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workers'
government

Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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greenhouse gases**

NO TO FRACKING!

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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Council cuts loom again

By Martin Thomas

As local councils prepare their budgets for the financial year 2014-5, they face reductions in their income from central government which by 2015-6 "will bring to 43% the total cuts to local authority funding announced by this Government".

So estimates the councils' umbrella body, the Local Government Association, adding that "the money available to deliver non-social-care services... is predicted to shrink by 66% by the end of the decade".

Central government pressure squeezes even tighter because it goes with decrees forbidding councils to raise council tax — the major element of their income that they can control — by more than 2% without a referendum, and penalising them if they raise it at all.

A lot of things local councils do are legal obligations, prescribed by central government. The cuts



The 2011 Southampton council workers' strike is still one of the biggest industrial battles against cuts. Will there be more?

slash into the areas where council have some degree of choice, like libraries, pools, and gyms.

201 local authority libraries closed in 2011-2, and 74 in 2012-3. On present projections, around a quarter of all the local authority libraries in Britain will close over this decade.

Those that remain de-

pend on volunteers: employed library staff numbers went down 6.8% last year, volunteers increased 44%.

Yet Labour councils still plan only to "manage" the cuts as best they can.

A few Labour councillors rebelled in 2013. More rebels voting against cuts in 2014, and

more support from them from unions, will be an important spur to community and union resistance.

• The Councillors Against Cuts campaign has a new statement online. See councillorsagaincuts.org

Duggan verdict: no justice



A statement from the Black* Power Caucus of the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts (NCAFC) on the verdict from the inquest into Mark Duggan's death.

Azelle Rodney, Jean Charles de Menezes, Mark Duggan; these are the names of just a few of the people that have died at the hands of the

Metropolitan Police, an organisation that is apparently there to protect the people of London.

To many people in the city however, it has always been nothing more than an aggressive and institutionally racist organisation, solely dedicated to preserving the unjust status quo, quelling any dissent and unafraid in using violence to do so.

The verdict given by the Mark Duggan inquest, that the shooting of an unarmed young black man on the streets of Tottenham Hale was lawful, does nothing but confirm this view.

The killing of Mark Duggan, and the subsequent injustice that came with the verdict, is in no way an aberration in the history of the Metropolitan Police or indeed any police service. Many black youngsters in cities like London feel nothing but fear and antipathy towards the Metropolitan Police, and justifiably so. A black person is on average seven times more likely to be stopped and searched by a police officer than a white person, despite strong evidence that, once stopped and searched, black people are no more likely than white people to be arrested.

The daily humiliation of being regarded as an object of suspicion, an object worthy of contempt, leads to the sort of anger that manifests itself in the shape of riots like those seen in London in 2011.

When young men like

Mark Duggan are not only shot and killed by the police, but then the police are virtually acquitted of any major wrong-doing, it is hardly surprising that mistrust and hostility to the police still exists.

An armed wing of the state like the Metropolitan Police Service does not, and cannot do, anything to make people's lives safer. A bourgeois state and its armed wings (and make no mistake, the actions of the police are as political as any government action) will however always target minorities, rather than face up to real issues such as economic inequality and youth unemployment.

Whether it's by making black young men like Mark Duggan out to be dangerous "gangsters", or by painting immigrants as a threat, or working-class people on benefits as scroungers.

With this in mind it is time to think hard about whether or not the police services in this country should even exist in their current state at all.

• More: anticuts.com

Dieudonné: symptom of a wider problem

On 28 December 2013, West Bromwich Albion striker Nicolas Anelka made an anti-Semitic “quenelle” gesture. Anelka says the gesture was an “anti-establishment” tribute to his friend, the comedian Dieudonné M’bala M’bala.

Describing himself primarily as an “anti-Zionist”, Dieudonné is politically associated with the fascist far-right. Yves Coleman, a French activist involved in the journal *Ni patrie ni frontières* (“No Fatherland, No Borders”), offers a contribution to the discussion about the convergence of “anti-Zionism” with the far-right, and the French left’s response.

Dieudonné, the French-African stand-up comedian, began his parallel career in official politics running against the fascist National Front in Dreux in 1997.

He participated in “pro-Palestinian” lists for the European elections in 2004 (as part of “Euro-Palestine”) and 2009 (as part of the “Anti-Zionist Party”). He became a close friend of National Front leader Jean-

Marie Le Pen and his family in 2006. He met Hugo Chavez in 2006, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2009, and Muammar Qaddafi in 2011.

He is a good businessman, charging €43 (almost six times the minimum hourly wage) to listen to his lousy “jokes” against Jews, homosexuals, women, etc. His “humour” has always been very ambiguous and dubious. His particular form of anti-Zionism is quite common inside the pro-Palestinian movement and wider anarchist/radical “left”, and the anti-Semitic ideas he espouses are commonly found, although often in less explicit and offensive terms, in the anti-globalisation and leftist movements in France.

Dieudonné’s defence of the rights of fascists to freedom of expression is often formulated with exactly the same words as those used by so-called left-wing intellectuals (Noam Chomsky, Jean Bricmont, Michel Collon, etc.). Dieudonné takes such stances in explicit alliance with infamous Holocaust deniers such as Robert Faurisson and



Dieudonné, making the “quenelle” gesture

Pierre Guillaume.

Since the early 1980s, there have been several organised right-wing drives inside mainly-Muslim communities (African and Arab, as well as in West Indian communities) and inside the Jewish community in France.

On the Jewish “side”, this was led by intellectuals and members of CRIF (“The Representative Committee of Jewish Institutions in France”). In Black communities, the right-wing and rightwards-moving communalists included Dieudonné, “Tribu KA” (an African anti-Semitic

group led by Kémi Séba), the “Anti-Zionist Party” (a coalition involving French fascists, members of the Jewish ultra-orthodox Neturei Karta sect, and Shi’a Muslim organisations financed by Iran), the “Indigènes de la République” (“Natives of the Republic”, which campaigned, amongst other things, against “Zionist domination” of French media), and “Euro-Palestine” (which hosted the notorious jazz musician Gilad Atzmon). All these groups attempted to construct alternative historical narratives and memories in each community.

The “anti-Zionists” consistently equate Israel and Nazism, something the far left has so far been unable to effectively challenge. For example, when Dieudonné, in a 2004 sketch on a TV show, made the Nazi salute and shouted “Isra-Heil!” while dressed as an orthodox Jew, the criticism from the Trotskyist group Lutte Ouvrière was soft, calling the sketch “bad taste”, and saying it could have shocked “good faith” Jews who “condemn the policy of the Israel state”. LO con-

cluded that “in all this, nothing justifies the ostracism which strikes [Dieudonné]. He is virtually, if not officially, banned from public television.” (See bit.ly/lo-d)

Defending its own “freedom of expression” has become a key theme for the far right. The left milieu has been unable to properly expose this hypocritical claim coming from fascists.

In the anti-globalisation movement, and “Indignados” and “Occupy”-style movements, it’s trendy to adopt a stance of saying anyone should be allowed to speak because all opinion are equal.

But we cannot let organised fascists or fascist “thinkers” express themselves freely at demonstrations, discussion meetings, etc. The New Anticapitalist Party’s (NPA) reaction to the recent measures taken against Dieudonné largely follows the same trend of emphasising opposition to the ban.

I’m not going to cry if Dieudonné loses money from having to cancel his banned tour, or even if he

is thrown in jail for his anti-Semitic and pro-fascist propaganda. I don’t think his ideas are just ideas. In France, racism, Holocaust denial, and anti-Semitism are considered as crimes, not as ideas open to debate. This is what bothers fascists and Holocaust deniers, as well as some liberals, leftists, and anarchists, who pretend to defend an “absolute” freedom of expression.

I will not protest alongside the defenders of Dieudonné, or use the same arguments. And I will certainly refuse to discuss and debate with any militant fascist, racist, or Nazi. Such “debate” can only serve to legitimise fascist ideas, which is exactly what the fascists want.

The question of anti-Semitism, and the growth of nationalist and fascist ideas amongst Franco-French and non-Franco-French workers, will become serious long-term problems if they are not confronted head-on.

• This article is abridged. The complete version is online at bit.ly/yc-d

Turkey: the pro-US or the Putin path?

By Phil Grimm

Recent developments in Turkey represent a new crisis within the political establishment.

On the surface we see an investigation into corruption initiated by the judiciary. The scandal reached the top of the ruling AKP (Freedom and Justice Party) and government officials, even Prime Minister Erdogan’s son. A cabinet reshuffle followed,

with many ministers being forced to resign by Erdogan.

On one level this is a power struggle between the Gülen movement and the Erdoganists. The AKP and the Gülen movement are both soft-Islamists, but with different roots.

The Gülen movement holds many positions within the state machine, especially in the judiciary and police, as a result of patient, semi-clandestine work for many years.

They were instrumental in getting rid of army generals as an autonomous political force. The AKP welcomed the Gülenists’ support in that. Now times have changed.

For some time, there has been visible tension. The Gülen movement has been more assertive, demanding more positions in the state.

They were clearly against Erdogan’s policies on a number of issues, such as his “peace” policy with the Kurdish movement, his hard line on Israel, his anti-US policy on Iran and Syria, and so on.

But the power struggle among them is not the whole story. This is a move motivated and backed by western imperialist powers, the US in particular. They haven’t been happy with Erdogan for some time as he has insisted on his own stubborn, ambitious line especially on foreign policy. The Gülen movement is a tool of US imperialism

in this game.

