

workers power 5

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THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE TO TORY-LIBERAL COALITION CUTS



DON'T BELIEVE THE TORY LIES

INSIDE : Resistance to cuts sweeps Europe • Calls mount for BP to be nationalised after oil spill • Anger with Israel over Freedom Flotilla massacre • After BNP election rout, is fascism taking to the streets?

NEWS IN BRIEF

Sanctions on Iran – silence on Israel

Hypocrisy rules again at the UN Security Council, which has passed a fourth round of sanctions against Iran. This is not because of the Iranian dictatorship's brutal repression of democracy campaigners, but to stop Iran's civil nuclear programme.

Meanwhile, the only nuclear power in the region – Israel – is allowed hundreds of nuclear warheads without UN criticism.

The UN sanctions agenda is driven by the US who do not want military rivals to Israel, America's Middle East policeman. Israel, which recently got away with piracy and murder in the Mediterranean (see pages 9 and 10), has laid out plans to attack Iranian nuclear facilities.

Supporters of Palestinian rights should put no trust in the UN, which is not an independent force for peace but a thieves kitchen of the major powers. We need a world-wide campaign of direct action to break UN sanctions on Iran – and Israeli sanctions on Gaza (see page 24).

ConDems deporting children to warzone

The ConDem government plans to send failed unaccompanied child asylum seekers back to countries they fled in desperation. First in line are young Afghans – to a country on which the UK has waged a brutal nine-year war.

Immigration minister Damian Green says "No one should be encouraging children to make dangerous journeys across the world." But what horrors compel them to make terrifying journeys alone?

But he wouldn't like the answer: these young people are fleeing a catastrophic war unleashed by the last British government and backed by the new coalition.

Green's deceitful words conceal a ruthless policy. Britain and America have invaded Afghanistan not for the good of the Afghans, but to bolster America's world domination.

Anyone fleeing this should be welcomed here. The answer is not occupation and deportation, but immediate troops withdrawal and free movement of peoples.

Bloody Sunday: justice at last?

After 38 years – it's official. Thirteen unarmed civil rights protesters were murdered by British paratroopers in 1972 in Derry, Northern Ireland.

As we go to press, the Bloody Sunday inquiry found the killings were "unjustified."

David Cameron apologised in Parliament and even the pro-war *Sun* called it a "day of disgrace" for the British Army.

Some might say justice has been done. But will this check the culture of impunity by which lethal force is used against civilians in occupied countries?

Nothing was done at the time because atrocities did not stop in 1972. They continued throughout Britain's war in Ireland: torture in the H-Blocks, shoot-to-kill, internment without trial, strip searching of women prisoners, and collusion with loyalist death squads.

The culture of impunity continues today and is inseparable from occupation in Ireland and Afghanistan: see pages 10 and 11.

Chinese workers – the giant awakes

By Peter Main

Workers in China are on the offensive as a strike wave spreads across the country forcing up wages.

In the capital Beijing, a thousand workers at the Hyundai plant were so sick of low pay that they walked out, forcing a 15 per cent pay rise and a further 10 per cent in July.

And in Foshan, 2000 Honda workers won a 24 per cent rise after a two-week unofficial strike and mass pickets threatened to close all four of the company's plants.

Li Xiaojuan, a 20-year-old woman strike leader at Honda signed an open letter calling on workers to "maintain a high degree of unity and not let the representatives of Capital divide us...this factory's profits are the fruits of our bitter toil...this struggle is not just about the interests of our 1,800 workers. We also care about the rights and interests of all Chinese workers."

Despite a government news blackout, the

example spread. Local authorities have been forced to increase the minimum wage by 10 per cent in many provinces. Workers are not only responding to an economic upturn that saw China's exports rise by 48.5 per cent last month, while there is still a labour shortage after 40 million migrant workers were forced to return to their villages in the recent recession.

Terrible conditions have been highlighted by a wave of suicides at Fox Conn's plants in Shenzhen, where 420,000 workers make components for Apple, Hewlett-Packard, Dell and Nokia.

Inside the plants, this army of workers has almost no rights; every move and every minute is controlled and regimented, the workers are not allowed to speak to each other. One worker told the China Labour Bulletin that they could only speak to their supervisor, and they were only allowed to say "yes"!

It was little better away from the production line. After 12 hour shifts, six days a

week, workers were discouraged from socialising and company agents quickly identified any discontent. For that, the basic wage was 900 yuan per month, a little under \$120. A world wide campaign, sparked by the suicides, has now shamed the company, which made £560 million profit in the first quarter, into promising a wage rise of 30 per cent now and another increase to 2000 yuan in October.

There have been scores of thousands of unreported struggles in China over recent years – strikes against Dickensian conditions, occupations against land seizures. But now workers in last modern plants are launching a new type of strike – confident offensive action for higher wages. This will have two effects, both of which will have a profound influence and not just in China.

The first is that China's "low wage economy" will not last forever. The second is that a new force is joining the international working class movement: one that is billions strong and can shake the world.

EDITORIAL**DON'T BELIEVE TORY LIES ON CUTS**

- Mass action can make bosses pay for their crisis
- Open a debate on the way forward right across the labour and trade union movement

As we go to press, Tory Chancellor George Osborne is about to announce his first budget which everyone knows will bring huge cuts. Prime Minister David Cameron threatens 'years of suffering' and warns that 'the British way of life will have to change'.

We don't yet know the detail, but they've said there will be cuts in pensions, benefits, public sector pay, jobs and privatisation.

Top of the Tory target list for cuts are pensions. The Tories and their newspapers call public sector pensions 'gold plated', but as Eileen Best of Unison national women's committee told the union's annual conference in June, the average annual pension for a woman worker in the NHS is just £3500 a year. You can't live on that without crippling poverty, yet the Tories say public sector pensions are 'too expensive'. They try to turn private sector workers against public sector workers, by pointing out that private sector pensions are worse.

But if my neighbour's pension is better than mine, surely I want mine to go up, not hers to go down?

Just as bad, with unemployment at 2.5 million and rising, and with more than 8 million officially 'economically inactive', Osborne is preparing cruel cuts to benefits including child benefit and incapacity benefit, and pay. He is also tipped to raise flat-rate VAT, which would hit the poorest hardest.

These callous measures will redistribute wealth from the poor to the rich. To get away with it, Osborne appeals to our sense of community. 'We are all in this together', the millionaire Old Etonian tells the nurse and the incapacity claimant, 'we all have to make sacrifices.'

Cameron adds that we have to make billions in cuts to get out of debt. 'There is no alternative' he says, to make avoid-ing cuts sound impossible.

But it's a Tory lie. Don't believe it.

Huge debts have been run up by every country, not because workers' pay and pensions are too high (how could that be it?) but because they bailed out the banks



CUTTERS: Cameron and Osborne

to the tune of trillions in the crisis of 2008.

This pushed every European country into deficit – so now they fund spending by borrowing from a cabal of extremely rich people who go by the harmless-sounding name of 'the bonds market'.

These squillionaires naturally want to be sure they'll get their money back, so they demand cuts in state spending – especially cuts in money that goes from rich taxpayers like them to 'undeserving poor people' like...well nurses, people invalidated out of work, people studying for their future, retired school staff and hospital cleaners and so on.

There is an alternative – it's just one that every Tory in Britain is determined to prevent. We could make the rich bankers and bosses pay, instead of the workers.

We could get back the billions we gave to the banks by nationalising them without compensation. The Tories and Liberals laugh this off as impossible – but we took over their debts in 2008, so why not take their assets and their profits now?

We could renounce the debt to the billionaire bond markets. Some might say this would cause a flight of capital out of Britain – but we'd appeal to every country to do the same. They are all in hock to the same club of speculators – we could all tell them where to go.

We could tax the rich, not the poor, with a swingeing new tax on unearned wealth; and we could axe Trident and get the troops out of Afghanistan instead of axing jobs in vital public services.

This would be an anticapitalist solution

to the crisis – making the people that caused it pay, and not the working class.

Labour leadership farce

Right now, after the election defeat, the Labour Party is debating who should be its new leader. Five Oxbridge candidates are all vying for the same position. If it weren't for Diane Abbott, they'd all look the same and they'd all have the same policies – a continuation of the bankrupt policies of Blair and Brown that got us into this mess.

Abbott herself, while she differs slightly from the others on tax and migration policy, is not challenging the record of New Labour and [continued on page 8...]

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WORKPLACE

BA strike: which way for victory?

