May's Labour Party opposite number, Yvette Cooper, has been appalling, leading with criticism of the govern-

**May: UK is full up for poor people**

ment for failing to deport a sufficient number of "criminals", and criticising the new proposals only on the basis that administrative incompetence — and not the obstacles represented by human rights legislation — is to blame for the Tories' failure to be more aggressively racist and anti-migrant.

The proposals are the latest in a series of Tory clampdowns intended to make it harder to come to Britain... unless you're rich. New requirements for pre-entry English tests discriminate against those not able to pay for language tuition, but anyone planning to invest more than £5 million in Britain will be fast-tracked for citizenship without being subjected to any such tests.

The Tories' immigration policy is simple. The rich are welcome, the poor are not. Each attack should be fought, as should the whole system of immigration controls.

**If capital and commodities have freedom to travel the globe, so should the workers who make them.**