Erdogan has become an increasingly Putin-like authoritarian leader. He seeks to carry on his political career as president with increased powers, through a series of elections that will be held in 2014. Western powers don’t want another Putin.

The conflict in essence is about which path to take for Turkey: An anti-western, anti-Israel path, with relatively more independence from the US, or a more obedient path. Erdogan has increasingly become the former type of leader in the Middle East.

The government and Er-

dogan have definitely received a blow. But it doesn’t necessarily mean that AKP will lose the coming elections.

AKP still enjoys a high level of support (around 40-50%) which is the highest by far for any bourgeois political party around.



Prime Minister Erdogan

Australian victory boosts lobby bill fight

By Gerry Bates

A “The Transparency of Lobbying” Bill pushed by the Government is being debated in the House of Lords from 13 January.

It puts more trade-union spending under legal limitations in the months before a general election - the TUC reckons that the text could lay the basis to ban all union conferences in that period — and greatly reduces the al-

lowance for “within-limit” spending.

On 17 December the fight against this Bill got a boost when the High Court of New South Wales, in Australia, ruled unconstitutional a similar but more drastic law enacted by the Liberal (Tory) government in NSW in February 2012, with the support of the Greens.

The Court annulled a clause which banned all political donations by unions and other organisations, and only dona-

tions by individuals legal; and another clause which reduced the legal ceiling on election spending by the Australian Labor Party by whatever amount affiliated unions had spent in the election (even those affiliated unions had been barred from donating to Labor).

As British labour lawyer Keith Ewing puts it, “the NSW legislation sought effectively to ban the Labor Party in NSW, at least as the party was initially conceived”.

Michael Gove makes an ass of himself

Press

By Patrick Murphy

Daily Mail

Michael Gove appears to be walking a path separate from any other Coalition cabinet Minister. It's not that he is necessarily more right-wing or callous than his grue-some peers.

It's just that in his pronouncements and actions he appears to be more concerned to carve out his own reputation as a peculiarly contrarian scourge of left-liberal Britain than to promote a coherent government programme.

From the hugely expensive and wasteful free school programme to the derided provision of King James bibles to every school in England, Gove often looks like a man ploughing his own lonely and quixotic furrow. The conventional view is that this is part of a studied and calculated plan to bid for the Conservative leadership and that what appears odd to most goes down very well with the Tory base. Certainly he has powerful friends in the media, gets a good press from the *Mail* and *Express*, is championed by Fraser Nelson of the *Spectator*, and is married to a leading *Times* columnist.

The arrogance and certainty created by this cocoon can, however, be beautifully self-defeating. In his recent broadside against left-wing academics and popular culture for their depiction of the First World War Gove seems to have blown a whistle to which even the dogs refuse to run.

In Gove's new year article for the *Daily Mail* attacking what he called "left-wing myths" about the 1914-18 war, Gove was drawing media and popular attention to his obsessions. Hence his decision to blame TV shows and a play, naming 'Blackadder', 'The Monocled Mutineer' and 'Oh What a Lovely War'. The result was the sort of widespread press and social media discussion which would not have been generated by an attack on a few left-wing historians.

Gove's case is that World War One was an entirely just war fought in defence of "the western liberal order" against "the ruthless social Darwinism of the German elites, the pitiless

approach they took to occupation, their aggressively expansionist war aims and their scorn for the international order". According to the *Mail* he "reserves his greatest scorn for those who have sought to depict the soldiers as lions led by donkeys".

Here speaks a man who can't be bothered to do any research at all before shooting from the hip. The ensuing days saw him reminded of a few facts.

The phrase "lions led by donkeys" was coined by the ultra-right wing historian and maverick Tory politician Alan Clark.

The idea that Britain was wrong to enter the war and should have left the European powers to fight it out is the central argument of Niall Ferguson's book *The Pity of War*. Ferguson is the poster-boy of the right. The other popular history of the war written by a right-winger, Max Hastings' *Catastrophe: Europe Goes To War 1914*, paints a relentlessly grim picture of the role of British generals. In short the notion that it is only left-wing historians who question the need for the war or the competence of military leaders is as far from the mark as it is possible to be. Even the historians Gove claimed for his side (Margaret McMillan and Gary Sheffield) quickly distanced themselves from him.

Richard Evans, professor of History at Cambridge, appeared in the *Independent* and *Guardian* to remind Gove of a few aspects of 1914 which sat uneasily with his simplistic picture of good versus evil.

Prominent among these is the fact that one of Britain's two allies in the war was despotic Tsarist Russia, whose political order was neither liberal nor democratic. Britain may have been more liberal but even by the standards of the time it was hardly democratic. 40% of men and all women were denied the right to vote in elections.



In Germany, suffrage had been extended to all adult males. That in turn helped to produce the largest socialist party in Europe both in terms of membership and parliamentary representation, the Social Democrats.

There is, of course, a left-right debate about the First World War. It reflects the battle of ideas that took part at the time and rent the growing international socialist movement in two.

The war was a crime and a disgrace not because there was nothing of importance involved or because the generals and politicians were blundering, out-of-touch or incompetent. It was pointless from the perspective of working-class people because it was not liberty, equality or democracy that was being fought for but the spoils of colonialism and empire. 1914-18 was the imperialist war par excellence.

Gove made a basic mistake in assuming that the wisdom of British involvement is a right-left issue. Ferguson, Clark and Hastings, amongst others, passionately criticise British participation largely on the basis that it wasn't necessary as a means of defending imperial dominance. It could have been avoided or the European powers could have been left to weaken each other. The involvement of Russia led to Communist revolution in the unlikely places, and US intervention left Britain with huge debts to the USA, which would soon replace the British Empire as a world power.

At the time governments and nationalist newspapers tried to sell the First World War as an honourable cause sometimes focusing on "freedom" but more often on alleged war atrocities by the Germans in Belgium (itself an imperialist power of singular cruelty in the Congo). Today, however, right-wing historians analyse the war as an episode in the decline of the British empire. They have different reasons from us for viewing it as a disaster, but they have little time for the empty expedient patriotism of the time. Gove was either too ignorant or too arrogant to understand this. Whichever it was he has been noticeably reluctant to come forward and defend his claims.

Michael Gove remains a powerful and dangerous politician, but it will be a good thing for children, parents and teachers if he is weakened and undermined by this episode.

Regrouping Cliffites, or six-way merger?

The Left

By Martin Thomas



Dave Renton, one of the well-known figures in the new wave of people who have quit the SWP after its December 2013 conference (NWSQ for short), sets his aim for 2014 as "the regroupment of the best of the Cliffite diaspora, and then (with luck) contributing to that bolder, braver left of which we can be just a constituent part".

Renton's perspective is different from that of the previous (spring 2013) wave of SWP-quitters, the main group of whom are in the International Socialist Network. Tom Walker, a leading figure in the ISN, writes on the ISN website that he seeks "a new approach fit for 2013, based on contemporary theoretical work instead of a return to any particular canon".

There are many different political shades in the ISN. Walker and other well-known ISNers such as Richard Seymour and China Mieville have published a blast accusing other ISNers of "the politics of anathema". "The IS Network at the moment tends toward the sect model... the dominant forces inside the organisation cannot forbear from abusing and insulting our own members" [i.e. Walker, Seymour, etc.]

Presumably the dispute had something to do with conflicts at the Left Unity conference on 30 November. Walker spoke at the conference for the trend in Left Unity which wants to model it on Die Linke in Germany, the Front de Gauche in France, the Syriza majority in Greece, etc. Some ISNers instead backed the harder-left Socialist Platform. The ISN as such made no statement one way or the other.

Another ISNer writes: "we've been inspired by many

groups outside our tradition, including autonomists, anarchists and issue campaigns".

Quite a few of those who quit the SWP in spring 2013 have left the ISN; quite a few people who left the SWP much longer ago, or with non-SWP backgrounds, have joined the ISN. The London group of the Anti-Capitalist Initiative, set up by Simon Hardy and Luke Cooper when they quit Workers' Power in April 2012, has joined the ISN, though the ACI's other significant group, in Manchester, has not.

The ISN had been talking about merging with the ACI and with Socialist Resistance (a small group which is a remnant from the old International Marxist Group, the Mandelbrite group in Britain: SR, like Walker, is in the Die-Linke-model wing of Left Unity).

VOTED

In late 2013, an ISN conference voted to go instead for a six-way merger of ISN, ACI, SR, Workers' Power, Plan C [an "autonomist-Marxist" group], and the IWW [a small revolutionary syndicalist group].

In any case, "regroupment of the Cliffite diaspora" is not what the ISN is about.

We do not know how many of the NWSQ Dave Renton speaks for. The NWSQ's website has carried no statements or arguments about perspectives. Some student NWSQ have expressed a will to work with the broad-left National Campaign Against Fees And Cuts, which AWL students work in, and indicated that they are trying to reconfigure themselves as a group in the student left.

Andrew Burgin, one of the founders of Left Unity, has told LU that Mark Bergfeld (former SWP student organiser and Central Committee member, who resigned in early 2013 but isn't in ISN) will join Left Unity "and bring ex-SWP students with him". However, in Lambeth, south London,

which has one of the most active and left-wing local LU groups, and a concentration of NWSQ, the NWSQ (around Rob Owen, also a one-time SWP student organiser) are active through their own group, "Brixton Rebels", and not in LU.