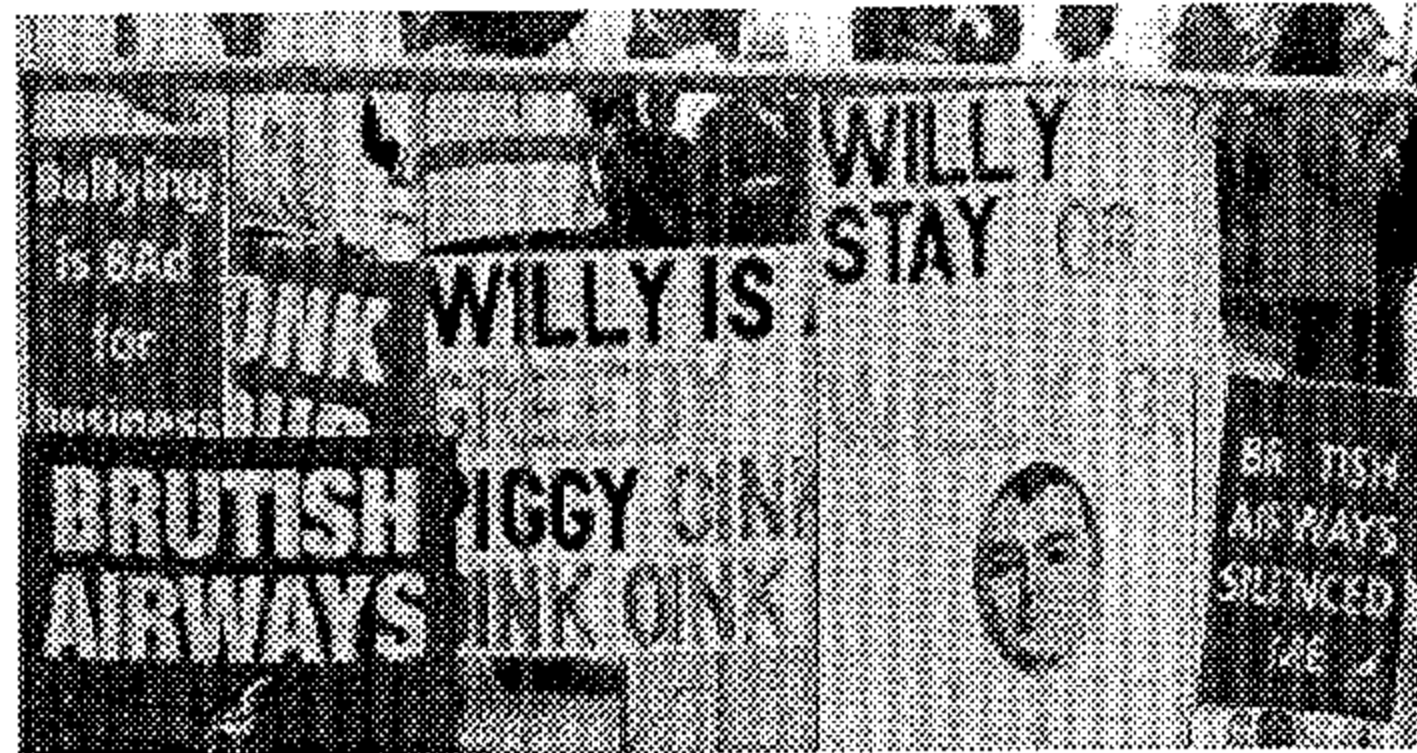
By Jeremy Dewar

After two thumping mandates for action and 22 strike days, the BA dispute is at a critical stage. An indefinite strike is the key to victory.

The battle at British Airways is not just about the 14,000 cabin crew – it affects the whole working class.

The dispute started over BA's plans to impose a two-year pay freeze, cut 1,700 jobs and turn 3,000 others into part-time posts. To cap it off, new staff would get worse conditions, creating a two-tier workforce. This was unfair and provocative.

The bosses certainly knew what was at stake, even if Unite's leaders Tony Woodley and Derek Simpson did not.



Twice high court judges ruled "irregular" the mandates of 80-90 per cent in favour of the strikes – most recently because Unite failed to fully publicise 11 spoilt ballot papers!

Now Unite officials say BA workers have to re-ballot because its mandate for industrial action has expired. In the meantime, BA is cutting jobs and victimising activists.

Escalate the action

BA cabin crew can still win this strike – but not with Woodley and Simpson's strategy. The core of Unite activists should organise mass meetings to hammer out a new approach.

First, the strikers need to deliver a massive "Yes" vote in the new ballot. Then it's time cabin crew were in charge of setting strike dates, not the Unite officials who bow to every

demand to postpone action.

Second, let's use the ballot-ing period to build up the strikers' own war chest, with workplace and street collections, so strikers can afford to ground BA planes indefinitely with an all-out strike. If a judge outlaws the new strikes, Unite should defy the courts and call for solidarity of the whole union movement.

Finally, BA cabin crew, who have remained heroically steadfast throughout this fight, have every right to bring their case to Labour and the trade union movement. Unite should demand that each candidate in the Labour leadership election – and the party as a whole – backs the strikers 100 per cent.

• **Victory to the BA cabin crew!**

Postal workers face new battle

By a CWU Rep

Royal Mail workers face twin threats of privatisation and sweeping mail centre closures. Ministers and postal bosses want to slash the workforce and boost profits higher than this year's £404m, itself a 26 per cent rise.

Lib-Dem postal minister Ed Davey says restructuring is to reduce the huge Royal Mail pension deficit. In reality it is to soften up the company – and the Communication Workers Union – for privatisation.

Meanwhile Royal Mail has announced plans to shut down as many as six of the northeast region's nine mail centres. Thousands of jobs could go,

with many more workers forced to spend hours commuting.

CWU leader Dave Ward threatened to strike against privatisation at the union's national conference, but instead pushed through plans for a weaker broad-based campaign and "dialogue" with the then Labour government.

With the Tories in the driver's seat, lobbying ministers and negotiating with Royal Mail bosses won't work. Only a national strike can break their resistance. Postal activists need to regroup the workforce for a fight and reverse the last four years of retreats. Uniting in action with other public sector workers facing cuts will strengthen everyone's fight.

IN BRIEF...

Rail strikes on track

Railworkers are coordinating strikes on London Underground and Docklands Light Railway on 23-25 June.

Serco, which runs the DLR, has increased staff workloads and responsibility without upping pay, while Tube Lines, which maintains Jubilee, Northern and Piccadilly lines and was recently renationalised, is threatening jobs and conditions. Workers voted 9:1 for strike action.

As RMT union leader Bob Crow said: "If the shareholders of Tube Lines can walk away with £310m of Londoners' cash in a 'golden-goodbye', why should our members be expected to take a kick in the teeth on jobs, pay and working conditions?"

BT staff ballot

CWU telecoms conference voted unanimously to ballot members in British Telecoms over a below-inflation 2 per cent pay offer.

In what would be a first since 1987, the strike could begin in July.

BT's pre-tax profits have risen to £1bn this year, with top executives awarding themselves big bonuses. CEO Ian Livingston's package increased 79 per cent to over £2m.

But these greedy bosses are only skinflints when it comes to paying workers.

By holding meetings to elect workplace committees, CWU activists can get out a big "Yes" vote and ensure there is no delay in calling action.

LABOUR LEADERSHIP

Labour leadership: five contenders, no choice

In the wake of the election defeat, the Labour Party is voting for its next leader. But with left-winger John McDonnell out of the race, **Jeremy Dewar** says there is little to choose from

Left-winger John McDonnell has been excluded from the Labour leadership contest. He was subject to the anti-democratic rules in the Labour Party that deny 5 million people in affiliated trade unions and around 150,000 party members the right to nominate candidates.

Currently only the 258 MPs (most of them pro-war, pro-capitalist careerists) are allowed to nominate candidates and a successful nomination requires the approval of 15 per cent – or 33 of them.

McDonnell has consistently used his position as an MP to support strikers, oppose wars, block privatisation, defend immigrants and combat climate change. He spelled out to delegates at the GMB union conference his vision of a campaigning party, "We need to represent a real alternative to Cameron and the Tories. This economic crisis was not caused by us, and we have to say that we're not paying."

This is why Unite conference delegates voted overwhelmingly to demand the Labour Party allow all the candidates onto the ballot paper.

Two Milibands and Balls

So what of the candidates whose names are on the ballot paper? For a while, it looked as if there would only be two brothers, David and Ed Miliband, but they have since been joined by Ed Balls, Andy Burnham and Michael Portillo's *Daily Politics* chum Diane Abbott.

