



For a
workers'
government

Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

No 336 17 September 2014 30p/80p

www.workersliberty.org

Help Kurds and Iraqi left resist ISIS

See page 5



**No confidence in US's
anti-ISIS coalition**

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!

Contact us:

- 020 7394 8923 ● solidarity@workersliberty.org

The editor (Cathy Nugent), 20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG.

- Printed by Trinity Mirror

Get Solidarity every week!

- Trial sub, 6 issues £5
- 22 issues (six months). £18 waged £9 unwaged
- 44 issues (year). £35 waged £17 unwaged
- European rate: 28 euros (22 issues) or 50 euros (44 issues)



Tick as appropriate above and send your money to:
20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG
Cheques (£) to "AWL".

Or make £ and euro payments at workersliberty.org/sub.

Name

Address

I enclose £

Chomsky tells BDS to wise up

By Paul Hampton

In an article published in the US magazine *The Nation* on 2 July, Noam Chomsky challenged the central tenets of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Palestinian solidarity campaign.

That sparked a huge furore among people who normally take his pronouncements as gospel. In further recent interviews Chomsky stood his ground.

Chomsky argues that the analogy BDS activists draw between their campaign and the anti-apartheid struggle is flawed. He pointed out that South Africa under apartheid relied on 85% black labour and that the apartheid government really did promote Bantustans.

Israel on the contrary, is premised on the exploitation of Jewish waged labour (as well as increasing numbers of migrant workers from Africa and Asia), with Palestinian labour marginal to its central mechanisms of capital accumulation.

Chomsky also points out that the reality on the ground does not conform to apartheid. He argues, somewhat contrarily, that the situation of Palestinians in the occupied territories is worse than apartheid, but for Palestinians living within Israel it is significantly better than for black people under apartheid. He doesn't

spell out the deeper flaw with BDS — its racialisation of the Palestinian oppression, thereby downplaying the more important national oppressive element of how Israel treats Palestinians. Nevertheless, he shows that differences of class structure completely undermine the apartheid analogy.

BDS says its goals are Israel out of the occupied territories; equality for Palestinians within Israel; and the right of return. Chomsky believes the first demand, one which all socialists and democrats support, should be the main focus of solidarity work. In this he is absolutely right, as it is the basis of getting an independent Palestinian national state alongside Israel.

BEST

Chomsky reiterates his long-held view that two-states, while safeguarding the right of Jewish self-determination is the best political solution to the national oppression of the Palestinians.

He disputes, wrongly in our view, the importance of fighting for equality within Israel; he does this because it undercuts those who want to focus on Palestinians inside Israel because they want one, so-called bi-national state.

Chomsky reserves his main critique to the demand for the right of return. He rightly questions the logic of a demand to re-

turn to the homes and properties of 1948, given all that has happened since. He regards a UN resolution that stipulates the right of return as "conditional", in the sense of being tied to "living in peace with their neighbours", is manifestly implausible. Chomsky does not take his view to its logical conclusion — that the right of return in fact means the destruction of Israel.

FLAWS

The original BDS declaration was explicit about ending Israel's "occupation and colonisation of all Arab lands". (It has since been revised).

BDS activists and single-state supporters are privately (and occasionally publicly) candid about this — and there is no question that is what it would mean.

Nevertheless, he is spotted on that the right of return is a central political defect with the BDS campaign.

Third, Chomsky takes aim at the tactical orientation of BDS, pointing to the flaws in all three of its components. He supports the boycott of settlement goods and has done so for years before the BDS campaign was launched in 2005. But he offers no support to an academic boycott or a wider boycott of all Israeli goods.

On divestment, he points out that major investment in Israel continues unabated — whether by Warren Buf-

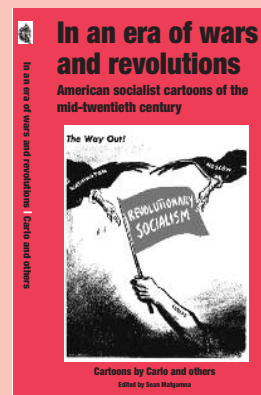
fett or Intel or other big hedge funds and multinationals (including military contractors). Finally, he mocks the campaign as "BD" since there are no sanctions — nor much likelihood of any. His point is that tactically, these demands do little to help the Palestinians and may indeed harm their cause.

Overall, Chomsky is right that these mistaken tactics flow from a faulty assessment of the political realities. In fact they reflect the vicarious fantasies of so-called anti-imperialists who believe the main job is to undermine the current world order, rather build a working class agency that can both challenge the dominant powers and also create a more progressive form of democratic self-rule.

Chomsky's position is not without its contradictions. He seems to put the emphasis on doing the right thing where you are — in his case putting pressure on the US to effect a change in the Middle East. Internationalist working-class solidarity goes much further, prioritising support for actors within the actual situation — principally the Israel and Palestinian workers.

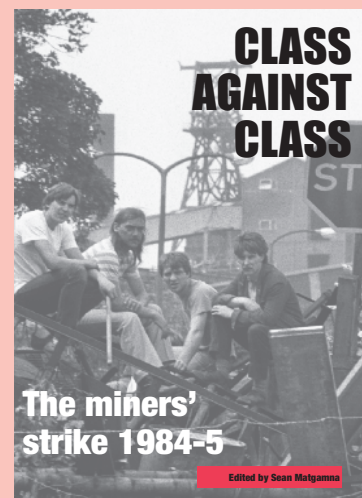
Nevertheless, his intervention does much to cleanse the ideological terrain. We should welcome the blows dealt by Chomsky's critique.

BOOKS TO CHANGE THE WORLD



In an era of wars and revolutions

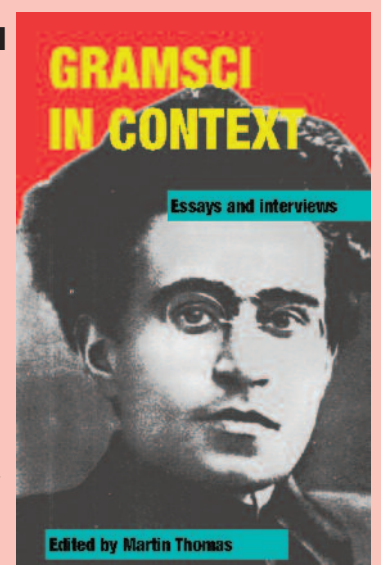
Cartoons which tell the story of revolutionary socialist politics in the US; depicting alternatives to "New Deal" capitalism and Stalinism
Buy online at workersliberty.org/socialist-cartoons for £10.60



Class against class

This history marks the 30th anniversary of the miners' strike. A blow-by-blow account of events, an examination of key political lessons.
£8 from workersliberty.org/books

A revised and 50%-expanded edition of the 2012 booklet
Antonio Gramsci: working-class revolutionary, summarising Gramsci's life and thought.



It disputes the "post-Marxist" readings of Gramsci and discusses the relation between Gramsci's ideas and Trotsky's.

Price £6, or £7.60 including postage, order from workersliberty.org/books



Make Labour rebuild the NHS!

By Michael Johnson

The Labour Party's 2014 annual conference in Manchester (20-24 September) is likely to be a stage-managed rally, with most of the major union leaders having already fallen in behind Ed Miliband ahead of the general election.

The conference is meant to set Labour's policy agenda but most of that process already happened at July's meeting of the National Policy Forum (NPF). There, a motion to reverse Tory cuts with a programme of investment was defeated with the votes of every affiliated union present, with the exception of BECTU.

At the Unite conference in June, Len McCluskey was clear: "The most important challenge Unite will face over the next eleven months is winning next year's gen-

eral election. There is a time to have heated arguments within the Labour Party about policy. There is even a time to discuss the future of the Party itself. But that time is not now."

But with Labour heading into the election promising to continue the Coalition's policies on cuts and public sector pay, the labour movement must advance its own demands on the Party's leadership.

The NPF will report to conference, with documents for each of its policy commissions. Delegates can then vote to "take it or leave it", as the conference does not have the right to amend or take parts on the documents.

It was to be hoped that discussions on "Contemporary Motions" would give the conference some democratic debate. These are motions on events which have

happened since the end of July which couldn't have been addressed by the NPF or the National Executive Committee (NEC).

Several CLPs submitted a model motion calling, among other things, for Labour to rebuild a publicly-owned, publicly-accountable, publicly- (and adequately) funded NHS, which is liberated from crushing PFI debts, privatisation and outsourcing.

Unfortunately that was ruled out of order by the CAC. The ruling will be challenged but it will probably be left to labour movement activists lobbying outside the conference on Sunday 21st to make the political points.

As well as some emergency motions, another potential for conflict with the leadership is provided by changes to the party rule-book.

Though no fewer than eight rule changes from 14 CLPs were ruled out of order last year, a few CLP rule changes remain on the agenda.

Most seem technical, though are of some importance. For example, one seeks to clarify the meaning of a clause governing how often CLPs can submit rule changes. Clarification could restrict the CAC's room for bureaucratic manoeuvre, and prevent arbitrary applications of the rules sidelining democratic rule changes.

Rebuild the NHS! Lobby Labour Party Conference. Sunday 21 September at 2.30pm, on Peter St, outside the conference venue. Called by health campaigners, trade unionists and Labour Party activists.

•For more info, see: bit.ly/1tYPU3k

Tory Eurosceptics gather strength

By Tom Harris

Divisions in the Conservative Party are deepening as their Eurosceptic backbench MPs gather strength.

The defection of former Tory MP Douglas Carswell to UKIP has embarrassed the Cameron and triggered a by-election on 9 October in Clacton in which the question of Britain's role in the European Union will be central.

According to *The Spectator*, right-wing Tory backbenchers are keenly aware of the new leverage that Carswell's move to UKIP has given them over David Cameron. "He knows that if he doesn't give us what we want, more of us will defect," one MP told the magazine.

The Tory leadership also fears that many Eurosceptic MPs will simply fail to turn up to campaign for the party

in Clacton. *The Spectator* even suggests that backbenchers have threatened the party hierarchy that hostile attacks on UKIP will have "serious implications for David Cameron's leadership".