Counterfire, the group founded by John Rees and Lindsey German when they quit the SWP in February 2010, and the International Socialist Group in Scotland, founded by Chris Bambery when he quit in April 2011, must also be counted as part of the "Cliffite diaspora"; but are distant from both ISN and NWSQ.

Serious attention to the political legacy that formed them is a virtue for the ex-SWPs, and so is openness to other ideas and currents on the left. So far, however, those strands have failed to mesh into an effective combination.

The ISN formally announced early on that it was unwilling to discuss with AWL, though some NWSQers (and some individual ISNers) are more open. Oddly, though, the ex-SWPs do not seem to have discussed and debated much even with those whom they consider closer, the anarchists, the autonomists, the syndicalists, the Mandelbrites, the ex-Workers' Power people etc.: there is no sign of debate on any of the big theoretical issues embedded in those traditions.

All the SWP-quitters, to their credit, disputed SWP leader Alex Callinicos's charge that in combatting the SWP Central Committee they were rejecting the basic ideas of Lenin. They would do well now to heed an important thought from Lenin.

"The majority of the [trend whom Lenin was combatting] look with sincere resentment... upon all theoretical controversies, factional disagreements, broad political questions, plans for organising revolutionaries, etc...."

"[But] without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement".

Stop fracking and the “dash for gas”

The risk of catastrophic climate change, which could have a devastating impact on human and other life on earth, is growing.

In May 2013, the Manu Loa observatory in Hawaii, USA, recorded 400 parts per million of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere for the first time. 400ppm is acknowledged by some climate experts as a key “tipping point”.

We need a rapid transition away from dependence on fossil-fuel-based energy sources, and towards renewable and sustainable sources. The market cannot be relied upon to oversee such a transition. Avoiding climate barbarism needs socialism — democratic working-class rule to plan a global transition away from fossil fuels.

The UK government is facing in precisely the opposite direction. There are now 19 hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”) sites in the UK. This includes five sites extracting shale gas, and 14 extracting coal bed methane. Additionally, another six shale gas fracking sites have been approved, along with 30 coal bed methane sites. A further 11 sites are under consideration.

David Cameron has said his government is going “all out for shale”. A recently-announced policy will allow local councils to keep 100% of business rates raised from fracking sites, up from 50%. Environmental and community activists have described the policy as a bribe.

The expansion of fracking is part of the government’s wider energy policy announced in December 2012, that approved the building of 30 new gas-fired power stations by 2030. The policy, known as the “dash for gas”, would undo all government commitments on reducing emissions.

The 2008 Climate Change Act set a target of an 80% emissions cut by 2050, and the Government’s independent climate advisers, the Committee on Climate Change (CCC), have stated that the low carbon grid of 2030 should produce no more than 50g of CO₂ for every kilowatt hour of electricity generated. However, gas produces 350g CO₂ for every kilowatt hour at the point of generation. Although gas is generally cleaner than coal, the extra emissions generated by construction and transportation projects necessary to implement the dash for gas policy would significantly narrow the gap.

Fracking carries huge environmental risks. As Paul Vernasky wrote in *Solidarity* 295 (11 September 2013): “The Tyndall Centre [based at the University of Manchester] concluded that large-scale extraction of shale gas ‘cannot be reconciled’ with climate change commitments to limit global

temperature increases to 2°C. In the UK context, shale gas could undermine the decarbonisation budgets proposed by the Committee on Climate Change.

“Shale gas advocates point to the US, where shale gas extraction has coincided with cheaper gas prices and falling emissions. US CO₂ emissions from domestic energy have declined by 9% since a peak in 2005. But another Tyndall report [...] estimates that between 35% and 50% of power sector emissions reductions may have been due to shale gas price effects, with the rest was due to renewable and nuclear power.



GLOBALLY

“Even if this is an improvement in the US, it is no argument globally. ‘Climate mitigation in one country’ is not progress if it simply displaces the emissions elsewhere.

“There has been a substantial increase in coal exports from the US over the same period and globally coal consumption continues to rise. More than half of the emissions avoided in the US power sector may have been exported as coal.”

Fracking also carried other risks, including water contamination and ground pollution.

The dash for gas has been accompanied by major changes to the way the government subsidises renewable energy sources. In December 2013, the government slashed the funding it provided for the construction of onshore wind farms. Funding for onshore solar energy was also cut. Danny Alexander, Lib Dem MP and Chief Secretary to the Treasury, called the policies “a rebalancing”. That’s putting it mildly; government policies massively tip the balance of onshore energy generation away from renewable sources and towards gas, extracted through a rapid expansion of fracking sites.

The dash for gas is a quick-fix, short-termist solution for a profound, epochal problem. Expanding fossil-fuel-power en-

ergy generation will make the reductions in emissions, vital to prevent catastrophic climate change, much harder. Renewable sources account for just 11.3% of the UK’s electricity generation. That percentage must increase dramatically, and fast.

The big winners from current government policy will be multinational energy companies and construction conglomerates. French energy giant Total recently became the first global oil firm to invest in shale gas extraction in Britain. More will undoubtedly follow.

Campaigns against fracking in Sussex and Lancashire have revived a flagging environmental movement. Activists have taken on companies like Cuadrilla and shown that multinationals cannot expect an easy ride. The labour movement needs to develop its own radical environmental politics and an alternative working-class plan for the energy industry.

Increasing subsidies to onshore renewable energy generation and ending the dash for gas is an immediate demand. But much more is needed.

A radical working-class plan for energy would start with demand for the expropriation of the energy companies and a reduction and freeze on fuel prices. The right to a heated home is fundamental and should not be in the gift of the market. Challenging market logic in the energy industry implies going beyond controls and planning of distribution, and democratically planning generation and production too. A working-class energy policy would involve an immediate moratorium on fracking and gas power station construction, with workers currently employed there being supported to develop plans to transition sites towards socially-necessary production (and, if that’s not possible, to be redeployed elsewhere where their skills are needed, or retrained if necessary). The current system of fluctuating subsidies to “green capitalists” in the renewables industry would be abolished, renewable energy generation taken into social control, and massively expanded through government investment funded by taxing the rich. The nuclear industry should also be expropriated and placed under social control, so the nuclear element of a low-carbon energy mix can be controlled and regulated by workers’ and community planning.

The questions of democracy and control are fundamental. We counterpose democratic control, of those working in the energy industry and in affected communities, to the control of the market.

Only a society responsive to the interests of human need, rather than the interests of profit, can steer a course away from climate chaos.

Help us raise £12,000 by October



2014 began with brutal repression of the Cambodian garment workers — five workers were murdered by the military police and many others jailed, after a successful fight to increase their bare subsistence wages. The best new year’s resolution socialists can make is to fight harder to put an end to this brutal capitalist system.

How to begin, and how to sustain a fight against capitalism? And, indeed — how to fight?

Educating ourselves — in theory and the historical, global experiences of working-class fighters — makes a huge difference. In the long-run only well-educated revolutionaries can hope to play a part in reviving socialist struggle and making sure it succeeds. The AWL is organising for revolutionary-democratic socialist ideas within the labour movement, to help ourselves and others educate themselves for a militant anti-capitalist fight. We produce this paper to help us do that. We publish books to help us do that. And we maintain a website to help us do that.

But our website needs refurbishing. workersliberty.org is a fantastic archive; not only does it hold back copies of *Solidarity* and our journal *Workers’ Liberty*, but there are many pamphlets, classical Marxist texts, articles from the archive of third-camp Trotskyism, debates, educational materials, and articles that have not been published in any other place. However, right now it is a bit like Karl Marx’s desk — piled high with wonderful manuscripts, which would be fantastic to read if only you knew what you were looking for and where to find it.

This year we want to overhaul the look and accessibility of our website. To do that we need to raise money to employ a part-time web administrator. We also need “seed money” to publish more books and booklets. And money to fund another person to work on all our publications.

Will you help us? If you think that our ideas matter, if you think that any aspect of our work is valuable, you should support us both financially and through getting involved in our activity.



We are launching a new drive to raise £12,000 by our AGM in October 2014

You can set up a regular payment with your bank to ours (Account name: AWL. Sort code: 08-60-01. Account: 20047674. Unity Trust Bank, Nine Brindleyplace, Birmingham, B1 2HB), send a cheque to us at the address below (cheques payable to “AWL”), or donate online workersliberty.org/payment. Take copies of *Solidarity* to sell at your workplace, university/college, or campaign group, or organise a fundraising event. And get in touch to discuss joining the AWL!

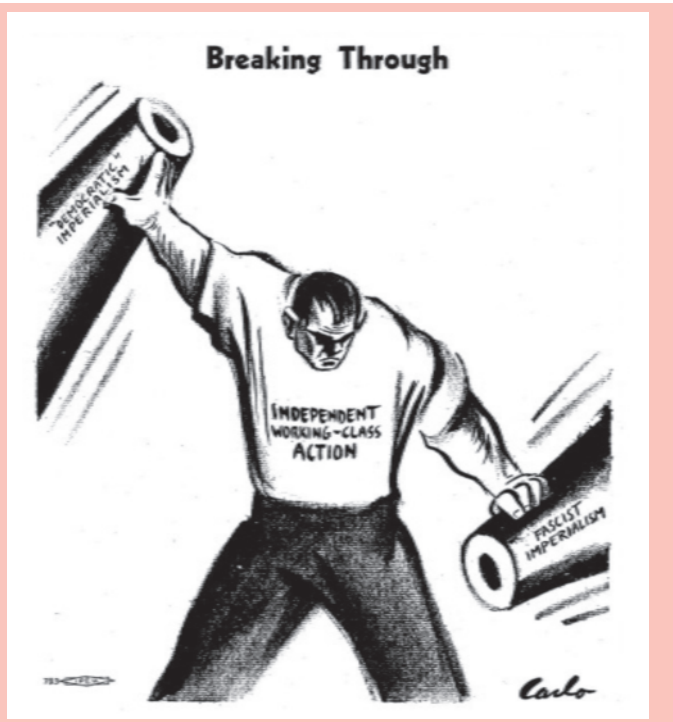
More information: 07796 690 874 / awl@workersliberty.org / AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, 58 Riley Road, London SE1 3DG.