Of the four men, there is virtually nothing by which to tell them apart. All of them sup-



John McDonnell MP

ported the trillion pound bank bailout, and all of them now back devastating cuts to jobs, pay, pensions and services. All of them believe – even now, after the great crash of 2008-09 – that privatisation, the market and the harshest anti-union laws in the developed world are the way forward. All of them served under Gordon Brown and are New Labour to the core.

Balls and Ed Miliband have tried to open up a gap by claiming – for the first time, seven years after the event – that they were opposed to the Iraq war, though, as McDonnell pointed out, "There is another war, in Afghanistan." Neither of them have distanced themselves from the current slaughter.

Balls seems to want to "fight" the Tories by stealing their politics. He wants to blame migrants for the economic crisis, suggesting they are to blame for housing shortages,

unemployment and dwindling services.

Abbott on the left?

So what about Diane Abbott? She is against ID cards and the Trident replacement, voted against the Iraq war in 2003 and rightly says that inadequate social housing, NHS services and jobs are the real reason some workers complain about immigration. Does this mean Labour Party members should vote for her?

No. Abbott has not been on the left of the party for many years, preferring the late night sofa on BBC's *This Week* programme to the early morning picket line. Yes, it would be great to have female and black candidates, but Abbott is not campaigning for a change in the rules that would allow rank and file party members to nominate leadership contenders, decide on policy or hold their leaders to account. That would do more to make the Labour leadership and the party as a whole reflect the interests of its members and supporters than any gerrymandered election.

Nor is Abbott offering a change in direction. Her opposition to the Iraq war does not lead her to call for an immediate end to the Afghanistan adventure. Abbott only told *Newsnight*, "I'm for withdrawing those troops on a timetable – like the United States." She went out of her way to stress that she "admires" Gordon Brown and that any of the other four candidates would make a good leader. When asked who would serve in her cabinet she referred to the other four can-

didates and, in a typical New Labour move, she backed the privatisation of the East London line. And when *Workers Power* asked her campaign office on 17 June if she was in favour of repealing Britain's anti-union laws, they were unable to answer the question!

Democratise the party

The leadership contest merely serves to underline what Marxists have always said about Labour: that it is irreformable. It is a capitalist party, wedded to serving big business, a repressive state machinery and imperialist aggression abroad. But unlike the Tories and Lib Dems, Labour rests for its support on the mass trade unions and millions of working class voters. It is, as VI Lenin said, a "bourgeois workers party".

For us that means two things. First Labour Party members need to demand the full restoration and extension of party democracy: for the right of unions and constituency parties to table motions at conference and decide policy, including the manifesto; for MPs and Councillors to be accountable and replaceable by the membership.

But second, we need to use the current debate on the question of working class leadership to pull together mass resistance to the Con-Dem government's cuts. As John McDonnell has said, this is the most urgent task of the day. But if we are really to defeat the government, the bosses and the bankers, and "say we're not paying" for their crisis, we need a new kind of party, a revolutionary party that can prepare the working class to overthrow capitalism.

CUTS COALITION – ATTACKS AND RESISTANCE

Fighting the ConDem cuts

Cameron has spoken of the cuts to come, preparing people for “pain” before the Con-Dem budget is announced on 22 June. *John Bowman* looks at what this could mean for us

“People should be very afraid”, said TUC general secretary Brendan Barber. He was responding to David Cameron’s 7 June speech which outlined what the Con-Dem government would like to see in their budget of cuts to be announced on 22 June.

Cameron’s speech was kept vague on specific cuts and what they would mean, but he focussed on preparing the public for the “pain” ahead. He promised to savagely cut back the size of the public sector. “We’re going to have to get it back in line – and that will be much more painful than if we had kept things properly in balance all along.”

The TUC is currently working to fathom out how the £6.2 billion (on top of cuts carried through by the Brown government) will affect ordinary people. Some vital services and benefits which look to be in the firing line are universal benefits such as child benefit, and winter fuel allowance – with Tory aligned think-tanks tied to the idea of making the poorest and most vulnerable go



SAVED: Whittington hospital A&E

through a lengthy means-testing procedure to obtain them – knowing full well that doing so lessens take-up rate among those who need them most.

Culture for working class families also looks sets to take a

hit, with plans outlined to extend VAT to books and newspapers, axe plans to extend free school meals, raise the cap on tuition fees and cut back even more on further and higher education. David Willetts, university min-

ister said students were a “burden on the taxpayer” and hinted strongly that the cap on tuition fees would be raised or removed.

Healthcare is under threat, despite promises of ‘ringfencing’ with those suffering long-term illnesses at risk of having free prescriptions cut back, but it is likely that health will be hit more severely pending the outcome of a comprehensive spending review to take place in the autumn.

As well as specific cuts to certain areas, huge job losses in the public sector could drive the numbers of unemployed beyond 3 million, with an enormous 725,000 job losses possible over the next five years according to the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development. This makes a mockery of George Osborne’s promise to protect “key front-line services”, something that the Tories and Lib Dems pledged consistently during their election campaigns.

Unions

Union leaders have reacted angrily to the cuts, and in particular to Cameron playing private sector workers off against those working in public services by saying that they had been “insulated” from the recession.

Unite assistant general secretary Gail Cartmail said “The public sector did not cause the financial crisis. The bankers, the so-called ‘masters of the universe,’ did - and they should now be called to account and made to pay for their monumental mistakes.”

But with so many jobs and services under threat, union leaders shouldn’t just be talking tough – they should be building the class wide response necessary to challenge the ‘masters of the universe’ and stop these cuts before it is too late – with a united public sector strike.

Lambeth fights cuts

By **Jeremy Drinkall, Lambeth Unison steward**

The Con-Dem cuts coalition was quick off the mark to announce big reductions in council services: £537 million from grants to local authorities, £311 million from funding for schools, £309 million from transport budgets. If you want to see how this billion pound bomb could impact on your town, take a look at Lambeth in south London.

Ironically, Labour increased its majority on

our council in May, winning seats from Tories and Lib-Dems But Labour immediately repaid its working class voters by imposing nearly 500 job cuts.

The biggest cuts are to Children’s and Young Persons’ Services (215 jobs), Adult and Community Services (about 70 jobs) and Housing (about 125 jobs). The results would be devastating for the large number of unemployed youth in the borough.

But Lambeth Unison

branch committee has said it will oppose all the cuts as a result of pressure from branch members – be they vacant posts, voluntary redundancies or agency workers’ jobs. We are also working to make the local Trade Union Council call for a mass local, cross-union and community campaign to oppose every single one of the council’s cuts.

For more information on Lambeth, go to:

lambethwp.blogspot.com

Tory schools policy: parent power or private profit?

By Jeremy Drinkall

The government has wasted no time in its campaign to increase the number of state schools opting out of local democratic control. Minister Michael Gove wants 10 times as many academies than currently exist.

How will he achieve this? By changing the rules, he hopes. Whereas Labour's policy required schools to consult both parents and staff, afforded the local authority a veto and limited academies to struggling schools in deprived areas, the Con-Dem coalition has turned all this on its head.

The new Academies Bill would also legislate for any group of parents to set up their own (state funded) "free" school, in competition with the state sector.

Academy schools are unaccountable to local councils, but take their budgets, plus a £25 million start-up cheque from the Department of Education.

They suck funds out of local authority schools budgets, which takes resources away

from schools in more deprived areas and pupils with special needs - as money is diverted towards the best performing academies.

The Anti-Academies Alliance is mobilising to defeat this new attack on our class and future generations. The teaching unions, GMB and Unison should unite with parents and local authorities, and prepare for strike action to defend state education.

For a full version of this article go to workerspower.com

Public meeting...

No more Academies, No 'Free' schools, defend State Education

Thursday 24th June, 6.30pm

Speakers including: Fiona Millar, Alasdair Smith, Christine Blower (NUT), Chris Keates (NASUWT), Christina McAnea (UNISON), Paramjit Bhutta (Tower Hamlets head teacher), Mary Bousted (ATL)

Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, London, SW1H 9NH

"Quiet man" swings axe at benefits

By John Bowman

Iain Duncan-Smith, ex-Tory leader and now work and pensions secretary, has launched a heavy verbal assault on those unable to work, to be matched by an enormous change in policy.

The self-nicknamed "quiet man" of politics said "what we propose will save money, but it will also shake up this nonsense."

In an attempt to save money on benefits the Con-Dem Coalition is threatening to reassess everyone in receipt of incapacity and disability benefits.

Those who are no longer deemed eligible for sickness benefits will be moved to job seekers allowance, and see their income radically cut. Duncan-Smith also outlined plans for toughening up JSA, and axing benefits for those who do not take up a new job quickly enough.