It is thought that some Tories favour a pact with UKIP whereby Carswell is allowed to win Clacton in exchange for UKIP refraining from challenging Conservative candidates in seats where Labour is the main contender.

Such a deal is highly unlikely, especially while Cameron remains leader. But for the duration of this government the story of the Conservative Party's position on the EU has been the story of a leadership pulled further and further to the right by backbench rebels with more confidence and more support amongst the party rank-and-file.

The split in the Tories re-

flects a contradiction between the interests of their backers in big business and the prejudices of their electoral base.

The majority of the British bourgeoisie is perfectly happy within the EU, and greatly benefits from the trade agreements and access to markets and cheap labour. Reflecting those interests, the Tory leadership is reluctant to disengage from the EU in any serious way.

However, millions of middle-class and working-class Tory voters are sceptical about Europe, seeing the EU as a meddling threat to national sovereignty and a source of mass immigration. The Tories have to be seen to address those fears. But Eurosceptic backbenchers are able to draw upon grassroots hostility to Europe in a way the leadership cannot.

Some leftists have viewed the split over Europe

amongst right-wingers as a good thing. They hope that UKIP will steal crucial votes from the Tories, and that the division within the Conservatives will hamper their bid to win the general election.

Such glee is shortsighted. The presence of a strong and well-organised anti-EU current threatens to drag all political discourse to the right. It will continue to divert popular anger and disenfranchisement away from the capitalist class and towards the EU, and mobilise people on the basis of nationality rather than class interest.

When Cameron makes concessions to the eurosceptics, the victims of those concessions will be immigrants and, ultimately, the working-class. The left must fight xenophobia and nationalism tooth and nail.

Paying for the doctor?

By Martin Thomas

Even the Tories dare not say outright that they want to stop NHS care being free at the point of need.

In fact that principle has been much eroded already. Dental treatment is not free. Care for elderly people with long-term ailments is not free.

But even the Tories won't cross the line to people having to pay routinely for everyday care? My recent time in Australia brought home to me how far that is from true.

This is Australia, not the USA. It is a country where the government seriously tried to introduce a National Health Service in the 1940s, at the same as Britain and on that model, though it failed.

It has had "social insurance" for health care since Gough Whitlam's Labor government in 1972-5. That social insurance system, sharply cut back under the Fraser Liberal government in the later 1970s, was restored by a new Labor government in 1984, and no-one proposes abolishing it.

Yet people still pay for health care, routinely. The current Liberal government is pressing for a \$7 extra levy on every visit to the doctor, not specially to raise revenue, but to give people a "price signal" that they should think twice about visiting.

This year, for the first

Ozone thickens

The ozone layer may be starting to thicken after years of depletion, according to a UN report.

The ozone layer, a fragile shield of various gases, protects the Earth from harmful ultraviolet rays which can cause cancer. It has been depleting for many decades, mainly due to the chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) mainly used in aerosols and as coolants.

The use of these substances was banned by the 1987 Montreal Protocol, and it is only now starting to have an effect. It is estimated that two million cases of skin cancer a year could be prevented by taking these steps to prevent depletion of the ozone layer.

time in my many visits to Australia, I had serious health problems, so I visited a GP three times, went for four medical tests, and was prescribed medications.

I had to pay \$615. I got back \$260 in Medicare refunds. Net payment \$355, for what in fact will be a small beginning bit of the medical treatment (the diagnosis showed incurable complaints). The fact that I am over 65 and on a low income made no difference.

The GP I went to charges a bit more than the standard Medicare refund. Some don't. But many do, and I preferred to go to the GP who had cared well for my daughters rather than search for another.

That sort of payment for health care is routine — in a rich country with a developed social insurance system.

Back in Britain, I got referred to NHS specialists by my GP, only to have one specialist write back saying that my appointment is cancelled because my case is not "appropriate". (I surmise he means that the Australian tests showing an over-50% probability that I have cancer aren't conclusive enough to be worth his time).

So cuts in the NHS can sometimes have even worse effects than having to pay for care. We need to campaign both to maintain the principle of free access to health care and to reverse the cuts.

Some scientists are predicting that the ozone layer could return to its pre-1980 levels by the middle of this century. This is an environmental success story, on a scale that has not been seen before. It has been achieved partly by political determination and international cooperation.

Addressing the damaging use of a small number of chemicals that had easily found replacements is on a very different scale to tackling man made global warming or wide scale deforestation.

Such political determination and international cooperation should be applied to other environmental issues.

Sexism is wrong, not clothes!

Letters



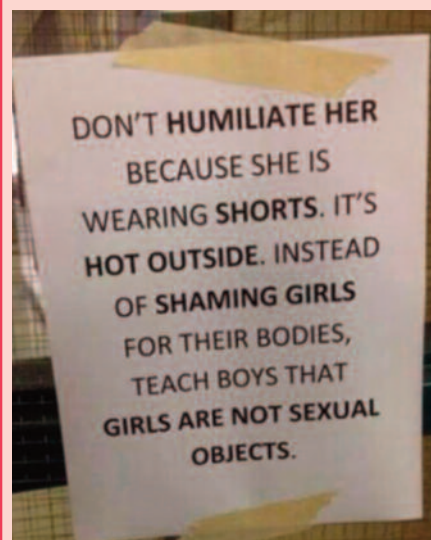
At the start of term 50 students at Heaton Manor school in Newcastle were put into isolation and issued with detentions for wearing “the wrong uniform”. The school has insisted that a certain type of trousers be worn, saying students should not wear “tight fitting trousers or leggings”.

This is not an isolated case, it has similarities to a movement in the US against sexist dress codes in schools (where there are usually no uniforms) and colleges.

Those movements have been highlighting dress codes that ban short skirts or shorts, “spaghetti strap tops” or tight trousers.

At South Orange Middle School in New Jersey a group of girls started a campaign against a code which bans “attire that exposes undergarments or anatomy”. #Iammorethanadistracted was started by the students after they were told that their clothing was a distraction and affecting the “learning environment”.

As an ex-teacher I have heard many a manager witter on about the “learning environment”; often they mean maintaining their personal dictatorial micro-management rather than anything beneficial for children or learning.



Putting students in isolation, detention or publicly humiliating them is not about creating a good “learning environment”.

At Oakleaf High School in Florida a student who violated the dress code by wearing a too short skirt was forced to spend the rest of the school day wearing a large, yellow t-shirt and jogging bottoms with the lettering “dress code violator”, reminiscent of prison clothing. Her “selfie” of the punishment clothes went viral.

At many UK schools students who turn up with incorrect uniform — often because they have bought their trousers from a cheaper retailer — are isolated or sent home until their parents buy new uniform. This not only excludes the student unnecessarily from education but also places an extra financial burden upon their parents.

The argument on uniform says it levelling the playing ground for poorer children. This case, and others, is nothing to do with that. The two main themes here are basic sexism and obsessive top-down control by school managements.

It is basic sexism to ban “tight trousers”, “skimpy tops” or “short skirts”. It tells young girls that their bodies are a distraction, shameful and should be covered up. It also suggests that women and girl’s attire is to blame for men’s behaviour.

Students in America are taking action. One group of students wore “offending” clothes to school holding “are my pants lowering your test scores?” posters. Another poster [pictured] started in one school and quickly spread to others through the internet.

Schools should not be a place where problems in society are reinforced and even taught. They should be a place where they are challenged.

Gemma Short, north London

The Jobbik-Putin nexus

By Hannah Webb

Although my first week (of a study year) in Budapest has been filled with mundane tasks of internet installation, sim cards and university course registration, it was not uneventful.

The city is covered in political posters for the local elections on 12 October. These elections are not without controversy — the date for them was only set in late July, and they follow a change to the electoral law brought about by the ultra-conservative Fidesz majority government to ensure they will win the Budapest elections more easily, an area that is a traditional stronghold of its leftist oppositions.

Under the new election system only parties capable of nominating a candidate for mayor in at least 12 out of the 23 local councils would be allowed to receive “compensation votes”, and smaller parties will get fewer seats. The smaller leftist parties have been forced to form a coalition.

This does not bode well for next year’s national elections; many believe this coalition is forced and untenable. It is also predicted that this clear abuse of the electoral system will give Fidesz a clear majority. Challenges in the Constitutional Court have been frustrated by Fidesz-appointed justices who make up the majority of the body.

Meanwhile Jobbik, an explicitly fascist party, and the second strongest party in Hungary (probably as big as all the left parties combined) is growing in popularity. Walking around Budapest it is not unusual to see Jobbik posters, from fly posters to paid billboards in major metro stations.

Among other things Jobbik argue that Jews are a “national security risk” (a few years ago their presidential candidate described Jews as “lice-infested dirty murderers”); they want detention camps for Roma “deviants”, attack pride marches, and have an SS wing — the New Hungarian Guard, who were recently ordered to disband, though it is unclear whether this has happened.

At one busy metro station I saw a man wearing a Jobbik hoody, with no outward reaction of shock or disgust from anyone walking by.

I met up with a friend of a friend, a Jewish Hungarian man Mordecai, now based in London, who grew up in the 7th district of Budapest, traditionally the Jewish quarter but now the centre of edgy tourist nightlife. He took me to a meeting of Hungarian activists, who were setting up a social centre, and offices for leftist groups, in the 8th district (an relatively poor area heavily populated by Roma people, who make up

8-10% of the population and are frequently the targets of horrific abuse). Although parts of the meeting were translated for me, it was interesting to see similarities with London activism: consensus organising hand signals being used, discussions about when a group decision should be taken, or individual decisions made.

On the way home Mordecai bumped into a friend, a famous Hungarian actor, who could no longer find work in any Budapest theatre. The actor had been working on a play at Új Színház (the New Theatre) in 2012, but following the election of Fidesz, the mayor of Budapest sacked the director, and appointed Jobbik supporter György Dörner in his place. Dörner vowed to reverse what he described as “degenerate, sick, liberal hegemony” in Hungary by stopping production of “foreign garbage” to concentrate on Hungarian plays, including those by open anti-Semites and advocates of the Jewish conspiracy theory.