In an era of wars and revolutions

Between the 1930s and 1950s, the revolutionary socialist press in the USA had talented cartoonists such as “Carlo” (Jesse Cohen).

A new collection of their work gives a snapshot history of the times — the rise of the mass industrial union movement in the USA, the great strike wave of 1945-6, the fight against “Jim Crow” racism, World War Two, the imposition of Stalinism on Eastern Europe, and more. These pages preview the collection.

To order *In an Era of Wars and Revolutions* (314 pages) by post, pay £8.99 plus £1.60 postage at workersliberty.org/payment



By Sean Matgamna, editor of *In an Era of Wars and Revolutions*

That “one picture can be worth a thousand words” is true, but only up to a point. A photograph or a painting can not properly nail down, explain or explore ideas. A complicated piece of writing has no visual equivalent.

Yet a well-done cartoon is a powerful political weapon. A few bold strokes by an artist can convey an idea more vividly and fix it more firmly in the viewer’s mind than would an editorial or an article.

A cartoon is drawn to convey an idea, a point of view, an interpretation of what it depicts, and its meaning. Cartoons by their nature simplify, caricature, exaggerate, lampoon, and play with archetypal images.

A cartoon is highly subjective, yet it draws on commonly recognised symbols. The image, idea, interpretation fuse in the drawing. Drawn to convey an idea of people, things, institutions, classes, states, and of their inter-relationships, a

cartoon distills the artist’s conception of what is essential in those people, events, entities, institutions, relationships.

The cartoonist is licensed to distort everyday reality so as to bring out a view, a “seeing”, analysis, critique, historical perspective of it. Its ciphers, emblems, archetypes vary to allow for the artist’s individual slant (like, in this collection, Carlo’s characteristic rendition of the top hat-fat archetypal bourgeois laughing at the gullibility or helplessness of workers).

All of a cartoon, all its details and references, are consciously or subconsciously chosen to convey a point of view, a nailed-down perception, a historical perspective. In old socialist cartoons the worker is always bigger and stronger than his enemies. He needs only to be awakened to an awareness of his strength.

It is almost always a “he”. The socialists who drew these cartoons were, themselves and their organisations, militant for women’s rights, but little of that is in their work.

One of the difficulties with old socialist cartoons for a modern viewer is that the stereotype-capitalist wears a top hat and is stout or very fat. In some early 20th century British labour movement cartoons he is named, simply, “Fat”. Fat now, in our health-conscious days, is seen as a characteristic of lumpenised workers and other “lower orders” people.

Much contemporary comedy is a hate-ridden depiction of the poor, the disadvantaged, the excluded, the badly educated, by physical type – fat and slobby. Where most of the old racial and national caricatures have been shamed and chased into the underbrush, no longer tolerable to decent people of average good will, the old social-Darwinian racism against the poor is rampant still, unashamed and not often denounced.

Even so, the old symbols, the fat capitalist and the big powerful worker, are still intelligible. They depict truths of our times as well as of their own. These cartoons still live.

They portray US politics, governments, the class struggle, the labour movement, America’s “Jim Crow” racism, Stalinism at its zenith, Roosevelt’s New Deal, Harry Truman’s “Fair Deal”, Senator Joe McCarthy, McCarthyism. They present clean and stark class-struggle socialist politics, counterposed to both capitalism and Stalinism.

A few are from the 1920s, but mainly they cover the quar-

ter century after the victory of Hitler in Germany in 1933, and the definitive consolidation of Stalinism in the USSR.

Across the decades, they still carry the emotional hostility to the master class and solidarity with their victims that they were drawn to convey; the socialists’ abhorrence of the Stalinist atrocities that discredited and disgraced the name of socialism (they themselves were often among the targets); the desire, hope and drive for a re-made world — a socialist world. They blaze with anger and hatred against the horrors of America’s all-contaminating Jim Crow racism.

These cartoons were of their time, and what their time and earlier times led socialists to expect of the future. They were often mistaken. Government repression during World War Two was less fierce than the severe persecution of socialists and militant trade unionists in World War One and afterwards, led them to expect.

In the later 1940s, like most observers, they saw World War Three looming. In fact, the world settled into a prolonged “balance of terror” after Russia developed an atom bomb in 1949 and the USA and Russia fought a proxy war on Korean soil which ended in stalemate. The economic collapse which the experience of the 1930s led them to expect did not come (though in fact the long capitalist upswing took off only with the Korean war boom of 1950-3). Plutocratic democracy in the USA, during the war and after it, proved far less frail than the Marxists feared it would.

Over many years I have collected photocopies of these cartoons, buried as they were in files of old publications for six, seven or eight decades. I think others will be moved by them too.

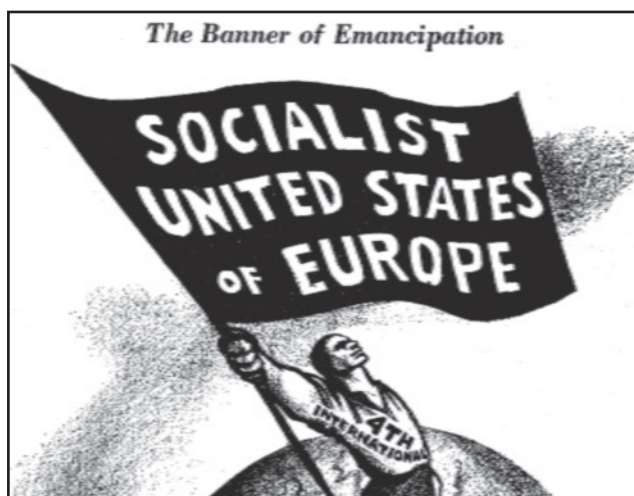
What Peadar Kearney wrote fifty years after their time of the Fenians, the left-wing Irish Republicans of the 1860s and 70s, speaks to the socialists of the era covered by this book as well:

*“Some fell by the wayside
Some died ‘mid the stranger,
And wise men have told us
That their cause was a failure;
But they stood by old Ireland
And never feared danger.
Glory O, glory O,
To the bold Fenian men!”*

The Way Out!



The Labor-Haters



I've looked at the first few pages, and this is terrific stuff! I'm looking forward to relaxing with a couple of glasses of red (of course!) wine and enjoying (when I don't cry) some really wonderful political art.

Marty Oppenheimer (joined the Young Socialist League, the youth wing of the ISL, in 1956)

When I first opened "In the era of wars and revolutions", I was taken back sixty years, seeing again cartoons published by the Workers Party/Independent Socialist League (ISL) in its paper, *Labor Action*, which I always looked forward to receiving.

But this not a simple reminiscence. I was struck again by the special power and sharp lessons taught by these cartoons. It is much more than a simple cartoon book. It is an excellent textbook on the history of revolutionary socialism between the mid-1920s and mid-1950s. The introduction is most moving and the historical timeline section complements the thirteen topical chapters. These group the cartoons, with their accompanying dates and explanations, putting them in historical and political context. While they reflect a particular time and struggle, they remain fully relevant today.

Sean Matgama has done an excellent and imaginative job overall. He closes the introduction with a powerful and moving poem on the Irish national and social struggle.

Ed Strauss (joined the YSL in 1954)

Inspiration for the 21st century

Paul Hampton reviews *In an era of wars and revolutions*

Socialist propaganda, defined by the Russian Marxist Georgi Plekhanov, conveys many ideas to a few people, whereas agitation conveys only one or a few ideas to a whole mass of people.

So what's the point of socialist political cartoons? Pictures can sometimes convey ideas more vividly than a thousand words or a 10-minute speech. Cartoons are both valuable propaganda and effective agitation.

This 300-page book of cartoons spans the end of the period of high imperialism, from the 1920s to the Second World War, and culminates in the mid-1950s at the beginning of post-war US hegemony.

The first selections centre on the nature of capitalism. Some of the metaphors still resonate, such as capitalists as vultures, the state as an octopus with tentacles that enmesh the working class, and imperialism embracing the whole globe.

Others perhaps less so: for example, as the introduction points out, the idea of capitalists as fat men in stripy trousers and bowler hats. Class struggle questions are drawn out: capital as a machine for pumping out surplus from workers, the wage ceiling (literally overhead) and the ambiguities of inflation — okay for the bosses to put up prices, but not for workers to demand higher wages.

Working-class politics is one of the key themes of the collection, showing how the Communist and Trotskyist press took up issues of women's liberation, anti-racism and other important matters of solidarity and workers' unity.

One of my favourites is two boxers, labour and capital. The demand on the worker is to use both hands — not just the economic struggle but independent political action, currently behind the worker-boxer's back. Another is the journalist with a roller running over hordes of workers with jingoism, a clever play on the word "press".