But at the same time, the Con-Dems, according to a treasury press-release are slashing £320 from employment pro-

grammes including the "future jobs fund" which aims to provide young people with real work experience through temping to get them on the jobs ladder.

And all this at a time when unemployment looks set to rise significantly, and the new government is planning a public sector massacre of jobs which will affect hundreds of thousands of people's lives.

In other benefits news...

ROUGH JUSTICE:

The legal aid fund is likely to be slashed after discussions between Justice Secretary Kenneth Clarke and former Treasury Chief David Laws

HARD UPBRINGING:

Universal benefits look set to be hit with Tory think-tanks angling for child-benefit to be means-tested. A ministerial review suggested axing the benefit when a child reaches the age of 13 or 14.

University: cuts, fees or both?

By John Bowman & Rachel Brooks

Students are a "burden on the taxpayer" according to David Willetts, University and Science Minister.

In an interview with The Guardian, Willetts refused to rule out raising tuition fees before the Browne Review into higher education funding is completed. The review, headed by the ex-British Petroleum boss is expected to recommend significantly raising the £3,225 limit on tuition fees that universities are currently allowed to charge students.

He also emphasised the American universities model, which relies heavily on endowments and donations from philanthro-



Students at Sussex university protest against cuts

pists, and as little as possible on federal grants.

In a deal reached with the Liberal Democrats, who stood on a platform of opposition to tuition fees in the election, Tory ministers have agreed that the Liberals will be allowed to abstain on Tory proposals to massively increase them.

Students are being asked to pay more for less, with announcements from the Higher Education Funding Council suggesting that some institutions could see 12 per cent cuts in the next academic year.

But many universities across the country have now seen occupations and lively cam-

paigns to stop the cuts, with recent actions including occupations at the University of Middlesex and the University of Kent. Students are organising nationally to fight the cuts in the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts.

Trade Unions have now formed a coalition called "United for Education" with the NUS to stop the cuts, whilst the lecturer's union UCU has called for a 24 hour national strike against all public sector cuts. United For Education must now organise a mass demonstration against cuts, fees and privatisation in education in the first term after the summer.

For more information on higher education cuts go to anticuts.com

LABOUR MOVEMENT**Jerry Hicks for Unite leader!**

By Andy Yorke

Jerry Hicks, is a rank and file candidate campaigning to become the next Unite General Secretary. A former Rolls Royce convenor, victimised in 2005 for leading unofficial action in defence of jobs. Hicks is only candidate who is not a full-time official in the union (the other three are all deputy General Secretaries!)

His campaign in last year's General Secretary election struck a cord with workers by calling for a radical change of direction for Unite. Since 2007 Unite's top-heavy bureaucracy has uncritically bankrolled Labour, while officials call the shots in disputes and undermine striking members. The Unite leadership in the past has refused to defend members such as Vestas or Corus workers from closure, repudiated illegal action such as the Lindsey wildcats, and dictated to workers when they can take action, recently undermining the action at BA. Jerry rejects this record – excellent.

**Jerry for Unite leader!**

Jerry wants to ban officials from interfering in strike strategy democratically decided by members – “members decide, the union provides” is his slogan – and says Unite should not repudiate action where workers are forced to break the anti-union laws. He is the only candidate calling for all officials to be elected and committing himself to taking an average Unite members' wage instead of the Derek Simpson's six-figure salary.

He claims that this is the

most important union election for decades – with Labour's dependence on its funding, and Unite's 1.7 million members spread across 23 industrial sectors, it is almost “a TUC within the TUC”. If Jerry were to win it would send shockwaves through the union movement and boost the left.

Jerry got 39,000 votes in last year's General Secretary election to the incumbent Derek Simpson's 60,000 – a good result for someone as outspoken as Hicks, without a machine behind him and with Unite officialdom united against him. But he faces a tougher challenge this time, with Len McCluskey in the T&G wing of the union backed by the United Left grouping in the union and the current General Secretary Tony Woodley, and both talking left, making militant speeches around the BA strike, criticising Labour and (in McCluskey's case) using rhetoric about “socialism”.

But McCluskey would not represent a break with the current direction of the Unite lead-

ership. In fact, it was McCluskey who publicly announced, following their ballot, that the BA workers would not strike over Easter, giving away one of the strongest weapons they had at the time.

Jerry is the best candidate – but he needs to go further and organise a nationwide rank and file movement in Unite, committed to dissolving the bureaucracy altogether and organising action without, or even against the will of the official Unite leaders.

If he wins, there would still be a 10,000-plus strong bureaucracy in Unite. But Jerry's campaign has the potential to ignite a rank and file movement that can replace the officialdom with a fighting alternative leadership.

If rank and file members of Unite can use Jerry's campaign not just to win him the biggest possible vote for a militant union, but also to build up a nationwide unofficial network of activists committed to transforming Unite, then this could be the beginning of an earthquake in Britain's biggest union.

DON'T BELIEVE CAMERON'S LIES ON CUTS – CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

[continued from page 3]

does not want the party to move back to the left. The only candidate who wanted Labour to launch a real fightback in the workplaces and on the streets against the cuts – John McDonnell MP – is not standing (see page 5).

But the Labour Party must not be allowed to get away with shoeing in another pro-capitalist leader without even a serious discussion. Affiliated unions and constituency parties need to bombard the party's September annual conference with motions condemning

and renouncing New Labour's record of kowtowing to the banks and demanding a real change of direction: nationalisation of the banks, taxing the rich, pulling the troops out now and above all backing workers who are forced to take strike action against the cuts.

This debate needs to take place right across the labour and trade union movement, at a time when the cuts will pose the need for resistance point blank. In Greece and Spain workers are taking action against the cuts – so should we.

The TUC should call a one-day general strike in September to coincide with the European TUC's day of action. Strikers like BA cabin crew, BT and rail staff should get 100 per cent solidarity from the whole working class movement. But we should not wait for smartly-suited Labour leaders to give us the go-ahead to take action – nor should we wait for tired, “moderate” union leaders who have backed New Labour all the way.

Instead we should set up committees against cuts in every city with delegates from every

union, every workplace, every Labour branch, every estate to organise action, with the official leaders where possible, without them where necessary.

And when the Tories and the bosses call on the courts to stop us striking – like they did to the BA cabin crew – then the whole union movement should defy the law.

That's what we did to Ted Heath back in the 1970s, and it didn't just beat his anti-union laws... it brought down his Tory government!

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

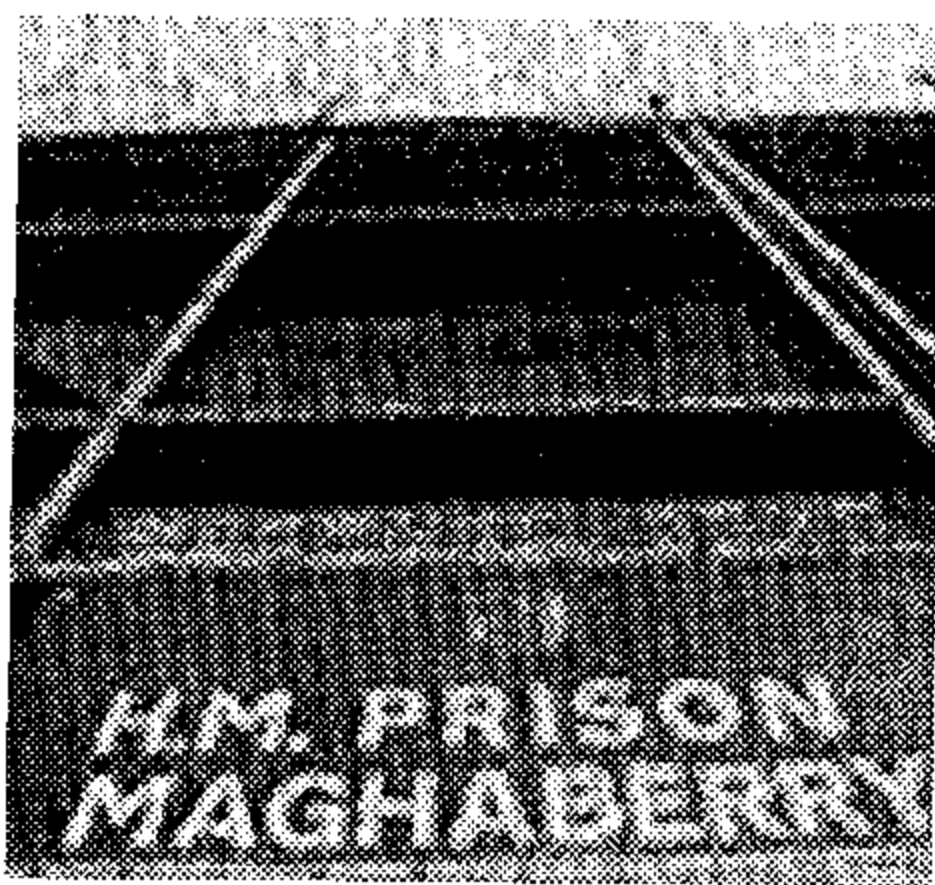
After Bloody Sunday inquiry: now stop torturing republican prisoners

By Bernie McAdam

Even as David Cameron apologises in parliament for the killing of 13 unarmed demonstrators in 1972, the brutality of Britain's occupation of Ireland goes on. Nowhere can this be seen more clearly than in the cruel mistreatment of Republican prisoners in British jails.