When the Dörner was introduced to the company, this actor punched him square in the face, and was subsequently banned from working in any Budapest theatres. This despite the fact that his most recent film, in which he had the main role, was winning international awards.

Although Fidesz’s electoral manipulation keeps Jobbik further away from electoral control, there should be no consolation sought from it. Fidesz and Jobbik prop up each other. When Jobbik occupy Roma villages, intimidating residents, and burning houses to the ground, Fidesz lets it happen; the presence of Jobbik makes Fidesz seem less extreme.

Although Fidesz is the party pushing austerity measures, and Jobbik builds its base by offering nationalist economic alternatives to them they are both based on what they describe as “Christian values” — social conservatism, political conservatism, anti-Semitism and anti-Roma racism.

Mordecai tells me that both Fidesz and Jobbik are funded by Putin. Whether this is true or not, it is a persistent rumour in Hungary, shaping how these parties are perceived by many Hungarians. It is clear that there are strong political ties to Russia, with Orbán (Fidesz prime minister) recently claiming that “the wind is blowing from the East”.

Mirroring the Russian annexation of the Crimea, Orbán has been calling for autonomy for “ethnic Hungarians” in southwest Ukraine; many Jobbik members are vocal supporters of Russia’s annexation of the Crimea; Jobbik president Gabor Vona was recently invited to speak at Moscow State University by Kremlin-connected right-wing Russian nationalists, meeting many members of the Duma whilst he was there.

Four hour strike in NHS not enough

Last week’s *Solidarity* carried an article that argued “a four hour walk out [on 14 October] is a good tactic in the NHS [as a starting point]” and “It is vital that discussions on strike tactics are held at workplace level where union members know what action can be most effective”. I disagree.

Unison’s leadership are worried about low turnout and unnecessary deaths on a strike day. They have attempted to solve these problem by proposing a four-hour stoppage. They hope healthworkers will be more likely to strike for half a day and it will be less risky for patients.

But the four-hour tactic will be neither effective nor safe. The union wants to provide a bank holiday level of service on strike days. To achieve it Unison have tried to devolve responsibility for strike strategy to workplace level, arguing that the complexity of the NHS makes it impossible to set a blanket rule for exemptions from the strike. But there is a very simple blanket rule that could be applied.

Some NHS workers work seven day shift patterns, while others work 9-5 Monday to Friday. Whether you are a porter, a lab worker, a nurse or a domestic, if you usually work weekends then you are part of the life and limb service. The ideal we want is for all the 9-5ers to strike and all the life and limb workers to maintain the bank holiday level service. But the union’s strength is amongst the workers who work shifts, not the admin staff and managers who work 9-5.

The solution is that the union calls an all-out strike. Management have ultimate responsibility for the safe running of the wards. During the handover period management will have to assess where life and limb services are short staffed and redeploy 9-5er scabs to work in those areas. If the strike is particularly solid and the offices, outpatient clinics and community teams are shut down, then management can negotiate exemptions with pickets. Management can also negotiate if there is a particular shortage of a skilled worker e.g. qualified nurses.

This approach will cause maximum disruption without compromising patient care. It will demonstrate the value of the lower grade shift workers in maintaining the service, be a huge boost to morale and help to build the union.

Many nurses still believe that it is illegal for nurses to strike and the leadership have done nothing to dispel this myth. It has failed to set out a clear strategy for safe but effective strike action in the NHS.

What Unison’s Service Group Executive decide to do will set the tone of the strike for all the other unions. A strong leadership would advocate the above strategy for strike days and set a rapidly escalating program of strikes; we need to get this dispute over and done with before Christmas.

A healthworker, south London

Help Kurds and Iraqi left resist ISIS

The ultra-Islamist group ISIS is a threat to all the people of Iraq, Iraqi Kurdistan, and Syria, as well as to the people who live in the territory where it currently rules.

It openly declares itself a "caliphate", hostile to democracy as a "western" idea. It represses and persecutes religious minorities — Christians, Yazidis, others — and Sunni Muslim Arabs who dissent.

Summary killing of people who refuse to pledge allegiance to ISIS has been common across Iraq and Syria. So have been persecution of non-Sunni religious groups and a special tax on Christians

The coalition of states assembled by the US at a conference in Paris on 15 September will not efficiently stop ISIS.

In Afghanistan the US has been bombing the Taliban for almost 13 years, and providing US aid to prop up a US-friendly Afghan government.

The result of those 13 years has been to rebuild a political base for the Taliban, which back in 2002 was shattered and discredited, with people cheering as it fled Kabul.

People have been driven into the arms of the Taliban by resentment against the US bombing and disgust with the corrupt US-sponsored Afghan government.

In Iraq and Syria, the prospects are worse. Even US strategists recognise that, stressing that the bombing is to back up forces on the ground and that they plan no US ground troops.

The US's strategy hinges on alliance with established powers in the region. Alliance with the Shia-sectarian Iraqi government in Baghdad, whose main military force since the Iraqi army disintegrated in June is Shia-sectarian militias.

Alliance with the regional government of Iraqi Kurdistan, which is less sectarian but seen by many Arabs in the areas where ISIS rules as a threat. The Kurdish regional government's first response to the ISIS surge in June was to seize Kirkuk, long a disputed area between Kurds and Arabs.

Alliance with all the conservative and repressive governments in the region, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the rest.

Both the US and Iran officially forswear alliance with each other against ISIS, but in fact they are allied. The record in Syria makes it impossible for the US to ally with the Syrian dictatorship. That also limits what the US will do against ISIS in Syria.

ISIS made its surge in June only because it was able to win support or compliance among the population. It has grown into a formidable fighting force, but militarily and economically it is still tiny compared to established states in the area.

Sunni Arabs have faced many years of Shia-sectarian rule from Baghdad (despite the presence in every government of token Sunni ministers), repression by Baghdad of moderate

What is NATO?

The recent summit meeting of NATO was more than usually busy with talks on Ukraine and ISIS dominating. But what is NATO?

NATO, otherwise known as the "global cop", was set up as a "mutual defence pact", the product of a military stand-off between the US and the USSR after World War Two.

Instead of disappearing after the end of the Cold War, it has expanded, and now counts for 70% of the world's total military spending.

The organisation is basically a "world-wide police instrument", mainly controlled by the US. A lot of its power lies in two departments, Allied Command Transformation and Allied Command Operations, both of which are overseen by senior US military officers. Discussions within NATO are all top secret, but disagreements tend to be straightened out by economic and political pressure from the US. NATO is also more or less embedded in the politics of Europe.

So NATO is a lot more complicated than a "mutual defence pact".

The way NATO relates to the rest of the world is underlined by inequalities of the world, including sometimes, nationalistic superiority bordering on racism.

In a document entitled *Toward A Grand Strategy for an Uncertain World*, big names in the organisation call for a "super-NATO" which could enforce the edicts "of a common transatlantic sphere of interest" anywhere in the world.



and peaceful Sunni protest, and vastly corrupt administration siphoning off Iraq's oil revenues.

According to Iraq Oil Report (16 September), Sunni tribal forces in northern Iraq are now turning against ISIS. But they have also turned against the Kurdish peshmerga forces. They also see those as a threat.

Democratic and socialist politics can mobilise the people of Iraqi Kurdistan, of central and southern Iraq, and of areas of Syria, and enable them to organise so that it is impossible for ISIS to spread its rule into that territory.

Over time, also, it can enable discontent with ISIS rule to

grow and cohere in the ISIS territory, free from the powerful inhibition that opposition to ISIS opens the way to Shia-sectarian militias or Kurdish nationalist forces who will be as repressive, in a different way, against Sunni Arabs.

Solidarity and Workers' Liberty are working with the Worker-communist Party of Kurdistan and others to support the development of that democratic and socialist politics.

For secular democracy!

For self-determination for the Kurdish people!

For workers' unity to win social control of the oil riches of the region!

Cities crammed with refugees

Dashty Jamal, a member of the Worker-communist Party of Kurdistan, visited in mid-August. He told *Solidarity* what he saw in Sulaimaniya, in the east of Iraqi Kurdistan, and in Kirkuk, an oil city long disputed between Baghdad and the Kurdish region but now under Kurdish control.

In Kirkuk people are stressed because of war, insecurity, and their fear of ISIS. ISIS control areas only 20 minutes away. Many people fear that ISIS will be in Kirkuk today or tomorrow, and don't trust the Kurdish parties to defend them.

ISIS has become a major threat to the lives of all Kurdish and Iraqi citizens. This terrorist organisation has captured and killed many prisoners of war and has killed thousands of Christian and Yazidi civilians. After these brutal killings, ISIS portrays the images of the dead to the general public via different media outlets.

ISIS has also raped hundreds of women, particularly Christian and Yazidi women. The group has as much financial and military power as a state has, which gives them the power to create such havoc and disaster.

Some are preparing to flee to Sulaimaniya, but the idea of the people defending themselves is giving some hope. People believe strongly that threat of ISIS must be banished.

Sulaimaniya has a population of just over 1,600,000. There are around 1.4 million refugees that are in the whole Kurdistan region, people who have come to Kurdistan from Iraq and Syria because of the war ISIS has started.

Kirkuk had a PUK member as mayor even before 12 June, when Kurdish forces took the city, soon after ISIS took Mosul. Now the city is under joint KDP-PUK control. The PUK has more strength.

[KDP and PUK are the two big Kurdish nationalist parties, which run Iraqi Kurdistan in a coalition. The KDP is stronger in the west, including in the regional capital, Erbil; the PUK is stronger in the east.]

The city administration is functioning, but there is no security. There are huge queues of cars waiting for fuel. Public sector workers — teachers, hospital workers — often don't get their wages. When I was there, even the peshmerga [Kurdish armed forces] were not getting wages, though they are now.

People do second and third jobs to survive. This is partly due to the fact that the Iraqi Government in Baghdad has not been sending the region the revenues due to it. Also prices are very high due to the continuing war. This makes life very difficult for working people.