The demand for a trade union-based independent labour party has the image of a large cop and a large capitalist threatening workers. Another has a coin with Republicans on one side, Democrats on the other ("heads they win, tails you lose"), while in another, the labour party is a life belt for a worker in the sea clinging to the Democrat boat. One powerful image is of a worker, chained and gagged, while a capitalist sits with an elephant and donkey (symbols of the US Republican and Democrat parties) on his knee.

The cartoons are particularly good at illustrating transitional demands, which are Marxist answers on immediate questions around which workers can organise, but that also point towards working class power. For example "open the books" is presented using a locked book with profits on the cover, indicating that by opening it the source of workers' exploitation will be revealed. For "workers control of production", a large worker advances towards the factories,



while a small capitalist holds his hands out in despair, the worker saying, "If they can't run them, we can".

In a telling cartoon on tactics, two politicians plead with the worker to write to their congressman, while behind them are two clubs, inscribed with "March on Washington" and "general strike".



Fighting racism is one of the strongest sections of the book, reflecting the terrible experiences of African-Americans during this period, including lynchings, the colour bar in many jobs, and slum living conditions. There is a drawing of Emmett Till, the 14-year old murdered in the South in 1955, his body laid out on an altar at the feet of a judge wearing a KKK hood. Another has a black soldier returning after war (having fought in the segregated US army) to find the Statue of Liberty with a black man hanging lynched from it, as a "welcome home".

The book does a good job in puncturing the uncritical nostalgia for the Roosevelt era which is still found in the trade union bureaucracy and among the "new deal" Greens. A verdict on FDR is illustrated for workers by his first term as an unemployment line, his second term as war, and the third term as a graveyard.

The terrible effects of Stalinism are well illustrated, with images of the secret police (the GPU) as the grim reaper. Similarly, the Stalinist tactic of the popular front, tying the labour movement to bourgeois political parties, is lampooned with a skeleton looking at a map of Europe, where it had failed in Spain, France, Austria and Czechoslovakia.

STALIN

Hitler and Stalin are illustrated, both on top of a mountain of skulls. The role of the Communist Party USA during the war in promoting class collaboration is also mercilessly ridiculed.

The cartoons challenge the prevailing view at the time and since that the Second World War was simply a matter of democracy versus fascism. There are no illusions about the nature of the Hitler state in Germany, but the drawings puncture the hypocrisy of the "democratic" powers, focusing on the lack of civil liberties (including anti-worker legislation on strikes), the restrictions on refugees and the war profits of the capitalists.

The cartoons have a variety of images of the post-war world, perhaps reflecting the difficulties Trotskyists had after 1945 in making sense of the shape of the new order. Some elements are spot on: for example two capitalists bestriding the globe fighting over world markets. Others suggest a repeat of the aftermath of World War One, with further repartition of colonies (and indeed of Germany) and economic depression, which did not in fact materialise. There is also the optimistic hope for socialist revolution, with one cartoon headed "down tools", with a worker hammering the globe and scattering the capitalists.

There is a sense of the Third Camp, both as a way of expressing opposition to both sides during the Second World War and then after 1945 as an independent stance opposed to both capitalism and Stalinism. There are reminders about the early days of nuclear weapons and the understandable fear of a devastating third world war.

These cartoons, all drawn in the heat of struggles to rouse workers to take action, are not merely relics. They have immense educational value today, for socialists trying to ground our ideas in the best traditions of our predecessors, but also to find a way to explain our politics in the current situation.

Marxists, socialists and other activists will draw inspiration from this collection in our fight for socialism in the 21st century.

How to get cops off campus

Recent collusion between management and the police at the University of London, during student solidarity with striking university workers, has raised the question of university autonomy from state intrusion. Michéal MacEoin looks at a rich history from Latin America.

Spanish and, later, Spanish-American institutions in Latin America based themselves on the medieval University of Bologna in Italy. They conceived of themselves as corporate communities of scholars.

This contrasted with a different medieval model, from Paris: controlled by masters, with students as academic and political subordinates.

This idea was given a modern update by the 1918 Reform Movement, which began in the University of Córdoba in northern Argentina. The movement had many specific educational complaints, from an outdated focus on learning by rote, to inadequate libraries and poor instruction.

Its demands for the institutionalisation of student participation in the running of universities and defence of the university's autonomy with respect to the state were not just ends in themselves, however. As Luigi Einaudi put it: "Autonomy was a prerequisite for reform of the university, and the reform of the university was in turn the first step toward the reform of the entire society."

The Reform Movement also wanted to mobilise the university around solving national political, economic and social problems. They were influenced by the Mexican and Bolshevik revolutions, and wished to sweep away the old oligarchy in the name of modernisation, secularism and progress.

Activists built links with labour organisations, and advocated the establishment of courses for workers. They demanded free education and open admission to all qualified applicants, aiming to create a democratic mass institution.

In the five years after the reforms, enrolment in Córdoba grew by around 80% and graduation rates increased by 244%.

Many student organisations took up the mantle of reform, and from Argentina to Mexico, student uprisings spread throughout the continent. The principles of the Córdoba movement were later endorsed by the International Student Congress on University Reform held in Mexico City in 1921.

Although there were demands for financial autonomy from the state, in practice autonomy meant two main ideas: self-governance by students and academic staff through the election of university officials and immunity from police intrusion without warrants or permission from university authorities, who were generally unwilling to give it.

Such autonomy created a "veritable discontinuity between the University and society." This arrangement, however, far from being depoliticising, often put universities at the centre of political struggle. In the battle against authoritarian governments in Latin America in the middle of the twentieth century, autonomy gave an impetus to the development of oppositional political forces and increased student power.

Thus, one of Juan Perón's first acts in 1945 after his election as President of Argentina was to appoint his own supporters to the position of rector and dean of the faculties at the Uni-



versity of Buenos Aires, a site of much opposition to Peronism. This was followed in 1947 by a new university law which, while paying lip service to the principle of autonomy, undermined it with an article providing for the appointment of the rector and professors by the "national executive" i.e. Peron.

In the 1950s and 60s, guerrilla movements challenged governments in Cuba and Venezuela. Rioting and demonstrating students opposed to the Batista dictatorship commonly took refuge from the police in universities.

Ironically, the Castro regime was to end university autonomy shortly after taking power. In 1959, there were elections for President of the University Students' Federation (FEU) at the University of Havana. The favourite was anti-Batista veteran Pedro Luis Boitel, who was supported by the 26 July Movement. But Castro intervened in the election to promote Rolando Cubela, a then loyalist who later became a CIA spy. Boitel withdrew his candidacy, though many students voted for him anyway.

University autonomy was abolished and student demonstrations without government sponsorship were banned in the wake of the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961. Boitel was later arrested for conspiracy and tortured. He died of starvation after 53 days of a hunger strike in 1972.

In Venezuela, the Castroite Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN) and the guerrilla Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR) made use of university autonomy to oppose the government of Rómulo Betancour. In December 1966 the government sent troops into Central University in Caracas, and proposed legislation limiting autonomy.

UK TODAY?

In the UK today we should think critically about what autonomy could mean. Now, too, it is not a panacea.

But autonomy from police intrusion, and the creation of democratic institutions could incubate critical thinking and give support to the class struggle.

Generally speaking, university life gives people a measure of time, space and resources between the end of parental authority and the beginning of capitalist workplace discipline with which to think critically about society and develop a worldview. Students can be particularly receptive to radical political opinions, regardless of their class background.

Though only the working class has the power to overthrow capitalism and replace it with a socialist society, universities and bodies such as students' unions can be useful allies in class struggle. Think of the general strike and student unrest in Paris in 1968 — a movement which also made reference to the 1918 reforms in Córdoba.

Today at the University of London, the students' union has provided political and material support to the outsourced Tres Cosas workers in their struggle for equal sick pay, holidays and pensions, to the extent of giving over office space to the Independent Workers of Great Britain (IWGB) trade union. This is undoubtedly a factor in the University's plans to abolish ULU and replace it with an apolitical management-run services centre.

There are some differences, however, from the Latin American experience. In the 1960s, with some exceptions in Peru and Colombia, Latin American universities were the preserve of students from upper- and middle-class backgrounds; regional enrolments from working-class students probably did not exceed 10%, and the peasantry were even less represented.

This is less the case today. Students are from a greater diversity of backgrounds, as student numbers have expanded in the last decade. According to research from the National Union of Students (NUS), 57% of students work part-time to fund their studies. The effect of this, as well as the end of living grants, the rise of tuition fees, and increasingly extortionate level of rents, means that students are less insulated and more exposed to the negative effects of class society. Students as a social group have economic grievances of their own. This provides an objective basis for students linking up with and becoming part of the labour movement, during as well as after their studies.

The role and function of universities has also changed, becoming greatly more enmeshed in the gears of capitalist society.

In the 1960s in many advanced capitalist countries, we saw signs of the tension between the university's orientation towards business, and the sort of critical thinking and political unrest which could lead in an anti-capitalist direction. In the early 1960s, the President of the University of California in Berkeley, Clark Kerr, wrote a book arguing that: "The university is being called upon ... to respond to the expanding claims of national service; to merge its activity with industry as never before; to adapt to and rechannel new intellectual currents."

At the same time, however, he tried to ban students from participating in political activity which had its base outside the campus. As Hal Draper pointed out: "[There is] a wide gap between Kerr's published theory about the 'merger' of the university and 'society,' and his moves toward restricting student involvement in political and social action off-campus.