In particular the conditions of Republican political prisoners in Maghaberry jail deteriorates as reports of torture emerge from the Republican wing at Roe House, there is a cynical wall of silence from the media. Clearly the culture of impunity lives on.

Prisoners have been beaten up, locked up for 23/24 hours, strip-searched before and after visits, and interned on remand with no prospect of a trial in the near future. Harry Fitzsimmons and Turloch McAllister have both been severely beaten up by prison screws. At a packed public meeting in Belfast's Conway Mill Harry's sister, Maureen, spoke of how her brother had been handcuffed to a bed in the 'isolation



unit' while "riot clad screws literally cut his clothes off with scissors". He was then kept in the unit for 30 days without access to family, a doctor or solicitor.

On Easter Sunday, Republican prisoners protested at the draconian regime and the screws' violent assaults. The response has seen the removal of basic facilities including washing, medical, exercise, free association, and even destruction and theft of personal belongings, as well as poor quality of food causing illness and a lack of regu-

lar visits from family and friends.

The state's disgraceful treatment of Republican prisoners stems from its attempt to criminalise all those who oppose Britain's presence in the six counties, while denying prisoners' political status. British jails in Ireland have always had a special role in attempting to break the spirit of resistance to imperialist rule. Sinn Fein, as part of an executive backed by Britain, cannot refute its collaboration in all of this. Indeed, the loss of political status stems from promoting a Peace Agreement that reinforces Partition and British rule in Ireland.

Public meetings and demonstrations throughout the six counties have already highlighted the repression in Maghaberry. Prisoners' families and friends and several republican and socialist groups are supporting the campaign. There is an urgent need to build a movement on the streets to challenge this latest bout of repression.

A national march is planned for Sunday 25 July in Lurgan called by the Families, Friends and ex-POW's group.

Are the Con-Dems pro civil liberties?

Natalie Silverstein

The coalition agreement claims to be committed to civil liberties, with a plan to "reverse the substantial erosion of civil liberties under the Labour government and roll back state intrusion." This stands in sharp contrast to the Tory's pre-election pledge to abolish the Human Rights Act, which protects basic liberties such as the right to a fair trial and freedom of expression, and replace this with a "British Bill of Rights" where protections would be more limited and only extend to UK citizens and not, for example, asylum seekers.

The agreement pledges to prevent some of the worst excesses, such as fingerprinting of children in school without parental permission. But the Tories previously suggested taking Labour's oppression of youth (through anti-social behav-

our orders (ASBOs) and stop and search) a step further through "grounding orders", allowing police to obtain orders which would confine young people – who have committed no crime – to their home outside school hours for up to a month.

The Lib Dem's election campaign presented them as committed to civil liberties and even suggested the abolition of prison sentences of six months or less, which would allow better opportunities for rehabilitation for minor offenders. But this plan is unlikely to be implemented by the coalition – particularly since the Tories supported Labour's prison expansion plan designed to increase capacity to 96,000.

The new ruling parties have both voiced their opposition to Labour's ID cards scheme: not due to a commitment to liberty but because this will save money on what would have been expensive and unpop-

ular. And while they mention the need for "safeguards against the misuse of anti-terrorism legislation", they have not pledged to repeal draconian laws giving police the power to detain suspects without charge for up to 28 days.

The agreement contains some welcome commitments, such as the protection of trial by jury and restoration of rights to non-violent protest, but it remains to be seen what, if any, steps will actually be taken to protect these rights. After all, we should never forget that it was the Tories under Thatcher who stripped away union rights and gave the police sweeping powers to harass pickets, marchers, and young people on the streets. As resistance to coalition cuts grows this autumn we should expect the government to ditch its liberties rhetoric and start tightening the screws again.

ISRAEL MASSACRES AID ACTIVISTS

Anger grows against Israel

No sooner had Israeli marines murdered nine activists, than the Zionist lie machine sprung into action. But events have undermined Israel's global support, says *Marcus Halaby*

Cold blooded murder spurs worldwide revulsion

In the early hours of the morning on Monday 31 May, Israeli paratroops attacked six ships of the Gaza Freedom Flotilla, killing nine activists on board the MV Mavi Marmara and injuring 30 or more, and detained most of the 663 people on board. Eight of the dead were Turkish citizens, including Turkish politician Ibrahim Bilgen, while the remaining one was a US citizen of Turkish origin.

The flotilla had been organised by the Turkish charity İnsani Yardım Vakfı (IHH) and the Free Gaza Movement, a coalition of activist organisations formed to challenge the Israeli three-year siege of Gaza by sailing humanitarian aid into Gaza in defiance of

Israel's blockade.

Immediately, Israel went on a propaganda offensive over their assault. They labelled the murdered activists as "terrorists", who had tried to "lynch" the well-armed Israeli soldiers with sticks, poles, kitchen knives and slingshots. These were shameless lies. The flotilla's organisers had made clear in advance that they would offer no resistance to any attack.

Eyewitness accounts have revealed that the troops opened fire as soon as they stormed the ships – even before they had boarded – and that those on board the other five ships had been treated to exactly the same levels of violence.

The truth is that the Israeli army murdered unarmed civilians.

And it was an act of piracy to boot – taking place 65 kilometres from the coast, in international waters, giving the passengers and crew every legal right to defend themselves in international law, as well as every moral right to do so.

Across the world – in Turkey, Italy, Germany, Austria, Norway, the UK and France, as well as in Gaza, Syria, Jordan, Iran, Iraq and Egypt – thousands took to the streets in protest against the Israeli atrocity, often with only a few hours notice.

Greek, Swedish and South African port workers' unions have all issued statements refusing to handle Israeli goods. In the UK, thousands joined emergency protest actions during the week and 20,000 marched to the

Israeli embassy in London on the weekend.

The United Nations Security Council, however, failed to name and shame, let alone condemn the perpetrators of this piracy, with its final resolution merely regretting "the loss of life and injuries resulting from the use of force during the Israeli military operation" and condemning "those acts which resulted in the loss of at least 10 civilians".

The reason for this cowardice is well known. The US exercises its veto in the Security Council to protect Israel from condemnation and sanctions, a right that only Israel enjoys, just as it prevents the enforcement of UN resolutions against Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands.

The root of the problem – Zionism

The struggle to break the siege of Gaza is the latest stage in the Palestinian people's struggle against Israeli occupation. It began in 1967, when Israel seized Gaza from Egypt in the "Six-Day War".

But the roots of the problem go much further back. Israel is not "a state of all its citizens", but was founded in postwar Palestine as a specifically Jewish state, even though a majority of inhabitants were not Jewish. Anyone who meets Israel's definition of a Jew can emigrate there and receive full citizenship. To make way for them, Israel had to expel over 800,000

Palestinians in 1948, seizing their homes and lands – and four-fifths of their country. Their 4.6 million descendants are forbidden from returning.

To maintain its Jewish majority in the face of a higher Palestinian birth rate, Israel must constantly draw on new sources of Jewish immigration, and provide them with Western-style living standards – otherwise, few people would go there and many more would leave.

This is why Israel settles Jews on stolen land, and refuses to allow 3.8 million Palestinians, who live in the remaining fifth of their country to have any-

thing like an independent state. Instead, Israel restricts them to ever-shrinking ghettos while its politicians debate ways to remove them altogether.

Similarly, the 1.2 million Palestinians in Israel, descendants of those who were not expelled in 1948, have citizenship and the right to vote. But they are excluded from political power, despite making up about a fifth of the country's citizens, and have second-class rights in education, housing, employment and land ownership. Many live in "unrecognised" towns and villages, without basic services like water,

electricity and schools.