In Kirkuk refugees from ISIS are living in schools and in parks. A few of them who have money are renting places.

There are even more refugees in Sulaimaniya, maybe 140,000. They come from many areas of Iraq and from Syria. There are some refugee camps, and many people living in unfinished houses.

I didn't see Arab-Kurdish conflict in Kirkuk. In Sulaimaniya, there has been an anti-Arab demonstration by a group of young people. The demonstration was small, maybe 100. Many people spoke out against it. But some KDP media have carried anti-Arab coverage.

I heard a nurse in a hospital saying, "all these Arabs, they're destroying our society". But in Sulaimaniya there are many educated people, and they resist those attitudes.

Sulaimaniya is not militarised like a city under siege, and travel between Sulaimaniya, Erbil, and Kirkuk is normal. But Sulaimaniya feels like a city in wartime. People don't feel secure. The ISIS threat has given the administration an extra excuse for unpaid wages.

The displaced people I spoke with want an end to the ISIS nightmare. But they do not trust the nationalist parties to defend them. And many see what's happening now as an outcome of American policy in Iraq. People are not silent.

There have been demonstrations in many cities and towns. Taxi drivers closed the roads because of the increase in the price of patrol. I organised two public meetings in a cultural coffee house in Sulaimaniya.

The meeting was attended by journalists, trade union women rights activists. At the meetings we discussed how people organize them self against ISIS, racism and also the KRG. The KRG must not use the excuse of war for not answering the demands of the people. The meeting also organised a network of people to support the displaced people.

Generally people are better off in Sulaimaniya than in Kirkuk. Kirkuk is a long-neglected area, and Sulaimaniya is a bit safer.

But water and electricity supplies are worse in Sulaimaniya than in Kirkuk. In Sulaimaniya, sometimes there is running water only water for two hours then no water for two whole days.

The displaced people have to buy water in bottles, though temperatures are still up to 40 Celsius. In January and February it will get much colder, with snow.

Class struggle not relevant?

Matt Cooper reviews *The Establishment: And How They Get Away with It* by Owen Jones.

According to Owen Jones Britain is dominated by an unitary elite — the Establishment. This is defined not so much by its wealth and power but by its ideology and mentality.

Acting as a united group, it promotes its interests and undermines popular democracy. Superficially this is an arresting thesis. It is, however, full of inconsistencies and gaps.

Jones does have some class-struggle politics. For instance he argues the post-1945 welfare state and Keynesian economic policy was the result of the growing working-class power. He sees the victory of neo-liberalism under the Thatcher governments as a corollary of the defeat of the working class, especially of the miners in 1985.

However Jones makes little attempt to relate the Marxist ideas of class to his narrative. That is, he does not dwell on the fundamental conflict between the ruling class which owns and controls the economy and the working class who through their labour create the wealth. He does not dismiss such ideas as wrong, just ignores this key idea of the socialist tradition.

Is this because Jones thinks it would put off a new layer of younger activists, or is it because he finds it irrelevant? That is not clear.

Jones focuses on ideas and ideological conflicts. The old Establishment that dominated Britain after 1945 was defined by a mix of Tory paternalism and social democracy. The crisis of the 1970s was an opportunity for neo-liberal ideologues to transform the Establishment into one devoted to the dictates of the free-market, a rejection of the state as a protector of the citizenry (although it continued to promote the Establishment's interests), media scapegoating of the poor, and foreign policy defined by Atlanticism, the special relationship with the USA.

The new Establishment was forged in the early years of the Thatcher governments. It consists of the financial institutions of the City of London, the political elite in Westminster and Whitehall and the owners and controllers of the media. There is a revolving door of personnel between these institutions. The police as a whole (not just its senior officers) are also part of this Establishment, but in recent years have been sidelined by the drive to privatise and cut its state functions.

Although Jones admits the ruling bloc potentially has competing interests, overall the Establishment is presented as a monolith. A more subtle understanding of the British state and society would have looked at the competing sectors of capital and their relationship to other important powerful groups. But for Jones the Establishment appears as a single-minded conspiracy with no room for internal conflict.

For instance the 2009 MPs' expenses scandal is used to show the self-serving mentality of the new Establishment. But this example actually undermines the idea it is self-serving unity. Jones ignores how the Commons' repeated attempts to stop the release of the information on expenses was undermined by the Lords, the Information Commission and the High Court. Eventually, a full list of MPs' claims was leaked to (that organ of

popular justice) *The Daily Telegraph*, which remorselessly ran with the story. And the Metropolitan Police refused to investigate the leak because, they argued, a prosecution would not be in the public interest. All of these institutions support the existing free-market order, but have their own institutional position and interests within that order. Jones' overarching concept of The Establishment adds nothing to our understanding of how these institutions work.

Another example. Jones describes how BBC Radio 4 Today Programme journalist Andrew Gilligan exposed some of Blair's shoddy propaganda over Iraqi weapons of mass destruction in 2003. For Jones Gilligan was acting against the Establishment. But if the Establishment exists Gilligan and his associates (*The Telegraph*, Boris Johnson, *The London Evening Standard*) are part of it! It is true, parts of the state and media turned on Gilligan and the BBC, but the story is best understood as division and competition within sections of the state and media.

Not all capitalist institutional actions are reducible to the "interests of capitalism". There is a long and important Marxist theoretical tradition in understanding how capitalism works and how its interests are articulated via the state, the media and other institutions. All of that is entirely ignored in this book.

This lack of theoretical ballast is clear in the book's conclusion, where Jones outlines his political programme.

Jones calls for a "democratic revolution" against the Establishment. But this grandiose idea turns out to be a series of limited reforms for a nicer capitalism, including putting MPs on the average wage, renationalisation of the power companies with compensation for their owners, keeping the bailed-out banks in state hands with a remit to lend to manufacturing industry and small business and more redistributive taxation policy.

Some of that is okay or okayish. And the agencies of the "democratic revolution" are two small campaigning groups (UK Uncut and the New Economics Foundation) and the People's Assembly Against Austerity. Could such an incremental programme, pushed forward by well-meaning, small and medium-sized, activist groups really shift the balance in British politics to the left?

Jones tells us nothing, indeed deliberately does not try to tell us anything, about how to reverse the defeats the working-class has suffered since the 1970s.



The Bullingdon Club with David Cameron and Boris Johnson

Why we op

Solidarity opposes the demand for Scottish independence. Shortly after we publish the referendum will be over, but the issues it has raised will be around much longer. This "question and answer" by Sacha Ismail is a response to questions we have encountered.

It's up to the people of Scotland to decide on independence.

Yes, but no one denies that. Given the widespread demand for independence, it is good that a referendum is being held (whether it's good that the demand is widespread is another matter). It doesn't automatically follow that people should vote yes in the referendum.

Socialists support the right of nations to self-determination, which if it means anything must include the right to separate and form an independent state. How we advocate exercising that right, including whether to form a separate state, depends on the consequences for the interests and struggles of the working class.

The overwhelming bulk of the radical left in Scotland is backing a yes vote.

Most of the Labour left and much of the trade union left is opposed to independence. But yes, probably most of the "hard left" socialists in Scotland are backing a yes vote. However, we respectfully disagree. And we think that a lot of the Scottish left has, to one degree or another, become a satellite of Scottish nationalism.

You're lining up with Cameron, Clegg and Farrage!

We're also lining up with most trade unions and the Labour Party! And on the other hand the pro-independence left is lining up with the significant minority of Scottish bosses who support independence, like billionaire Brian Souter of Stage Coach, billionaire Jim McColl of Clyde Blowers and former Royal Bank of Scotland chair George Mathewson. Rupert Murdoch has a close relationship with Alex Salmond (who describes him as a "remarkable man") and has been flirting with backing the yes campaign!

But socialists cannot decide our policy by putting a minus where the ruling class (or the majority of the ruling class) puts a plus. That is the approach which has led swathes of the left into so many blind alleys, for instance over Stalinism and over anti-imperialism, for decades.

We do not defend the status quo. We advocate the reorganisation of Britain as a federal republic — unlike the Scottish National Party, which supports the monarchy.

If Scots vote for independence, they'll always get the government they vote for.

The same could apply to any area of the UK. What about London, or Birmingham, or Manchester, or any big English city which always votes Labour but often gets Tory governments? In any case, having an independent government is not a guarantee that it will be any good from a working-class point of view.

In both Scotland and England, "we" — the working class — are the big majority. Yet we get governments that serve the capitalists, who are a small minority. The problem is not in any real sense the existence of Britain as a single unit, but the balance of class forces within that unit — who has power.

If Scotland was in some sense oppressed as a nation, then escaping from English control would be a boost for democracy and for workers' struggles. But one, even on the left, seriously argues that it is. The fact that Scotland sometimes votes differently from England does not constitute national oppression.

"Britain is for the rich: Scotland can be ours"

That's a slogan of the Radical Independence Campaign, the left wing — or more accurately, left cover — of the campaign for independence.

Oppose Scottish independence



Many support independence out of anti-Toryism, but a united working-class fightback would be better

But the RIC doesn't mean that an independent Scotland will quickly become socialist — so in what sense will it be “ours”? The (not that radical) shopping list of reforms it proposes could indeed be carried out by a left-leaning government in Scotland, given a strong enough working-class movement exerting pressure and adequate channels for that movement to find some political expression. But that is just what does not exist in Scotland. The movement for Scottish independence is self-evidently not such a movement.

If there was a strong left movement in Scotland, but not in the rest of the UK, one of its tasks would be to spread to England, not to separate Scotland off. But in fact there is no such movement at present.

A left movement, bringing about a left-leaning government, could also happen Britain-wide. The barriers to it in England are real and strong, but only about as real and strong as the barriers in Scotland. We should fight together to overcome them.

Why was it that the legalisation of trade unions, shorter worker hours, the right to vote, the NHS, the welfare state, nationalisations, measures of equality for women, LGBT peo-

ple, ethnic minorities, and so on were won UK-wide over decades and even centuries, but now radical change is only possible unless Scotland leaves the UK?