"On the one hand he tells us we must accept the integration of the university with the state and industry in this Cold War... and must erase the boundary lines; on the other hand, he tries to muzzle and rein student activity on campus which tends to step beyond the boundary line, while at the same time other 'constituencies' in the university community are lauded for doing just that."

This tension has become sharper, as the marketization of education has vastly accelerated in the neoliberal era. In the UK, post-Thatcher managers, sometimes with little or no experience of teaching or university life, may as well be managing any corporate institution. Protest, and even student representation, are seen as detrimental to corporate image and institutional reputation. Universities dispense lucrative contracts to companies providing outsourced services; for-profit institutions are beginning to proliferate; and collegiate co-operation is becoming cut-throat competition. This is a far cry from the idea of the university as a community of learners.

As capitalist logics begin to permeate university sector, institutions themselves increasingly become a site of major class struggle.

Managers have faced resistance to course closures and the privatisation of services in universities such as London Metropolitan College and the University of Sussex, and staff have battled redundancies from on campuses such as the University of Birmingham the University of Liverpool.

It is not just autonomy from the state that is the issue, here. Autonomy is essentially a democratic demand. In previous generations, autonomy served to create distance from a repressive state or a reactionary society. In the neoliberal era, class relations reproduce themselves within the university and many of our major enemies can be found within our institutions themselves. The focus of our demands are therefore different.

With demands such as "cops off campus", we should remember who called the police on to campus in the first place in the University of London: unelected and distant senior management rattled by escalating class struggle and student unrest.

This is why, together with campaigning for police to stay off our campuses, we must also form and extend our links with local workers' struggles and demand democratic universities run by those who study and work in them.

The idea of democratic universities under students' and workers' control is the "crowning summit" of the battle against police intrusion, illiberal court injunctions and the unaccountable vice-grip of neoliberal managers.

**Demonstrate: march on Senate House
Wednesday 22 January, 2pm
University of London Union, Malet
Street**

**National demonstration and student
meeting, 11am, 29 January, University
of Birmingham
(defendededucationbrum.org)**

Solidarity with campus workers' struggles; the implementation of a living wage for all university staff; fighting the privatisation of the student loan book and rising tuition fees; fighting the marketisation of higher education and opposing cuts to staff, courses, bursaries and vital services.

Claiming our lives

Vicki Morris reviews a major exhibition of works by Nottingham-born artist Paul Waplington.

The Paul Waplington exhibition at Nottingham Castle showed works from what the exhibition notes call “a recent but by-gone age”, the 1970s and 80s.

A Central TV documentary about Waplington, broadcast in 1984, forms part of the exhibition. In it the artist comes across as the original “Grumpy Old Man”, mourning the passing of this by-gone, almost golden, past.

Happily, Waplington’s pictures — even of the East Midlands (he now lives in sunnier, rural Portugal) — are the opposite of grumpy: warm, colourful, full of life, love and hope. “Lowry meets the Muppets,” says my friend, but with an important political message.

The first room of the exhibition has paintings of Nottingham’s poorer streets, “strange views of terraced houses stacked up above each other”.

“May Day, Hyson Green” shows the 1978 May Day march snaking through the terraced Victorian streets around the then new-build Hyson Green flats. The Basford Hill Band — in which Waplington rose to second cornet — leads the march, which stretches into the distance.

The march features the banners of unions we know today including the NUT but also ones whose names disappeared through merger, eg, AUEW, and/or workplace closure, like ASTMS Raleigh. There are the banners of Bulwell Council Tenants Association, the NUM, and Nottingham and District Trades Union Council, and a home-made banner that says “People Before Profit”.

The scene would be familiar to a socialist today, but the march is clearly bigger than we can currently muster.

The residents of Hyson Green flats look down on the march with what Waplington suggests is bemusement. Many of them are recent immigrants to Nottingham; certainly none of them are — yet — citizens of the traditional labour movement.

Already, in 1984, Waplington is nostalgic for a time when whole streets would turn out for May Day, would know what the march and trade unions were about, and when political parties took the labour movement seriously. “I’d love to see May Day as what it was: a festival dedicated to working people.”

Waplington hated school, failed his 11 Plus, and left as soon as he could at 15. He wanted to be an artist but, without qualifications, was rescued only by the Nottingham lace industry where he got a job as an apprentice draughtsman, designing net curtains. “That was the pencil and brush job around here.”

Although he was pleasantly surprised to find he liked the work, he says it would be boring to do it your whole life: “Years pass and you’re filling in these little squares”. And then there is the problem that, regardless of your talents, you are just a worker, like any other, dependent for your living on ups and downs in trade.

Aged 21, Waplington was made redundant. He went abroad for a while, to Belgium, working as a pavement artist.



A mural in Sheffield based on Waplington's work

He met an anarchist and trade unionist who educated him to understand that what had happened to him was normal within capitalism, no matter how good you were at your job.

Back in the UK he became politically active, seeing his own experience as part of a system. A black and white photograph of the 1973 May Day march shows him marching behind the Nottingham Vietnam Solidarity Campaign banner. He was in the Young Communist League, but never joined the Communist Party or any other political group. The exhibition notes say he focused on involvement with the labour movement, meaning, presumably, trade unions. An AWL comrade remembers Waplington getting stuck in on a local protest against the National Front.

When Waplington returned to work in the lace industry it was as a freelance. Between doing his art, designing lace, and teaching art classes he made a modest living. But by 1984 he was still 70% dependent on lace (by then a dying industry), and felt tied to Nottingham because of it. He suggests that he could make more money as an artist if he picked a more commercial subject, but he doesn’t want to do that kind of art.

“You make what’s called sacrifices,” he says, eschewing new clothes or a new car. “This is not too terrible.”

After all, he is painting what interests him, he enjoys his work. “Unless you are excited by what you see, you are just churning something out, you’re making commercial art.”

Of lace itself he says: “I don’t basically like lace as a fabric. You could say that politically I don’t like the connotations of the material. I was keen on the machine and how it worked, but I wasn’t interested in the product or how it worked.”

The 1984 documentary starts with Waplington talking about what was by now his main subject: working-class life. He paints practical, unadorned workplaces and workers and work processes, and the unlovely streets and houses where the workers live.

“Like a lot of working people, for me painting and drawing were associated with a lack of industry. It took years to say: why do I keep walking away from the housing estate?”

Thereafter, he struck out from his modest, terraced house through the neighbouring streets to paint houses and the

people living in them, the industries carried on in their midst. He set out to see whether he could make art based on these places.

He could — though not everyone liked it.

A picture painted for a local hospital got mixed reviews from the visitors; many disliked its honest depiction of the modest Nottingham streets. “I don’t like the houses.” “I like the children playing.” “He hasn’t got the perspective right.”

Responding, Waplington says: “They expect from painting what I used to expect it to be... something that takes you out of yourself, makes you forget.” In fact, his paintings hold far more exciting thoughts and emotions.

In a triptych — heady pictures of children hanging from climbing frames against a backdrop of row upon row of terraced houses — Waplington poses the question:

“When are the kids going to come down off the monkey frame and claim that town and their own life?”

It’s not clear whether he means in the sense of becoming adults (workers) or in a more political sense — both, I think.

Waplington has a detailed, technical interest in the machinery people work on and sets out to record workers and their work, “but not just in a photographic way, more vivid, quite intimate”. He paints portraits of people who are interesting to him by virtue of their work, but he paints them as individuals.

He is pulled between the two styles. He paints the worker as an anonymous part of a work process — an individual worker, yes, but one who could nevertheless be replaced by any other individual worker, or laid off altogether... even replaced by a machine.

He acknowledges the tension, saying he tries not to paint “typical faces”, or to paint stereotypes, but while his paintings are of individuals, they are individuals shaped — literally, physically shaped — by their work. And different jobs shape workers in different ways.

PRACTICAL

In the documentary Waplington is filmed painting Barry, a man who sports a crew cut, “not for an image but practical”: because his work involves leaning into the machinery, to have even averagely short hair would be dangerous.

At the same time, Waplington says, while even his hairstyle is shaped by his work, Barry “is not a robot, he is a man in many ways to be envied”, because he does a job that requires skill and judgement, at a time when modern technology is making work more and more boring and skills such as Barry’s obsolete. “He’s working in a way that everyone should have the chance to work in.”

My favourite exhibit is a drawing of two balding, bespectacled, middle-aged men tying a warp on a loom. Sat side by side facing the loom, a tension in their posture indicates effort but their bodies are also skilfully held, suggesting they have been doing this job for years.

A huge mural in Castle Street, Sheffield, made of bricks, depicts a steel worker (1986, above left) and was based on a drawing of an individual worker, Ron Mason. Waplington took pains to portray him in detail, because, while he represents a worker and his trade, he is also an individual.

In the 70s and 80s Waplington made many paintings of coal miners and their surroundings. A group of old miners that he paints sitting in a bar remind him of his granddad and friends, old men who reminisced about the First World War and the General Strike. “I was very sympathetic and tried to paint them with affection and respect. I was trying to paint a type — an archetypal old miner. But a particular one.”

Affection and respect, but he doesn’t want to paint icons: “Heroism is one aspect of mining, but I would not use the stereotyped images of heroism. When drawing the figure, I never think I am going to do a hero or heroine. The thought is just not there.”