The end of the occupation, allowing Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank to rule themselves, is an urgent immediate objective that would mark a huge step forward. But ultimately, the problem will only be resolved by the abandonment of the Zionist project of colonising Palestine in the name of the "Jewish people".

This is why we call for a single state for both peoples, and the right of return for the refugees, with equal individual and collective rights for both Arabs and Jews: a socialist republic of Palestine.

over Gaza flotilla murders

Freedom Flotilla activists are demanding their side of the Mavi Marmara massacre story is heard, in response to heavy Western media bias and an Israeli government cover-up over the incident.

The protestors' demands have focused on the return of the stolen mobile phones, laptop computers, cameras and other items that might contain evidence of what really occurred on the Mavi Marmara, as well as the immediate unconditional release of the captured passengers and crew. They even had to demand the release of the victims' bodies.

The BBC, which has been slavishly pro-US since being neutered after the invasion of Iraq, busied itself in the hours immediately after the attack by interviewing Israeli ambassadors and government spokespersons, at a time when nearly all of the 600-odd victims (the only non-Israeli witnesses) were in Israeli custody and shut off from the outside world. Hardly any representatives of the protest organisers were invited for interviews. This does not even adhere to the BBC's supposedly famous principle of balance.

There was no shortage of video evidence of the event taken aboard the ship, but it was immediately confiscated by the Israeli Defence Forces, who then spent days heavily editing some of their own footage for release to the world's media. One hour of footage did manage to escape from the flotilla via American pro-Palestine activist Iara Lee, but the film – which shows the crew appealing to the IDF to halt the violence and giving medical aid to IDF soldiers – has not been shown by major media cor-



porations.

In Israel not even the slightest criticism of the attack on the flotilla was tolerated. The daily paper Ma'ariv said "...despite the temptation to give advice, engage in keyboard criticism and break down the operation with the benefit of hindsight, we should shut up and salute the fighters and their officers."

Journalists' and other media workers' trade unions should take direct action, including pulling the plugs and halting the presses, to expose any government, media owners, or editorial suppression of pro-Palestinian views.

But we need to go further to help the cause for which the murdered activists died – freedom for the 1.5 million people of Gaza, 1,300 of whom were killed by Israel's bombing in 2008-09.

Gaza has been kept under an almost total siege for the last three years, ever since the elected Hamas government defeated an attempted coup in Gaza by elements of the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority (PA) security services in June 2007. Prior to this, Israel had refused to recognise or deal with any PA administration containing Hamas, until it had renounced "terror" and recognised Israel. Israel even placed sanctions

on the whole of the 1967 occupied Palestinian territories in order to pressure the PA's Fatah president Mahmoud Abbas to break his coalition with Hamas and wage a Palestinian civil war on Israel's behalf.

Today, Abbas clings on to power in the West Bank only with Israel's protection. His presidential term expired in January 2009 without any new elections being held. This scandalous denial of the Palestinian people's right to choose their own leaders is what lies behind the siege, and it should be roundly condemned by all, whatever criticisms we may have of Hamas' reactionary religious politics.

Israel insists that its blockade of Gaza is necessary to prevent the smuggling of arms. But a recent court case has revealed that Israel has prohibited the import of such dangerous items as: fresh meat, tinned food, jam, chocolate, fabrics, notebooks, toys and donkeys. Bizarrely, cinnamon, combs, plastic buckets and Israeli-produced tomato paste are allowed in, while coriander has only just been legalised.

In fact, Israel officially allows only about 100 different products into Gaza, while the average Israeli supermarket contains more than 12,000.

Dov Weisglass, an adviser to the previous Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert, justified this policy in February 2006 by saying that the idea was "to put the Palestinians on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger", with the clear intention of using hunger to force the Palestinians to make Hamas cave-in to Israel's conditions or force them out of power.

In the meantime, the number of Gazans dependent on food aid has trebled to 300,000, or one in every five persons. There are shortages of essential medicines, and chronic malnutrition affects one in 10. Four out of five Gazans depend on external aid to survive – at that's when it can get through.

We should fight to make sure that all states end their de facto recognition of Israel's blockade of Gaza, and in Egypt's case its active support of it, and call for international recognition for the elected Hamas administration.

We should support all efforts to challenge and break the blockade, including the sending of a fleet of aid ships and land convoys. And crucially, we should demand the severing of all diplomatic, economic, cultural and military ties with Israel until the siege of Gaza is totally lifted.

ENVIRONMENT

BP barons fuel oil slick disaster

The explosion at the Deepwater Horizon drilling station that killed 11 workers was only the beginning of a nightmare for the people living in the Gulf of Mexico. *Simon Hardy* reports

BP's oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, which is still pumping out around 400,000 gallons of crude oil a day, is a harsh example of the crisis of capitalism and its destructive impact on the planet. Thousands of gallons of crude oil pumping into the ocean every day are a major threat to the Gulf's wildlife, ecosystems and local economy. Thousands of dead fish have washed up on shore, while hundreds of birds lie dying on the beaches. The flora and fauna along the coast are also in jeopardy. The cleanup operation is using a dispersant that is itself toxic and harmful to fish. Many fishermen have been forced out of work and the tourism industry will suffer – who wants to sun themselves on a Florida coast covered in oil?

Reminiscent of the Hurricane Katrina aftermath, the free market – and the US government's unconditional defence of it – has hampered any effective response to the crisis.

Crisis exposes pro-market madness

BP and the US government have spent weeks wrangling over who should handle the operation to stop the oil spill and clean up the coast. Finally, it was agreed that BP had to stop the oil spill and pay compensation for the damage, while Obama sent in the National Guard to carry out disaster management along the coast.

But BP was slow to respond – at times even preferring to spend more energy on public relations than on actually stopping the spill. BP hired the talents of people like Romano Prodi, formerly an Italian prime minister, and Josh Bolton, who worked as a Chief of Staff for George W Bush, to manage its public relations. It even bought internet search terms such as “BP Oil Slick” to redirect web users to their website.

The bickering between the White



House, senate and BP continues to play out while the oil pumps into the ocean, daily exposing the most incredible hypocrisy from both sides.

Business leaders, who only yesterday complained about government interference, bemoan the state's inaction; and politicians, who once claimed the free market could do no wrong, are demanding the government toughens its stance on big business interests.

Bobby Jindal, Louisiana's Republican governor, is on record opposing “big government” and preferring the “enterprising spirit” of US citizens. But when his coastline was drenched in oil, he complained that the federal government was not doing enough to help. During the credit crunch, arch-neoliberals were arguing for state bailouts for the banks, saying, “There are no ideologues in fox holes”. It seems that when there is a crisis, whether economic or environmental, suddenly the need for a central state with control of the situation becomes apparent even to the most laissez-faire-minded governors.

The problem is that the equipment that can stop the spill is entirely owned by the private sector. Even if Obama wanted to get the situation resolved more quickly, he is limited by having to negotiate and pay the

price the corporates, such as Halliburton, that own the equipment demand.

The most sensible solution would be to nationalise BP's US operations and place them under the control of the workers themselves – after all it was the rig engineers who argued for the safety procedures to be followed, but the managers didn't listen. Running BP as a nationalised company under workers control would not only remove the profit motive, it would also allow the workers to decide on the best way of working the dangerous equipment. Although a necessity to effectively deal with this crisis, such a move is an anathema to these capitalist politicians.

The power of finance capital

BP is the fourth largest corporation in the world (behind Shell, Exxon and Walmart). But BP is not just a petrochemical giant – it is also a huge financial institution. It holds around 8 per cent of British pension funds, as pension investment firms see energy companies as “stable” investments.

In fact, BP is a perfect example of a modern multinational corporation that has its fingers in many pies. It encapsulates what the Marxists Hilferding and Lenin called “finance capital” because it fuses industrial and financial capital into a complex

The three worst oil spills

Atlantic Empress

In 1979 off the coast of Trinidad and Tobago – 90 million gallons spilled caused by an oil tanker collision with another ship.

Ixtoc 1

From June 1979 to March 1980, in the Bay of Campeche off Ciudad del Carmen, Mexico – caused by an explosion at an offshore drilling platform. It took workers nearly a year to cap the leak.

Persian Gulf, Kuwait

January 1991 – the amount was between 380-520 million gallons.

How it happened

On 20 April various BP managers were gathered on the deck of the *Deepwater Horizon* to celebrate its “spotless safety” record of seven years. But there were other things on their minds.

Deepwater Horizon was costing them \$500,000 a day to rent from another company Transocean and with the addition of other costs, the combined daily expenditure was hovering around \$1 million.