The inescapable implication of the RIC slogan is that nothing much can change in the rest of the UK. To bolster illusions about the prospects in an independent Scotland, it promotes despair about prospects in England (and Wales?)

But Scottish politics is well to the left of English politics.

On a certain limited level that is true, in that the Tories are currently weaker. It has not always been true and will not necessarily always be true.

Such arguments rest in large part on the implication or assumption that the SNP is left wing. It isn't. On some issues, the SNP is to the left of Labour — on others it is to the right. It voted down Labour's proposal to insist that all Scottish government contractors pay the living wage and do not blacklist, voted down Labour's call for an inquiry into police actions during the miners' strike, criticised Miliband's pathetically weak proposals for an energy price freeze as “unrealistic”, opposes a 50 percent top rate of tax, and says that if Scotland becomes independent it will cut corporation tax.

If Scottish independence would (at least in the short term) weaken Tory influence in Scotland, it would strengthen it in what remained of the UK, because it would (at least in the short term) make it harder for the Tories to lose a general election.

Scottish independence will weaken British imperialism.

It's hard to see how. Minus Scotland, the UK will still have over 90 percent of its previous population, over 90 percent of its economic output, an extremely strong military, and major overseas influence. In any case, as British imperialism has long been in decline, this would hardly be a major blow.

Socialists do not advocate fighting imperialism by chopping up imperialist states. We do not want to break the US up into fifty small countries. We want to help a working-class

movement develop which can fight the ruling class and its imperialism across the US, as part of an international movement.

National self-determination is a different issue: we advocate self-determination not primarily to “weaken imperialism” but to extend democracy and remove barriers to working-class struggle.

On Trident, no one disputes that what is proposed is not scrapping it, but moving it. The idea that British imperialism will not be able to relocate it is absurd. And nimbyism is not the same thing as disarmament.

You accuse some Scottish leftists of being nationalist. But there is nothing nationalist about wanting independence.

There is nothing necessarily nationalist about wanting independence if the country you live in is oppressed by another country. But Scotland is not. So the demand is inherently nationalist, even though a minority of its advocates say they are not.

In principle it is possible to imagine a left which supported a yes vote while also militantly criticising and fighting the SNP and its supporters. In fact the majority of the pro-independence left has echoed the arguments of the nationalists, only changing the emphasis. In doing so it has strengthened nationalism.

That is because serious criticism would mean exploding the whole basis of the nationalists' worldview, and therefore the whole basis of advocating independence.

The left, across Britain, is in a weak position. We have to organise and argue our way to a stronger position. That will be hard work. It is daunting, and tempting to look for short cuts or substitutes. Support for Scottish independence is an example of such a substitute.

We need to renew and popularise the basic ideas of socialism — including the idea of uniting workers and the oppressed across boundaries of nationality identity. We encourage readers who disagree to write in.



A slogan of the Radical Independence campaign

Death of a political gangster

By Sean Matgamna

Michael Banda (Michael van den Poorten), who died recently, had for nearly three decades been a retired political gangster.

For much of the previous three decades he had been an all-too-active political gangster, as one of the two or three central leaders of the Healy organisation known variously as the Newsletter group, the Socialist Labour League, and the Workers' Revolutionary Party.

He was known in the organisation during the 1950s and early 60s as "Mike the Knife", after he pulled a knife on a man who had grabbed Gerry Healy by the coat collar in a factional row.

He also played "Mike the Knife" at the demise of the organisation in 1985-6. That time, the knife was political, and its target was Healy, whose political lieutenant Banda had been for the previous three decades.

The old Healyite organisation came to an abrupt end, shattered into pieces. One of the pieces was led, or spearheaded, by Banda.

Serious socialists owe him a debt of gratitude for the long-overdue demise of an organisation that had, for its last decade of existence, been a pensionary of Middle East dictators Gaddafi of Libya, Saddam Hussein of Iraq, and some of the sheikhdoms.

How much money the WRP received cannot, by the nature of the operation, be precisely known now. It was certainly well over one million pounds and perhaps a great deal more. The alluvial flood of petrodollars allowed the WRP, though it was in prolonged and steep organisational decline, to buy printing presses more modern than those the mainstream papers were printed on, and to acquire bookshops and other property in a number of cities.

To earn their wages, the Healy-Banda gang sent their paymasters spy reports on dissident Arabs in Britain and on prominent Jews. They justified the killing of Communist Party members by the Iraqi state. In 1980, Banda wrote an explanation to the readers of the WRP's daily paper *Newsline* that the CPers had tried to subvert the Iraqi army — and everyone knew what happened to people who did that, didn't they?

The Healyites spread political corruption into those areas of the labour movement which they could reach by testifying that Gadaffism was authentic socialism: Michael Banda was frequently the boldest and most shameless in such work.

In the early 1980s he told a big meeting at the Conway Hall, called to denounce and condemn *Solidarity's* predecessor, *Socialist Organiser*, that the Islamic-green Libya was like a melon — green on the outside but red on the inside! That satisfactorily solved that little difficulty...

In the period before it imploded in late 1985, the WRP activated or reconnected with still-loyal former or secret members such as "Red Ted" Knight, the leader of Lambeth's Labour council and "close comrade in arms" of Ken Livingstone in the leadership of the local government left of the time.

That local government left became both prominent and powerful as Thatcher's Tories struggled to set themselves firmly in the saddle so that they could smash up the labour movement.

What did the WRP do with its reclaimed allies? Politically, emotionally, and intellectually, they encouraged the local government leaders to run away from the necessary fight with the Tories, for which positions in local government should have become a base. And they set up a weekly paper for them, *Labour Herald*, edited in fact by a WRP Central Committee member, Steven Miller, though nominally by Livingstone, Knight, and another Lambeth councillor.

The local government leaders had promised to make local government a base for fighting the Tories, but Ken Livingstone was always a political cynic and a devoutly self-promoting careerist. By contrast, Knight had serious and long-standing roots in revolutionary socialist politics, and might have chosen a different course if the WRP leaders hadn't been there to whisper right-wing advice and rationalisations in his ear. (After the miners' defeat, Knight would blunder into a semi-confrontation, and be legally disqualified as a councillor).

One of the services which the Healyites tried to provide for

the local government left leaders who were reneging all down the line on their public promises to use Labour-controlled local government to mobilise against the Tories, was to try to cripple or destroy *Socialist Organiser*, with which Livingstone and Knight and others had worked closely up to the point that they bottled out of confrontation with early Thatcherism and we turned on them.

Early in 1981, the WRP — in the improbable person of the actress Vanessa Redgrave — started a libel action in response to a very understated summary account of the WRP which the present writer published in *Socialist Organiser*. I was sued for what I'd written — for comparing the WRP to the Moonies, but not for referring to the evidence of funding from Arab despots — and John Bloxam was sued for repeating some of it in a circular letter to *Socialist Organiser* supporters.

We decided to fight the case in preference to publishing a tongue-in-cheek retraction of what we knew to be true, making a hypocritical apology.

That expensive libel action — we wouldn't have been able to fight it if some friendly lawyers hadn't worked with us without payment — dragged on for the five years that remained in the life of the WRP, until its 1985 implosion made it impossible for Redgrave to go on.

Michael Banda played a central role in that and other political-gangster activities. In its later period, there was always an atmosphere of intimidation and real or incipient thuggery around the affairs of the WRP. Banda was central to that, too.

It would be senseless to discuss which of the political and other crimes of Healy, Banda, and the other leaders of their organisation was "the worst". What they did with anti-semitism would, however, rank very high in the list.

"THE ZIONIST CONNECTION"

As part of the deal with their various Arab patrons they provided private reports on dissident Arabs in Britain and on the activities of prominent British Jews. Publicly they ran a campaign against "Zionists" in British politics, businesses, and other public affairs. "Zionist" was the thinnest of disguise for "Jew".

It reached the stage that they wrote about "The Zionist Connection" in terms very close to the craziest anti-semites who saw conspiracy by world Jewry everywhere and in everything they disliked. The WRP published an editorial in 1985 that raved about a gigantic "Zionist connection" that extended from the editorial board of *Socialist Organiser* through Thatcher's Cabinet all the way to Reagan's White House.

By that stage Healy was, arguably, clinically mad. Banda wasn't.

The end came for the WRP when it lurched into financial crisis on an unprecedented scale. With a few hundred members, the organisation was vastly overextended. It had expenditure and commitments which it could not sustain even help from the inflowing wads of petrodollars.

A great head of political frustration had built up in the organisation, and of hatred between layers of the party bureaucracy. For example, older leaders resented having been pushed aside by Healy to make way for such as the Redgrave siblings, Corin and Vanessa.

Above all, political events made it increasingly difficult to evade the fact that all of Healy's promises to "build a mass revolutionary party" had failed entirely.

Healy had always played the role of a bonaparte in the WRP, balancing, controlling, and acting as court of last re-

HEALYISM IMPLODES



When the WRP collapsed in 1985

sort for political differences and in disputes. But he was 73, and no longer the formidable political thug that he once was. There was some evidence that he was getting ready to purge the WRP leadership.

So they fell on each other, gouging and spitting and ripping each other. The hysteria that engulfed the leading layer had been building up for years. Cliff Slaughter, an academic and hack theoretician for Healy over many years, suddenly discovered and proclaimed that Healy's inner group (the Redgraves, etc.) were no less than "fascists".

Michael Banda and his brother Tony had learned no-holds-barred political rough-housing from Healy. Good pupils, they denounced Healy as a serial rapist of young female comrades. (If that had, as they charged, gone on for years, then they too, knowing it, were guilty). The press had much merriment, reporting on Healy, "the Red in the Bed".

Healy had lived the life of a sheikh or a Hollywood mogul while members of the organisation struggled to raise money, and ordinary full-timers often went unpaid. Now the backlash licensed by Banda convulsed the organisation. Old scandals came pouring out.

Healy, the life-long bully — organisational, physical, and sexual — refused to face his accusers. I remember the gleeful satisfaction with which one of the leading WRPer, Geoff Pilling, who hadn't spoken to me in many years, accosted me one night in a pub near Conway Hall to tell me that. "He didn't dare to face us".