He likes the sense of community in pit villages, but worries that working-class people increasingly seem to be content with their lot — presumably, the programme was recorded before the miners’ strike began in that same year!



Hucknall NUM branch banner, on a march during 1984-5 miners' strike

Depicting a barbaric history



Chiwetel Ejiofor as Solomon Northup

Stephen Wood reviews *12 Years a Slave* (2013, dir. Steve McQueen).

Solomon Northup, on whose autobiographical memoir *12 Years a Slave* is based, was lucky by the standards of most of the thousands of “free negroes” kidnapped and sold into slavery in the Southern United States.

His release in 1853 and the story he went back North to tell boosted the abolitionist movement which a decade later helped destroy slavery in the US. Yet, after regaining his freedom, his colour meant he was unable to testify against his kidnapers in a Washington D.C. court.

Like Steve McQueen’s first film, *Hunger*, *12 Years* is often difficult to watch, unflinchingly brutal in its depiction of violence, despair and overwhelming powerlessness. We see Solomon taken from the relative comfort of his life as a musician, carpenter and family man in Saratoga, New York, to the dark cell where he wakes up after his kidnapping to find himself shackled and in chains. His identity is bullied and beaten out of him. Given a different name to pretend he is an escaped Georgia slave, he is no longer a well educated man with family and prospects, but just a “nigger” — valuable only as property.

Because Solomon’s first owner, the Baptist preacher Ford, values his property and is relatively humane, Solomon believes he can gain his trust. Another of Ford’s slaves, devastated by her separation from her children, chastises his mistake: to Ford, Solomon is just “livestock”. When a white carpenter is about to lynch Solomon after an argument, he is only “saved” on the grounds that he is another man’s valu-

able property — and left hanging from the noose, his feet barely touching the ground, for the rest of the day as the other slaves work around him.

This is bleak stuff; rightly so, of course. Such things continue through the film.

Criticism of religion is a theme of *12 Years*. When the preacher Ford, in fear of having to acknowledge that Solomon is a free man, sells him, his new owner is a “slave breaker” whose belief in the righteousness of what he does to slaves is fuelled by his Christian beliefs. And in fact, organised Christianity in the South did help legitimise and prop up slavery. In the 1850s many Protestant churches literally split North vs South as slavery increasingly became the central question of American politics.

This personally-focused story is not, of course, a picture of the whole slave system.

But while Northup was very different from the vast majority of slaves, who never experienced freedom, this depiction of his ordeal — with powerful performances from Chiwetel Ejiofor, Michael Fassbender, and Lupita Nyong’o — provides a convincing and disturbing picture of a barbaric American institution that it took war and revolution to destroy.



Director Steve McQueen

From page 9

At the top of a banner that Waplington painted in 1986 for Hucknall NUM, commemorating the 1984-5 miners’ strike, there is a mounted policeman, raising a baton to strike a kneeling miner.

The policeman is anonymous, the visor of his helmet hides his face. The young, kneeling miner in the centre represents all the miners, but his face is recognisably that of an individual miner Waplington knew, Ian Morrison.

Paul Waplington has said that he doesn’t want to paint political pictures, only what he sees. Despite that, we can draw important political lessons from his work.

His own conclusions — in the 1970s and 80s, anyway — seem to have been pessimistic: modern technology is making jobs more boring, making people idle, and sucking the colour out of life, and workers seem to be acquiescing in this.

And then came the miners’ strike! In Nottinghamshire, where the majority scabbed, yet a minority of miners joined the strike and fought, with Waplington and other working-class Nottingham people on their side.

In spite of the conclusions Waplington draws explicitly, his work strikes me as profoundly optimistic.

The forms and geography of capitalist exploitation have changed — are ever-changing — but there is no winding down of the basic, underlying realities. Important facts remain.

People must work in order to live. And people — the way Waplington paints them — are wonderful, full of life and colour, despite sometimes miserable surroundings. As much as possible, they enjoy work, they want to create, make music, organise.

Industries, trades and jobs have changed or vanished. New workers will be shaped by new industries; they will rebuild and renew their trade unions.

The then “new” flats depicted in “May Day, Hyson Green” were demolished after the riots in 1981 and replaced with a big Asda.

However detached from the labour movement they seem, the residents of the Hyson Green flats, and all those who live or shop in the area today, are workers, with the potential to organise. We can see again May Day marches that snake through the streets for miles.

• The exhibition concludes on 19 January. For more information, see bit.ly/p-wap

Norman Harding, 1929-2013

By Luke Hardy

Veteran Trotskyist and Leeds activist Norman Harding passed away in December. He was 84.

For the last 25 years Norman had been a key figure in Leeds Tenants’ Federation and pensioners’ rights campaigns. Before that he was a prominent member of the Socialist Labour League (SLL) and the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP); he wrote about his experiences in a highly readable and cautionary autobiography *Staying Red — Why I Remain A Revolutionary Socialist*.

Norman was a shop steward in a textile factory and member of Leeds Labour Party when he joined the SLL in the late 1950s, then the biggest Trotskyist group in Britain. Norman was attracted by the group’s sharp attacks on the still powerful Communist Party.

As a young trade union militant Norman had already clashed with the conservative and bizarre Russian chauvinism of Communist Party shop stewards and union officers. He became one of the SLL’s key organisers in the Labour Party’s youth section, which the group dominated and radicalised until, over-confident after some successes, the SLL walked out in 1963-4.

He helped run workplace bulletins and a local paper for West Yorkshire mining communities called *The Miner*. Norman thought the work he and others did around the Normanton rent strike of the mid 60s using *The Miner* as an organising tool was some of the best work the SLL ever did.

However, its internal life was always authoritarian and became worse. The group was led by Gerry Healy, who became a self-serving bully, and who, in old age, was indicted as a serial sexual predator. Norman claimed he was always wary of Healy and more impressed by the general work the group did.

Later Norman moved to London to help run the print department of the group. He was at the centre of the SLL as it transformed itself into a cult. All work became about building “The Party” (the SLL changed its name to the Workers’ Revolutionary Party, WRP). A lot was about building Healy’s cult of personality.

The WRP became ever more shrill in their catastrophic revolutionary predictions and support for “anti-imperialist” nationalist or Stalinist dictators.

Norman talked about a number of farcical and horrific



A WRP meeting in 1980, with Gerry Healy speaking.

run-ins he had with Healy and other senior party members. He had particular contempt for Vanessa and Corin Redgrave, whom he feels Healy indulged and pampered because they were famous actors. (Healy once bollocked Norman for praising non-member Lynne Redgrave’s acting ability over her sister Vanessa’s!) Healy shouted at Norman for complaining about Corin cutting in front of print workers in a queue. Norman once was rung up by one of Healy’s assistants and asked to buy the great man some Jaffa Cakes at 3am. Failure to complete such tasks were signs of revolutionary weakness.

Norman became part of the group in the WRP leadership that denounced and expelled Healy in the mid-1980s. He says that, once he found out about the true nature of what Healy was up to, he acted. Others have argued that earlier suspicions should have been acted upon.

Norman left the rump WRP and moved back to Leeds. Outside the horrendous atmosphere of the WRP he thrived; he married and threw himself into organising tenants’ struggles. He wasn’t in a group, but still regarded himself as a revolutionary socialist.

Norman Harding’s life begs a question though. Why did he stay in a central position in the WRP so long if he knew Healy was a deluded bully and the political direction of the party was disastrous? It is also unclear if he moved away from all of the Healyite orthodoxies.

Norman Harding’s life reminds us that even the most committed revolutionaries cannot separate their campaigning activity from the fight for healthy democratic organisations.

Royal Mail no-strike deal: vote no!

By Darren Bedford

Communication Workers Union (CWU) members in Royal Mail will be balloted from 21 January to 4 February on the "Agenda for Growth" agreement.

The deal proposes a 9.1% pay increase over three years, and includes commitments by Royal Mail to protect workers' terms and conditions for at least five years. But those commitments are undermined by an enormous loophole in the terms of the deal that allows Royal Mail to renege if bosses deem any of the protections "reasonably likely to have a materially adverse effect on the employer's business or prospects".

Workers who have not had a pay rise for nearly a year will be understandably tempted by what looks like a significant increase, but the 9.1% pay offer is only 0.5% more than the company's initial offer, and still below inflation.



Most worrying of all is the clause in the deal which amounts to an effective no-strike agreement. The deal says: "The employer shall be entitled to notify the CWU at any time that any of the Protections will no longer continue, if [...] there is national-scale industrial action (in the form of a strike or action short of a strike) which has been authorised at national level

by the CWU [which] will have, or is reasonably likely to have, a [...] disruptive effect." The power to decide what constitutes "disruptive" action lies with the bosses, meaning they could use any action bigger than a tiny local strike as an excuse to renege on the protections of terms and conditions in the deal.

With established private-

sector rivals like Amazon operating notoriously exploitative regimes that keep costs down and wages low, the pressure will be on Royal Mail to find excuses to cut corners. The CWU leadership pulled a planned national strike in November 2013 to discuss and put the "Agenda for Growth" agreement to ballot; that hardly bodes well for their willingness to confront inevitable management hostility and pressure under the new deal.

Rank-and-file activists and militant branches in the CWU who understand how much of a step back a no-strike deal would be should organise for the biggest possible no vote.

After a cancelled strike and prolonged pay freeze, the odds are stacked against a no campaign; but even if the deal passes, a strong rank-and-file campaign will mean greater ability to organise under the new regime.