The subsequent events, as revealed by various crewmembers that survived the explosion, clearly point to cost cutting and compromising safety in the pursuit of profit. CNN published interviews with BP workers, who “described a corporate culture of cutting staff and ignoring warning signs ahead of the blast. They said BP routinely cut corners and pushed ahead despite concerns about safety.”

During the weeks previous to the explosion, rig workers had reported highly flammable pockets of gas escaping through the pipes, causing concern over a potential blowout. However, a number of safety procedures were circumvented, or just plain ignored, as BP decided that the risk was not significant enough to slow down drilling. Even more worrying was the damage done to a crucial piece of equipment at the bot-

tom of the ocean, called the blow-out preventer (BOP), which had not been repaired for several weeks.

BP routinely cut corners and pushed ahead despite concerns about safety

That morning an argument occurred between the project manager and the chief engineer when BP management ordered mud in the drill hole to be cleared out and seawater pumped in. This would make drilling quicker but seawater significantly increases the chance of a blow out, since the mud acts as a crucial barrier to an explosion.

The explosion rocked the entire rig. Huge flames began to bellow into the sky as the gas from below the seabed was sucked into the engines of the rig. Emergency procedures failed as mechanisms, such as the BOP and the device to cut the rig away from the drill head, did not activate. Eleven workers were killed in the explosion and subsequent fire, and many more injured as rig workers threw themselves into the water to escape the flames.

web of corporate interests.

Even the timid threats by the US government to make BP pay for the spill have evoked a torrent of nationalist bilge from the British establishment: the Daily Mail condemned Obama’s “cynical attacks on BP”, and London Mayor Boris Johnson criticised Washington’s “Brit bashing”. This jingoistic response is a distraction: BP is responsible for criminal negligence and environmental ruin, and should be punished.

A criminal investigation is a good start, but we cannot rely on the US courts to mete out real justice, packed as they are with members from the moneyed class. Instead an independent investigation should be conducted under the auspices of the American labour movement and environmental organisations to ascertain BP’s liability.

Why is off shore drilling so important?

Capitalist governments worldwide are terrified of the oil running out. A number

of researchers argue that it is already happening, and soon the oil that is left will be harder and costlier to get out of the ground. This is why oil companies are increasingly looking to deep sea and offshore drilling.

It is also why as soon as the polar ice caps melted sufficiently Russia claimed a part of Arctic Ocean – with the help of a submarine – in the hope of finding oil there.

However, the desperate rush to carry out more deep-sea exploration will only lead to further disasters like this. Despite their ever-soaring profits, energy companies act like any other capitalist business and continually cut back on health and safety protocols in order to save money. The energy industry is almost entirely self-regulating when it comes to health and safety criteria, as successive US governments have handed over most of the responsibilities to the companies themselves, a sure recipe for disasters waiting to happen and something that any inquiry must expose.

The crucial question facing humanity is

how can we kick the fossil fuel habit? The twin dangers of climate change and environmental damage loom over our planet, effectively condemning future generations unless we act now. We need to move away from our dependency on fossil fuels and towards alternative forms of energy. BP’s profits, if confiscated and ploughed into research and design for alternative power sources, would improve the situation, but under capitalism the profit drive trumps everything else.

Currently, a lot of research into non-fossil fuel energy production is being conducted by the same petroleum companies who have a vested interest in maintaining fossil fuels as the staple form of energy in use. That’s why socialists fight for energy companies to be removed from the market through nationalisation without compensation and under workers’ control. Their profits should be spent on renewable energy research and their more environmentally destructive practices stopped immediately.

CRISIS SWEEPS EUROPE

All over Europe, battle rages against austerity

By Dave Stockton

Since the Greek crisis – which saw European governments scramble to call the bluff of speculators betting on the nation's default – the flag of “austerity” has been unfurled over every European capital. Our rulers are demanding that workers in public services and the millions that use them accept billions of euros in cuts.

The response from workers and youth across Europe has been immediate.

Greece has seen three general strikes and mass demonstrations, including protestors attempting to storm the parliament in Athens as it voted to impose the cuts. Similarly in Spain, two million public sector workers took strike action on 8 June.

Now the European Trades Union Congress (ETUC) – not a body normally known for its militancy – has called a continent-wide day of action on 29 September under the slogan “No cuts, more growth”.

Battle lines drawn

The cuts threaten a new dark age of mass unemployment and the destruction of working people's living standards across Europe.

- Hundreds of thousands of public sector workers face the sack and millions face up to 20 per cent cuts in pay and postponement of their retirement.
- The services they provide – such as health, education and public transport – are all on the hit list.
- The harshly regressive value added tax (VAT) on all goods, paid by workers regardless of their income, is being raised in many countries.

There are rumours that Germany could raise VAT on food from 7 per cent to 19 per cent. Chancellor Angela Merkel has announced cuts of 80bn euros (£66bn) by 2014, including getting rid of 15,000 government jobs, reducing family tax credits and delaying infrastructure projects.

“Germany has an outstanding chance to set a good example,” she remarked, testifying to the pan-European scale of the entire austerity project.

Greece has been forced to adopt the most savage cuts, promising to reduce its budget deficit by 30bn euros over three years through wage and pension cuts, slashing social programmes and increasing VAT.

Massive cuts in Spain

Spain has adopted cuts amounting to 80bn euros. These include 13,000 jobs in public services, a reduction of state employees' salaries by 5 per cent and a pension freeze. In order to reduce its budget deficit by 2bn euros, Portugal has imposed a hiring ban, frozen public salaries and increased VAT.

The Italian government has announced cuts of 24bn euros by 2012. They include a major reduction in civil service jobs, salary cuts, raising the retirement age and cuts in the health care system. France plans to reduce its budget deficit from 8 per cent to 3 per cent of GDP by 2013. This will be achieved by raising the retirement age, cuts in housing benefits, employment compensation and museums funding, as well as a 10 per cent cut in administrative costs.

Cuts like this will be more than mirrored in Britain, which has a deficit more than twice Germany's (around 5 per cent) in relation to national income. The government is expected to announce £60bn of cuts annually, with 300,000 posts at risk and a pay freeze in the public sector. Given election pledges that health, overseas aid and defence will be “protected”, the most severe cuts are likely to hit areas such as education, transport, housing and welfare.

A global attack

During the first years of the crisis, Germany and France were able to pass off the credit crunch and the banking crisis caused by the “Anglo Saxon model”. But then the slump in world trade and an industrial

recession hit Europe. This challenged to existence of common currency itself; the media questioned whether the euro could survive and whether countries that face state bankruptcy should be expelled from the eurozone.

In 2010, the “sovereign debt crisis” hit the southern eurozone countries full force. The media coined the repulsive acronym PIGS (Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain) for these countries. The message was that the population of countries with high debt to GDP ratios were facing economic meltdown because of their overindulgence, particularly by “excessive” spending on social services.

Yet a moment's thought would make anyone realise that Greece is not a country of idlers living on huge pensions and salaries. With an average wage of about 1,000 euros a month, tiny pensions, some of the longest working hours and the weakest welfare system in Europe, it is not workers or poor farmers in Greece who are to blame for the country's debt.

The bankers in Frankfurt, Paris, Zurich and London – who, despite “losing” 25 per cent of the financial assets of Europe, continue to pay themselves billions in bonuses – then organised a speculative frenzy against Greece on the bond market and stampeded the politicians into imposing enormous cuts and tax increases. It was a sort of crash diet for the already starving.

Obviously the continent's ruling classes believe they can use this economic “shock therapy” to massively reduce the living standards and social wage of their workers and thus improve their competitive position against their rivals in East Asia and North America. The “European social model” with a living wage, universal health insurance, decent retirement pensions and union rights – which was fought for and won by workers for over 50 years – needs to be drastically reduced if our rulers are to achieve a “level playing field” with the labour conditions their rivals enjoy.

At the forefront

As the response to the cuts in Greece showed, a continent-wide austerity offensive can easily become a major turning point of the class struggle in Europe. Compared with the US, China and Japan, the working class in western and southern Europe has much stronger union organisations often with a record of resistance to the neoliberal reforms tried over the last 10 years. Also in Europe, the anticapitalist, antiwar and environmental movements have proved very capable of building powerful mobilisations on the streets.

The attack on the Greek working class and youth brought the country to the verge of revolution in late 2008, when the police shot a young man in Athens and provoked weeks of rioting and strikes against the repression of youth. It happened again this spring when the government announced its austerity measures.

Two million workers (in a country of just 11 million) took part in a one-day general strike on 24 February. Another on 11 March brought the country to a standstill. On 5 May Greece saw its largest-ever general strike and huge demonstrations in Athens, Thessalonica and indeed most cities and even small towns.