Someone commented that Machiavelli would have summed up the lesson in power politics for Healy thus: "He who rules by personal force and the ability to terrify his followers should not grow old".

Michael Banda disappeared from politics soon after that. He came to a meeting I did a dozen years ago and we talked afterwards.

He said Healy was a paranoiac, citing the opinion of Chris Pallas, a neurosurgeon who had parted company with the organisation as long as 25 years before Banda turned on Healy.

He said: "He died on the job, you know". He told that story as if he and others had not plausibly branded Healy as a serial rapist — indeed, I thought, with an edge of proprietorial, even filial, pride.

I asked him how he named himself politically. "I'm not a Trotskyist. I'm a realist now". God knows what that meant.

He managed to sustain the ebullient manner that had always been his front in politics. In fact, politically he was dead — by that time, long dead.

You have to stand back from the mountain of political atrocities, against the working class, against young and vulnerable members of "his" organisation, against Marxism, and against Trotskyism, which Banda perpetrated or helped Healy perpetrate over decades, to see the personal tragedy of Michael Banda, of his brother Tony, who died a decade ago. And of so many others.

An organiser for black workers

Our movement
By Michael Johnson



Ernest Rice McKinney (1886-1984) was a black US trade union organiser, revolutionary socialist and former National Secretary of the Third Camp Workers Party USA.

Born in Malden, in West Virginia's Kanawha Valley, McKinney's father was a coal miner and later a teacher as was McKinney's mother. McKinney Sr. eventually landed a job at the US Treasury through his involvement in the Republican Party, which had widespread black support in the decades after the American Civil War.

Due to the efforts of anti-slavery abolitionists during post-Civil War Reconstruction, West Virginia had a black franchise. The area also experienced industrial development from the 1870s with the growth of railway lines and mining. The United Mine Workers of America (founded 1890) had some success pursuing biracial trade unionism, which left a lasting impression on a young McKinney.

Growing up, McKinney noticed class differentiation within the black community, as the small black middle-class attempted to forge alliances with the white elite, supporting anti-union sentiments. These experiences shaped McKinney's understanding of the centrality of black workers to the class struggle, and the centrality of the class struggle to black liberation.

McKinney was educated at Oberlin College in Ohio, where he worked with the black intellectual WEB Du Bois to set up a chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In later life McKinney would be skeptical of the role of such non-working-class groups. At the time both Du Bois and McKinney were active in the Socialist Party of America.

After Oberlin, McKinney became a social worker, working with young black people in Denver, Colorado. He then served in the US Army between 1917-1919, as part of the American Expeditionary Forces in France.

Like many in his generation, McKinney was inspired by the 1917 Russian Revolution and joined the Communist Party in 1920. At this time he was working on A. Philip Randolph's newspaper *The Messenger*, which advocated inter-racial trade union organising; it opposed the black nationalism of Marcus Garvey's "Back to Africa" movement.

In the early 1920s the American CP took the problem of black oppression more seriously than any other US socialist organisation had ever done before. One of the founders of American Communism and, later, Trotskyism, James P Cannon recalled that, the "earlier socialist movement, out of which the Communist Party was formed, never recognised any need for a special program on the Negro question. It was considered purely and simply as an economic problem, part of the struggle between the workers and the capitalists; nothing could be done about the special problems of discrimination and inequality this side of socialism..."

"The American communists in the early days, under the influence and pressure of the Russians in the Comintern, were slowly and painfully learning to change their attitude; to assimilate the new theory of the Negro question as a special question of doubly-exploited second-class citizens, requiring a program of special demands as part of the overall program — and to start doing something about it."

The debates on black liberation in the 1920s were affected by the growing Stalinisation of the Communist International and its national sections. The position on black liberation shifted towards "self-determination for the black belt" in the American south, a policy drafted at its Sixth Congress in 1928 by Finnish Stalinist Otto Kuusinen (later head of Stalin's puppet Finnish government after the Soviet occupation).



Ernest Rice McKinney

The line was dictated from Moscow to the CP leaders in the US. However, it was more of a test of loyalty and orthodoxy than an operative agitational slogan. Much of the Stalinists' most impressive black activism (like its defence of the Scottsboro Boys) happened not *because of* but *in spite of* the Comintern's programme.

McKinney would always be a strong advocate of a revolutionary integrationist position arguing that "the Negroes in the US must lay their case before the trade unions. Not as outsiders seeking a united front but from the inside as an integral and integrated part of the labor movement. Here the Negro proletarians will be caught up in the basic struggles of labor, they will have opportunity to pose the question of democratic rights for the Negro as a part of the struggle for the emancipation of the whole working class."

This meant the labour movement must cease to be a movement of more privileged white workers: "The demand...for social, political and economic equality for Negroes is... addressed directly to the white proletariat... The party says to the white workers that the Negroes have already initiated and carried on the struggle for their democratic rights against terrific opposition; even the opposition of white labor. It is now the duty and the responsibility of white labor to step out in front, take the lead and throw its full weight into the fight."

In 1926 McKinney left the CP and three years later joined with AJ Muste to form the Conference for Progressive Labor Action (CPLA) which supported the formation of a mass Labor Party distinct from both the SP and the CP.

WORKERS PARTY

The CPLA formed the American Workers Party in December 1933 and opposed the slogan of "self-determination for black belt."

McKinney wrote in 1936: "The Workers Party rejects as spurious and defeatist all schemes based on race patriotism and nationalism; whether it be 'self-determination for the black belt', Back to Africa, salvation by Negro business enterprise, or any other scheme or plan which in practice means the segregation of the Negro worker."

McKinney continued, the American Workers Party "rejects also the spurious doctrine that the Negro worker has no special problems and can be treated en masse just as a worker. The fact that the Negro worker suffers a double form of exploitation gives the lie to this doctrine. He is exploited as a worker and further exploited as a Negro worker."

One main focus of the CPLA was unemployed organising. In September 1932, the Pittsburg CPLA branch launched the Unemployed Citizens' League with McKinney as its Executive Secretary. "We sought," he recalled, "to give these unemployed workers an idea of what kind of society they lived in, an idea as to what improvements might be made in that society, and an idea how they could participate in improving that society."

These efforts were successful in mobilising workers and the unemployed to protect people's homes and possessions from bailiffs, wire their houses and turn back on their gas. The Unemployed Leagues also demanded cash relief and cash for public works in order to give the unemployed more of a choice than that offered by the receipt of goods.

In 1934, the AWP played an heroic role in the Toledo Auto-Lite strike, paralleling the work of the Trotskyists in the Communist League of America in the Minneapolis Teamsters' strike that same year.

The strikes were the catalyst for the fusion of the AWP with the Trotskyists to form the Workers Party of the United States at the end of 1934, which marked McKinney's entry into the Trotskyist movement.

These strikes also paved the way for the creation of the more radical Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in 1935, as a rival to the craftist American Federation of Labor (AFL). The following year, McKinney briefly became an organiser with the CIO's Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC). Mc Kinney organised steelworkers in Youngstown, Ohio in the 1930s and in 1940 sharecroppers and tenant farmers for the Missouri Agricultural Union.

After a period of entry work inside the recently revived Socialist Party, the Trotskyists formed the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) in 1938. Within the Trotskyist movement, McKinney became an ally of Max Shachtman. When Shachtman and his allies split with the SWP in 1940 over its response to World War Two, McKinney became National Secretary and



Communist Party defence of the Scottsboro boys

trade union expert in the newly-formed Workers Party, and wrote much of its policy on black liberation.

CLR James, who had headed the SWP's work on black oppression, also joined the new Workers Party. There was personal animosity between James and McKinney, but it was accompanied and aggravated by political differences.

The "self-determination" slogan was still vigorously opposed by McKinney (and Shachtman), who saw black people as the most exploited layer of the American working-class but not as a separate nation. The slogan found more resonance with James, who carried his views into the new organisation, and influenced Leon Trotsky.

As Christopher Phelps wrote in his introduction to Shachtman's polemic *Communism and the Negro*: "As against Shachtman's 1933 standpoint, Trotsky and James in 1939 believed that the right of self-determination applied to black Americans, and that revolutionaries should support the demand for territorial independence if raised in substantial numbers by black Americans themselves."

However Trotsky himself wrote that he thought it was wrong for the CP to make an "imperative slogan" out of self-determination, and did not advocate raising it — only for revolutionaries to support a movement for self-determination if black Americans themselves wanted it.

On this latter point, James wrote to Trotsky that: "You seem to think that there is a greater possibility of the Negroes wanting self-determination than I think is probable... I consider the idea of separating as a step backward so far as a socialist society is concerned. If the white workers extend a hand to the Negro, he will not want self-determination."

McKinney, however, in the majority resolution of the Workers Party in 1945 wrote: "All the manifest tendencies of Negroes today, especially the proletarians, are in the other direction. As the regular Negro proletarians and the new Negro wage earners enter the factories and take their places in the trade union struggles they reveal a marked tendency away from separation and all ideas of racial separatism..."

"However, if, despite our efforts, the Negroes should demand political independence, the WP guided by the Bolshevik position on self-determination, would approve such a course; provided, however, that such a course did not violate wider principles of workers' democracy and provided also that such a demand was not made under conditions that would jeopardise the existence of the workers' state and throw the Negroes themselves defenceless into the clutches of counter-revolutionary imperialist forces."

"Whatever position the WP might take in the future when a concrete demand for self-determination arose, we are not now and will not be advocates of self-determination... We are and remain advocates of the unity of the working class: the fellowship of all the proletarians in the class struggle, the gathering together of all the working class for the coming assault on capitalism and the establishment of the workers' state."

McKinney was to drift out of the organised Trotskyist movement, leaving the Workers Party in 1950, though he still considered himself a Marxist. He went on to teach labour history at Rutgers University, working with the United Federation of Teachers to organise education workers, and served as a consultant to the A. Philip Randolph Education Fund, which ran programs for trade unions and black groups.