Thinking outside the box in Tube fight

Tube workers will strike on 4-6 and 11-13 February in a fight to stop ticket office closures and job losses. A worker and RMT activist spoke to *Solidarity* about the dispute. For more, see page 12.

It's definitely positive that we got a solid yes vote. Between now and the strikes we need to organise in the workplace to give people confidence.

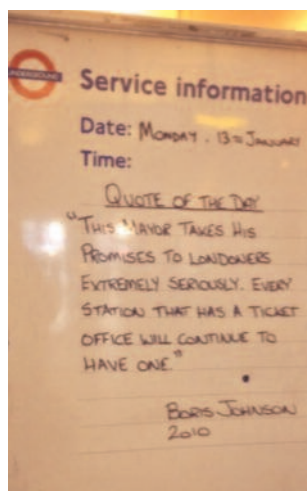
We're already showing we have a strategy and a plan, and that includes some types of action which are outside the experience of the employer.

The revenue strike is about thinking outside the box, and maximising the impact of the action. There's a political impact with this action, as it'll be popular with passengers, and it gives members the opportunity to take part in action which is accessible and doesn't require them to

lose too much straight away. It's also something relatively new and experimental. We may find other new forms of creative action.

It's also significant that we're starting each strike at midday, which spreads a 48-hour strike across three days. Again, that's about maximising impact. Essentially we're talking about guerrilla tactics. It's a war with the employer, and we want to use tactics and strategies that are harder for the bosses to defend against. We should be looking to escalate after the two 48-hour strikes.

The public campaign is about reaching out to people who might not automatically engage with workers' struggles, but who understand this as an attack on public transport and don't want services cut, don't want an unsafe transport system, and don't want to use this supermar-



ket model that London Underground managers seem to want. What happens in Tesco when the automatic self-service machines don't work? You still need someone to come and assist you.

The public campaign is also about showing our members that the wider public is on their side. It'll give workers greater confidence if there are support-

ers leafleting at stations, or passengers walking through saying they support what we're doing.

We also need a public campaign to counter the propaganda that'll come through the right-wing media, and show working-class people that cuts are not the only option.

Fast food day of action

The "Fast Food Rights" campaign, launched at a meeting on 8 January and involving the Bakers, Food, and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU), plans a day of direct action on Saturday 15 February. For more information, see fastfoodrights.wordpress.com



Curzon Cinema workers win union recognition fight

By Ira Berkovic

Workers at the Curzon cinema chain have won their battle for union recognition.

Curzon bosses signed an agreement with the Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union (BECTU) on Monday 13 January which means the company will have to bargain collectively with its employees on issues of pay, terms, and conditions.

A long-running campaign, which included petitioning, leafleting, and demonstrations outside Curzon cinemas, demanded union recognition and a living wage for staff. Workers are hopeful that, with the demand for union recognition now won, negotiations towards pay increases to living wage levels can now begin.

Workers at the Ritzy Cinema in Brixton, south London, are also campaigning for living wages. The Ritzy's parent company, Picturehouse, was

recently bought out by the giant Cineworld chain. It was one of Picturehouse's highest-grossing outlets. A campaign leaflet said: [Ritzy] pitches itself as an ethical enterprise, hosting the Human Rights Film Festival, selling fair-trade chocolate, and supporting charities, while not paying a living wage to their staff."

BECTU members at the Ritzy first struck for living wages in 2007.

For more, see [facebook.com/RitzyLivingWage](https://www.facebook.com/RitzyLivingWage)



Image downloaded from [Ritzy Living Wage Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/RitzyLivingWage)

Support the 3 Cosas strike fund!

By Jonny West

The "3 Cosas" campaign of outsourced cleaning, catering, and security workers at the University of London is appealing for funds to help finance its next strike, on 27, 28, and 29 January.

The strike aims to win equal pension, holiday pay, and sick pay provision for outsourced staff. A November strike won significant concessions on sick pay and holiday pay, and the workers' union, the Independent Workers union of Great Britain (IWGB) are determined to push for full equality. As a small union with few re-

sources, strike funds are essential to allow the IWGB's University of London branch to take sustained action that their mainly low-paid membership would otherwise be unable to.

For information on how to donate to the strike fund, visit the "3 Cosas" website at 3cosascampaign.wordpress.com

• 3 Cosas activists are planning a speaker tour around labour movement organisations to spread the experiences of their dispute. Could your union branch host them? Email dancooper13@hotmail.com



Tube workers to strike on 4 February

By Ira Berkovic

The ballot of Rail, Maritime, and Transport workers union (RMT) members on London Underground for strikes to stop ticket office closures and job cuts returned a 77% majority, on a turnout of 40%. The majority for actions short of strike was even higher.

The RMT has announced two 48-hour strikes, each timed to impact across three days, for 4-6 February and 11-13 February. It has also announced a ban on overtime and rest-day working for station staff starting from 17 January, and a revenue action (a refusal to carry out duties such as checking tickets) on 7, 10, and 14 February.

A rally is planned for Thursday 16 January to launch "Hands off London Transport", a campaign for decent public transport in London involving unions,

disability rights groups, pensioners' organisations, and other working-class community groups.

The Transport Salaried Staffs Association (TSSA), which represents mainly white-collar workers on London Underground, begins a strike ballot on 17 January. TSSA's ballot closes on 27 January, meaning it could coordinate any potential strike action with the RMT.

Beginning the dispute with 48-hour, rather than 24-hour, strikes is a positive step. In the 2010 dispute against similarly devastating cuts, the RMT and TSSA never went beyond 24-hour strikes, allowing bosses to ride out their impact with scabs and managers covering duties. That kind of strikebreaking will be much harder over 48 hours.

Longer strikes will almost certainly be necessary to win the dispute, but starting with 48 hours is a statement of seriousness that is simul-

taneously achievable and accessible for a workforce not yet ready to launch all-out indefinite strikes.

The announcement of the revenue strike and rest-day working and overtime bans is also a big plus. If these actions are effective, they'll ensure that pressure is kept on in between the strike days. Other forms of creative action should be considered, as well as selective action, such as overtime bans by engineers targeted on particular weekends to disrupt particular planned engineering work.

FURTHER ACTION

The RMT (and TSSA, once its ballot is returned) should announce further, ongoing actions as soon as possible.

The aim should be to win the dispute as quickly as possible, but an open-ended programme of escalating action, supported by strike

funds, would show management the unions are serious.

Union reps and rank-and-file activists still have a lot of work to do to make the strike and the other actions solid and effective. That means getting round every workplace, building the action, inviting members' ideas for its future direction, and recruiting new members to the union.

The RMT's London Transport region has created a committee which has been meeting weekly to discuss the dispute; that committee needs to be broadened out beyond existing activists to be more representative of different grades and areas, and become a genuine strike committee capable of controlling the direction of the dispute from below.

The "Hands off London Transport" campaign will also be essential for the dispute's success. A vibrant public campaign will be a huge counterweight to the anti-union propaganda the *Evening Standard* will pump out every day, and will help bolster the industrial action.

It can also ensure that Tube workers aren't left to fight the dispute alone, a sectional industrial conflict, but are joined by other unions and community groups in a fight around a key class issue: the right to decent public transport in Britain's capital.

• Workers' Liberty members who work on London Underground produce the rank-and-file bulletin *Tube-worker*. The next issue is due out on Thursday 16 January. For more information, workersliberty.org/twblog

• "Thinking outside the box" — interview with an RMT activist, page 11



Egyptians vote on a new constitution

Egypt: a vote where saying no means jail

By Tom Harris

On 14 January, polling stations opened in Egypt as part of a referendum on a proposed new constitution. The constitution being voted on was drawn up by the council that has technically ruled the country since the military deposed Mohamed Morsi in July 2014.

Some groups of socialists call for a "no" vote and agitate against military rule. Those that have done so have faced repression. The Revolutionary Socialist group, linked to the British SWP, has seen two leading members, Mahienour el-Masry and Hassan Moustafa, sentenced to two years hard labour for defying anti-protest laws.

A protest will be held at the Egyptian embassy in London on 25 January in solidarity with imprisoned socialists.

The government, the army leadership and the media are pushing hard for a "yes" vote, which they believe will confer legitimacy both on the rule of the army and its overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood government. State media and corporate publicists have swamped Egypt with propaganda in favour of the new constitution.

The Brotherhood have declared a boycott of the referendum, but their influence is limited by the imprisonment and repression of many of their leaders and activists. Popular memory of its recent time in power also means the Brotherhood is struggling to find the support of the masses. Most of the other Islamist factions also oppose the constitution except for the Salafist Nour party, who have sided with the "yes" camp on the basis that it will allow them to retain their influence and avoid being outlawed.

Many liberals, leftists and independent trade unions have backed the new government and advocate a vote for the constitution, seeing it as a bulwark against the Islamists and the basis for a transition to parliamentary democracy.

The constitution is an improvement on the one implemented by the Morsi government — the new document is more secular, provides more democratic and civil rights to individuals and bans the use of torture.

Nevertheless, the constitution includes nasty loopholes. Religion would still be the basis of state law, civilians could still be brought before military courts and the army would have its role in government enshrined and protected from civilian interference.

General Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, leader of the military coup and current Defence Minister, will likely use the referendum victory as the basis for a presidential campaign.

• Details of 25 Jan protest: on.fb.me/KZxPhe



Tube workers are striking against cuts and closures and for decent public transport.