He was a hugely talented organiser, journalist and revolutionary militant, Ernest Rice McKinney's life and work deserves to be widely known about and discussed.

Culture-shift on the left

The Left



By Rhodri Evans

A “common sense” which has dominated much left thinking since the late 1980s or early 1990s is now breaking down. That’s a good thing.

The old line was to support whomever battled the USA. By opposing the USA, they were “anti-imperialist”, and therefore at least half-revolutionary.

So many leftists backed the Taliban. They sided with Khomeini’s Iran. They claimed “we are all Hezbollah”.

But Syria’s dictator, Assad? Some leftists have taken the US support for the Syrian opposition, and the US threats to bomb Syria, as mandating them to side with Assad. Most find that too much to swallow.

And ISIS? Leftists who have backed the Taliban are not now backing ISIS. Not even “critically”.

The outcry about ISIS ceremonially beheading Western captives has, reasonably enough, deterred leftists. So has the threat from ISIS to the Kurds, whose national rights most leftists have learned to support.

And so, probably, has the fact that other forces previously reckoned “anti-imperialist” — Iran and its allies, for example — detest ISIS as much as the US does.

The Taliban converted Kabul’s football stadium into a site for public executions, and chopped hands and feet off the victims before killing them. The Taliban persecuted the Hazara and other non-Sunni and non-Pushtoon peoples of Afghanistan.

Now the media coverage of ISIS has focused thinking. But leftists who now don’t back ISIS must be aware that their criteria have shifted.

The old “common sense” was spelled out, for example, by the SWP in a 2001 pamphlet entitled *No to Bush’s War*.

It portrayed world politics as shaped by a “drive for global economic and military dominance” by a force interchangeably named “the world system”, “globalisation”, “imperialism”, “the West”, or “the USA”.

All other forces in the world were mere “products” of that drive. They were examples of the rule that “barbarity bred

barbarity”, “barbarism can only cause more counter-barbarism”, or they were “terrorists the West has created”.

The pamphlet promoted a third and decisive idea, that we should side with the “counter-barbarism” against the “barbarism”.

It was nowhere as explicit as the SWP had been in 1990: “The more US pressure builds up, the more Saddam will play an anti-imperialist role... In all of this Saddam should have the support of socialists... Socialists must hope that Iraq gives the US a bloody nose and that the US is frustrated in its attempt to force the Iraqis out of Kuwait” (SW, 18 August 1990).

But the idea in the 2001 pamphlet was the same. The SWP talked freely about how “horrorifying” the 11 September attacks in the USA were. It refused to condemn them.

“The American government denounces the Taliban regime as ‘barbaric’ for its treatment of women”, said the pamphlet. A true denunciation, or untrue? The SWP didn’t say. Its answer was: “It was the Pakistani secret service, the Saudi royal family and American agents... that organised the Taliban’s push for power”.

Bin Laden was behind the 11 September attacks? Not his fault. “It was because of the rage he felt when he saw his former ally, the US, bomb Baghdad and back Israel”.

FANTASIES

Now Corey Oakley, in the Australian socialist paper *Red Flag*, which comes from the same political culture as the SWP, criticises “leftists [for whom] ‘imperialism’ simply means the US and its Saudi and Israeli allies.

“Syria, Iran and even Russia, whose strategic interests brought them into conflict with the US, are portrayed as playing a progressive role...”

“Events in Iraq... leave such ‘anti-imperialist’ fantasies in ruins. The Saudis are conspiring with the Russians while US diplomats negotiate military tactics with their Iranian counterparts... Israel tries to derail a US alliance with Iran while simultaneously considering whether it needs to intervene in de facto alliance with Iran in Jordan.

“If your political approach boils down to putting a tick wherever the US and Israel put a cross, you will quickly find yourself tied in knots. The driving force behind the misery... is not an all-powerful US empire, but a complex system of conflict and shifting alliances between the ruling classes of



For most, Stop the War’s implicit support for Assad is too much

states big and small...

“The British, Russian, French and US imperialists are no longer the only independent powers in the region. Iran, Saudi Arabia and Egypt — though all intertwined in alliances with other countries big and small — are powerful capitalist states in their own right, playing the imperialist game, not mere clients of bigger powers...” (1 July 2014).

The shift signifies an opening for discussion, rather than a reaching of new conclusions.

On ISIS, a frequent leftist “line” now is to deplore ISIS; say that the 2003 US invasion of Iraq contributed to the dislocation from which ISIS surged (true); express no confidence or trust in US bombing as a way to push back ISIS (correct); and slide into a “conclusion” that the main imperative is to campaign against US bombing.

The slide gives an illusion of having got back to familiar “auto-anti-imperialist” ground. But the illusion is thin.

The old argument was that if you oppose the US strongly enough, then you oppose the root of all evil, and hence you also effectively combat the bad features of the anti-imperialist force. But no-one can really believe that the US created ISIS, or that there were no local reactionary impulses with their own local dynamic and autonomy behind the rise of ISIS.

Our statement of basic ideas, in this paper, says: “Working-class solidarity in international politics: equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small”. We have a new opening to get discussion on that approach.

Death of a political gangster

From page 8

These were two young men, of well-off Sri Lankan background, who came to England in 1951 or 52. This was a race-conscious England not over-friendly to brown-skinned incomers like the Banda brothers. They were already Trotskyists, and presented themselves to Gerry Healy as fully-grown political activists, “reporting for duty”, so to speak.

Healy’s account of it was that they came, and he questioned them about their politics and what they’d read. Have they read Trotsky’s *The Revolution Betrayed*? Oh yes. The Permanent Revolution? Yes, of course. *In Defence of Marxism*? They had.

Healy’s affectionate story about how little of “big” politics he had had to teach them was also, of course, a portrait of his own level of political development. He taught them other things... things they would never find in the writings of Leon Trotsky.

They went to work for the organisation. Michael Banda worked on the printing press for many years, running a small commercial department to ensure some extra income for the poverty-crippled organisation.

When the “orthodox Trotskyist” Fourth International split in 1953, Healy sided with the SWP-USA Cannon faction, the “International Committee of the Fourth International”, against the “soft-on-Stalinism” Pablo-Mandel “International Secretariat of the Fourth International”. The man the young Michael Banda pulled a knife on was the leader of the Pablo-Mandel faction in Britain, John Lawrence, who very quickly went over to the Communist Party.

The issues implicitly posed in the 1953 split concerned the whole political trajectory of the “orthodox Trotskyists” after Trotsky’s death — their analysis of Stalinism and their politics towards the expanding Stalinist empire. They were never posed explicitly. “Pabloism” became an empty term of abuse against other post-Trotsky Trotskyists.

When the SWP-USA moved towards reunification with the Mandel Fourth International (now minus Pablo), the Healy-Banda group fumed and raged about “Pabloism” and kept their distance. Indeed, with much polemic, and much of it dishonest, they increased their distance.

Then, suddenly, early in 1967, Healy and Banda came out for the Mao-controlled Cultural Revolution and the Red Guards. They paraded in London, with placards and banners and red bunting, to glorify and support it.

This was an ultra-Pabloite outdoing of the “Pabloites”. The Mandel Fourth International made the necessary criticisms and condemnations of the Cultural Revolution.

The Bandas were central to the Healy strain of terminal political confusion. Michael Banda had the reputation that he was not far off being a Maoist.

Out of all that political confusion, and what it licensed Healy-Banda to do or not do, came the political collapse of the Healy-Banda organisation, long before the organisational collapse of 1985.

It collapsed into various manifestations of ultra-left craziness. For instance, it spent years proclaiming an imminent military coup in Britain.

When in August 1969 British troops were deployed in

Northern Ireland to stop Catholic-Protestant fighting, all Healy and Banda could see was that these were soldiers and therefore evidently part of a creeping military coup. They were too excited to notice that the troops were under the political and operational control of the Wilson Labour government.

In a welter of polemic, demagoguery, say-anything-for-effect, take-any-line-you-think-will-serve, the whole group, shedding people constantly, slithered down the long decline until Healy would sell its services to Libya.

It was not possible for “ordinary” members of the group, even if they could escape the collective hysteria long enough, to question any of these things. Banda could have questioned them. He bore a great share in the responsibility for what happened to a once-serious and once-valuable organisation.

Michael Banda himself, a talented and in his own way devoted man, was destroyed too.

Solidarity and Workers’ Liberty have our own distant political roots in the Cannonite “orthodox Trotskyist” tendency. We have had to reorient and rethink the whole history of the Trotskyist movement, back to 1940 and beyond.

We concluded that two fundamental tendencies emerged from the Trotskyism of Trotsky at his death — the Shachtman and Cannon tendencies. The Shachtman tendency was a rational current that responded to events as they unfolded and named such things as Russian imperialism for what they were. The other, the Cannon tendency, including the ICFI faction of 1953, was a blind alley.

The fate of Michael Banda should remind us all of that.

Refuse workers take on Green council

Refuse workers in the GMB union in Brighton struck on Monday 15 September. A worker involved in the strike spoke to *Solidarity*.

The dispute is a hangover from our strike against pay cuts last year.

It's an equal pay issue; we used to get various allowances and benefits on top of basic pay. The Greens, who run Brighton Council, proposed taking them all away.

We had a prolonged strike campaign last year. The deal which ended the strike regraded us as a Local Government scale 4, and built in all our old allowances as contractual overtime, etc.

We've since discovered that we weren't graded fairly compared to other

workers across the council. They also didn't count holding a HGV licence as a "skill", meaning the drivers aren't in the "skilled workers" category (surely something our union negotiators should have noticed at the time?!). Other workers across the council are doing less work or less "skilled" jobs than our drivers, but for more money. Other local authorities pay their HGV drivers at scale 5.

The Greens are saying that they can't "break national agreements over equal pay". That's factually incorrect. Pay scales are decided nationally, but job grading is done at a local level. They claim they have to "work within financial constraints", but still employ new senior managers on astronomical salaries. Talks have been ongoing since April, with no movement. We moved to a ballot for action, starting with the drivers, returning a 96% majority in favour of action.

A work-to-rule began on Friday 12 September. This includes an overtime ban. Management rely heavily on overtime to get the work done. We also started refus-

ing to collect any waste not actually inside the bins.

There's also been a go-slow, with only one bin at a time being collected (usually it's three).

We took this type of action because we think this will be a long dispute. A work-to-rule means maximising the impact on the service without people losing pay. A work-to-rule means a 50% reduction in the amount of tonnage that gets collected.

We called an all-out strike for Monday to get things going. The strike will create a backlog of waste, and with the work-to-rule already in place, it's simply not going to get cleared.

On the strike day, not one truck left the yard. Loaders and admin workers haven't been balloted as part of the strike, but they're fully behind the drivers and held an all-day sit-in at the canteen.

We have a very robust democratic culture in the workplace. In the course of a dispute we hold regular meetings to decide on strategy and what action to take.

The demand for the dispute is very clear: regrade the job at a scale 5.



London bus workers protest

On 11 September 400 Unite the union bus workers demonstrated in central London.

The protest was over pay, conditions and lack of collective bargaining across the bus network.

London busses are currently tendered out to 9 different private companies. One of those companies, Ariva, posted a £27m profit

last year. There is no universal pay scale or set of conditions across these companies, meaning the same job in different companies may pay different wages.

Unite officials claim they will escalate to industrial action if TfL does not put in place collective bargaining across all London bus companies.

TUC "waits for Labour"

By Gerry Bates

TUC Congress was yet another snore-fest, punctuated with only out-breaks of debate.

Much was decided beforehand behind the scenes, leaving many delegates to wonder what had become of the workers' parliament.

However there was some discussion on Ukraine, fracking and allowing trades council delegates to congress. Most delegates unthinkingly voted for the

pro-Putin resolution on Ukraine. Only Matt Wrack [FBU] flew the flag of internationalism against Stalinist apologists. A card vote went against allowing trades council delegates, a move that would have vastly improved the democracy of congress.

"Wait for Labour" appears to be the default position, although this is mostly about avoiding another term of Tory attacks, rather than anything Labour will offer unions positively.

Care UK picket lines

Tommy Wood visited Care UK picket lines

Last week saw Doncaster care workers' 69th day of strike action.

Care UK management are continually trying to undermine the strike.

Despite this, morale amongst the strikers was high when I visited last week.

Ongoing discussions about taking industrial action further are at the forefront of the campaign. Strikers are confident that with continued effort and support they will be able to win.

This is a demonstration of the effectiveness of well-planned successive strike action in the fight for fair pay and working conditions.

•For more information, including how to donate: bit.ly/care-uk-strike

Ritzy workers accept deal

By Gemma Short

On Monday BECTU announced that Ritzy workers had voted, 35-4, to accept an improved offer from management.

The offer will see them earning the living wage by next September, which equates to a 26% pay rise over three years. Ritzy workers have called off the dispute and the boycott of Picturehouse cinemas.

A BECTU official said: "It's inevitable ... that there will be disappointment the company has yet to formally adopt the Living Wage ... the branch will continue to work for the incorporation of the Living Wage into its collective agreement."

On their facebook page Ritzy workers said: "As a strong collective of staff at the Ritzy, doing things differently has been key to our success to date.

"We have shown that workers don't simply have to put up with poverty pay, or feel powerless and isolated."



London Underground axeman jumps ship

By Ollie Moore

London Underground Chief Operation Officer Phil Hufton left the company on 15 September, to take up a senior position at Network Rail.

He is unlikely to be mourned by many Tube staff. He was brought in just over a year ago, with a spe-

cific mission to develop and implement a new staffing model that involves the closure of every ticket office on the network, and 953 frontline job cuts.

His departure is far from the end of the battle against a cuts plan which other LU bosses are still determined to see through, but leaving without having succeeded in implementing the cuts

must be seen as a failure for Hufton.

Strikes by Tube unions RMT and TSSA in February, and a further strike by RMT in April, have delayed implementation of LU's cuts.

Activists in both unions are pushing for further action, including a strike around the time of the public sector workers' walkout on 14 October.

Tube cleaners ballot for strike

Cleaners employed by ISS on London Underground are preparing to strike.

The dispute is about the imposition of biometric fingerprinting machines.

RMT members who have refused to use the machines have been locked out of work since July.

The strike ballot result is due back on 18 September.

Reinstate Noel Roberts and Alex McGuigan!

Tube union RMT is fighting for reinstatement for two of its members, sacked on what the union says are spurious and unjust grounds.

Noel Roberts was "medically terminated" by LU, despite doctors, local management, and occupational health declaring him fit for work.

Alex McGuigan was sacked after failing a breathalyser test which

failed to take into account his diabetes, which could have given a false positive.

Alex's urine sample was only tested for drugs. Standard practice is to test for alcohol after a positive breathalyser test.

A second sample, which should be retained for independent tests, was destroyed.

•For details see rmtlondoncalling.org.uk

Cleaners protest against SERCO

By Daniel L Cooper

On Friday, 12th September, there was a loud, boisterous protest of

cleaners at Deloitte.

The protest was against job cuts, unfair dismissals and bullying.

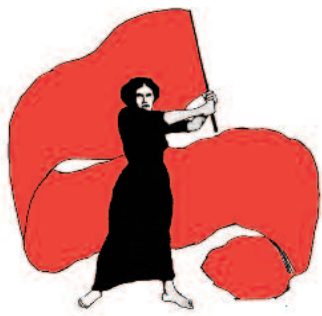
The contractor, SERCO, which is notorious for its abuse and "sweatshop" type working conditions, have recently fired a worker, a member of the IWGB trade union, who spoke out

against inhuman conditions, bullying and discrimination by managers.

Rita, a mother and cleaner who has been at Deloitte for several years, said: "[SERCO management] put too much pressure on us. I sweat, I work and I drop and they do not listen. Am I not human?"

The IWGB's union members are considering its next steps.





14 October: Organise on the ground

By Gemma Short

Between 2008 and 2013 real wages fell by 8.2%, on average. The median worker lost £2000 a year, for many that will have been much worse.

The wage squeeze is worse for younger workers, a 14% drop for those aged 18-25, 12% for 25-29 year olds. Each decade since the 1980s real wages growth has been lower than the previous decade.

In the public sector wages have fallen by 15%, many face a pay freeze.

Overall price inflation over the past 5 years has

been 19% (RPI), but the income needed for a minimum living standard has risen significantly. For a couple with a child this could be up to 33%, for others 18%.

Even nominal wages have fallen during 2014.

The public sector strike on July 10 was the first move to a fightback on pay. October 14 may involve a wider range of workers as Unison and Unite are currently balloting health workers.

Health workers' wages have dropped in real terms between 12 and 15 per cent since 2010. This year 60% of health workers are been offered no rise, and others will

get one percent.

Union leaders hope that a few "protest strikes" will nudge the government into trying to repair its popularity in the lead up to the May 2015 general election by making small concessions on pay. Some may also rely on waiting for a Labour government. Vague hopes are not the basis on which to build a serious strategy to win on pay.

Activists in health already have concerns over the strategy the union will take. Many, in local government too, may fear their union leaderships leading them into a "deal" to wind down the action.

Activists should take control of the dispute, starting with organising strike committees in the run up to strike action on October 14 to decide the strategy for the day. Strikers' meetings on the day will give workers an opportunity to discuss the dispute and make demands on the union leadership to call more action.

14 October will be a display of the potential power of the labour movement, and will raise hopes for all workers feeling the squeeze on wages. The labour movement should bolster that hope with a strategy to win.

Burnham: put your words into action

By Gerry Bates

Andy Burnham once again repeated his promise to "repeal the Tory Health and Social Care Act" if Labour win the next election.

Burnham was speaking from the platform at the 6 September Trafalgar Square rally of the People's March for the NHS. It is good that Burnham makes the promise to repeal the Act publicly, but it is not enough.

When Burnham was Health Secretary under the last Labour government he backed the recommendations of Sir David Nicholson, the chief executive of the NHS, to make £20 billion "efficiency savings" by 2015.

Burnham's opposition to Lansley's plans boils down to not letting "market forces rip right through the system with no checks or balances", but he is at pains to stress that "without the contribution of private providers, we would never have delivered NHS waiting lists and times at historically low levels".

Burnham is in fact quite the fan of private provision within the NHS, albeit with the proviso of not letting it go "unchecked". Labour's own manifesto pledged to give Foundation Trusts more freedom to expand private services.

The problem with market forces is that they have a dynamic of their own. Allowing Foundation Trusts to expand private provision led Labour to accept proposals to raise the private patient income cap (mean-

ing trusts can derive more of their income from private patients, so diverting resources to private services over NHS ones).

The promise starts to sound more empty when you think of the cuts that have already taken place, about which Burnham has little to say. A repeal of the Act would not reverse the damage already done. Only serious reinvestment would address the millions of pounds of cuts already made.

Burnham has been very quiet about future funding of the NHS, whilst most agree that without an increase in funding the NHS will face a £40-50bn shortfall by 2020.

There is some argument in top Labour Party circles about raising national insurance contributions to cover this shortfall. The argument should be about taxing the rich and cutting the spending on the bureaucracy that has sprung up with increased privatisation.

A return simply to pre-2010 status for the NHS is not enough. Since the 1980s Tory and New Labour policies to introduce market mechanisms and PFI into the NHS to hugely increased bureaucracy, from 6% of health expenditure, 15% with the introduction of the internal market, and now an estimated 30-50% after the Health and Social Care Act.

Burnham should commit Labour reverse market forces and embark on large scale reinvestment in the NHS.

BRITAIN NEEDS A PAY RISE!

Join the TUC march and rally on Saturday 18 October in London.

Assemble 11am, Blackfriars Embankment and march to Hyde Park.

For more information, see britainneedsapayrise.org



NATIONAL STUDENT DEMONSTRATION

Students from across the country will be marching through London on to demand free education, an abolition all debt and a living grant for every student on 19 November.

To help mobilise on your campus or for any more information, see fb.com/nationalstudentdemo or call 07891714146