In Portugal, 500,000 workers participated in a strike on 4 March against the government's austerity plans. In Spain, an estimated 200,000 workers struck on 23 February against plans for a two-year increase in the retirement age; in addition, two million took part in the day of action of 8 June after the Socialist Party government announced the new austerity plans. Further action is planned for 16 June when the government is due to unveil plans to introduce new labour laws to make it easier to sack workers – in a country with 20 per cent unemployment overall and youth joblessness at 40 per cent.

In France, a mass day of action took place on 23 March and another is planned for 24 June. The industrial action will come six days after the government is due to submit its draft law to parliament proposing changes to retirement age and pension system. In Italy on 12 March there was a major day of action called by the Cgil, the largest Italian union federation, and other unions to protest billionaire Silvio Berlusconi's attacks on workers' jobs and rights.

France, Italy, Portugal and Spain have strong militant traditions in their labour movements. This means that the rulers



Spanish workers hold general strike on 8 June

in Europe will not find it easy to push through the austerity measures without involving sections of the union leaderships and social democratic parties linked to them. In some cases where "their" parties are in government, for example Greece, Spain, Portugal, and the UK until recently, the unions have restricted protests against the crisis to a minimum.

But this sort of class collaboration is becoming less and less tenable, given the sheer scale of the cuts. This is already true for the weaker economies such as Greece and Portugal, and it is now spreading to major imperialist countries with fewer reserves such as Spain and Italy. In these countries, the economic basis for concessions to the privileged upper layers of the working class has always been slimmer. The stormy class struggles in Greece can certainly spark major outbursts across southern Europe and even trigger a blaze in the more northerly states – France, Germany, and Britain – where major austerity programmes are now being launched.

Socialist United States of Europe

It is clear that the years ahead will be ones of bitter struggle – the cuts needed are so vast that the bosses will launch wave after wave of attacks on workers' living standards.

If they get away with it and defeat key unions, breaking workers' organisations, the capitalists may succeed in creating a climate of fear, in which workers are so afraid of mass unemployment that strikes die down – a new "reserve army of unem-

ployed" and desperate people can be used to undercut wages and divide workers against each other.

On the other hand, if we strengthen and unify resistance, linking struggles across industries and across borders, then we can not only break the European bosses offensive, but also convert our resistance into an offensive of our own, to overthrow the capitalists' governments and create a Socialist United States of Europe, where the bosses will be forced to pay the price of the crisis, and where production will be for need, not for the profits of the corporations and the banks.

Key to this will be going beyond one-day actions. Waves of strikes and workplace occupations need to culminate in general strikes.

Only an indefinite withdrawal of labour can bring the austerity regimes to their knees and pose a direct question, who will be the master in Europe? The workers or the bosses?

Everything therefore depends on the leadership of the working class movement. The task of socialists is to build solidarity with the struggles, bring the struggles together, advance a programme that can defeat the bosses and their governments and win thousands upon thousands of European workers to the formation of a new political challenge to the existing social-democratic, Labour, "Communist" and trade union leaders, whose politics of compromise are holding us back and threaten to squander an historic opportunity to turn capitalism's crisis into social revolution.

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FORUM

The European Social

The fifth European Social Forum, held in Istanbul in July, offers a chance for the left to debate strategy and the way forward, argues **Dave Stockton**

The European Social Forum in Istanbul on 1 to 4 July is a great opportunity to build a European wide fightback against the capitalist cuts. The ESF is a gathering of activists from the trade unions, youth, anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist movements that first took place in Florence in November 2002. Once again this year militants will gather to debate the lessons of recent events – the historically severe capitalist crisis blighting Europe, the fightback against the horrific slashing of our jobs, wages, pensions, social welfare, presently spearheaded by Greek workers. At hundreds of different meetings and a final Assembly of Movements they will hopefully decide on a course of Europe-wide actions, a strategy for coordinated resistance and action on vital issues outside Europe, like breaking Israel's blockade of Gaza.

The ESF has huge power – if it decides to use it.

In Florence eight years ago a bold decision for coordinated action on 15 February 2003 – a call taken up by the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil in January of the following year – led to the 20 million strong worldwide protests against the impending invasion of Iraq. When the war began on 20 March, a further wave of demonstrations, strikes and other forms of direct action took place. Though ultimately unsuccessful in halting the



war and occupation, owing in large measure to our failure to win the major trade unions to take strike action, nevertheless it showed the power an international call can have, when a powerful alliance of working class organisations addresses millions all over the world.

However, this success was not followed by equally bold actions at subsequent Forums. The European Social Forums held in Paris (2003), London (2004), Athens (2006) and Malmö (2008) failed to set themselves the task of mobilising resistance. They passed up the opportunity to create a permanent network of anti-capitalist parties and militant trade unions, coordinated nationally as well as internationally, with a central delegate executive body holding regular international meetings.

European Preparatory Assemblies (EPAs) did gather roughly three times a year. But the meetings did not focus on a fighting strategy, restricting themselves to the administrative questions of organising the next ESF. This was not challenged by

even the more radical forces present, including representatives of the more militant unions (like COBAS, Cgil-FIOM, SUD, FSU) and, under various disguises, representatives of left-wing parties like Italy's Rifondazione Comunista and political groups like the Fourth International and the International Socialist Tendency. Networks on particular topics – education, Palestine – built useful links and called some common actions, but the failure to take any real steps to creating an organising centre was a serious error.

If there had been a European coordinating committee in 2008 when the crisis hit, it could have issued an authoritative call, backed by significant organisations in every country, for unified resistance to the cuts. The wave of demonstrations which took place across the continent on the slogan, "We Won't Pay for Their Crisis" could have been turned into a wave of strikes and workplace occupations to halt the governments in their tracks – and an alterna-

tive radical course of action could have been promoted as a challenge to the path of compromise of the official labour leaders.

From 2003 onwards, the League for the Fifth International argued within the ESF to set up a permanent coordination for action. To this end we argued that the ESF and the WSF should renounce the Porto Alegre Charter of Principles that banned political parties from participating and forbade the Forums from making decisions on strategies of resistance.

In addition at every ESF, from Paris in 2003, and at the World Social Forum in Mumbai 2004 and Porto Alegre in 2005 we repeated our call on the parties, unions and movements fighting neoliberalism at home and imperialist wars abroad to set about founding a new workers' International – a new world party of social revolution. The first four Internationals each played a vital role in building militant trade unions and revolutionary parties. In the era of globalisation and its general crisis after 2008, we argued that we urgently need a Fifth International. We argued it could be launched through a process of uniting the militant participants in the ESF and WSF around common actions to resist the onslaught on workers and turn this into a counterattack on capitalism itself. This would mean a democratic debate within the ESF about the programme a movement should adopt.

In the following years promi-

Forum and the Left

ment figures on the left of the Social Forum movement – Walden Bello, Samir Amin and Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez – also called for the crippling restrictions on the Social Forums to be removed. Last November Chavez added his voice to the call for a Fifth International to be launched. After a strange period of silence it now appears that an international gathering to debate this may finally take place in Caracas in the autumn of this year.

The European Social Forum needs to discuss this initiative – and that is why the League for the Fifth International will be hosting a discussion on this subject and participating in all other meetings that address the question of how to move forward. We will argue that a Fifth International cannot be centred on any President or capitalist government, however radical. It must be an independent organisation of the working class

So what can the ESF in Istanbul do? Today we are facing a situation hardly less serious than that we faced in 2002 – not in the form of an immediate threat of war, but an internationally coordinated attack on the social gains European workers have built up since the Second World War: our welfare, pensions and jobs.

Greek workers have launched five one-day general strikes this year in protest against the savage austerity programme being imposed on them.

In Turkey itself we have witnessed the months-long struggle of the Tekel workers. We have also just witnessed the heroic attempt by the Turkish-based *Mavi Marmara* and seven other ships in the Freedom Flotilla, to break the Israeli siege of Gaza. In Italy Portugal, Spain, France and Germany we have seen a wave of protests against the austerity programmes now being imposed.

The League for the Fifth International will propose to the Assembly



Demonstration at the Paris ESF

of Social Movements, which concludes the ESF to issue a clear call to all working class organisations, both trade unions and political parties, to social movements and campaigns, to youth, women and migrants, to unite in common struggle across the whole continent:

- No to all the austerity packages. No to each and every cut in wages, jobs, pensions, the slashing of social services, education and health. Cancel the debts of Greece and other countries impoverished by the crisis and the market speculators.

- The bankers and owners of the big corporations must pay the entire cost the crisis. Tax the rich – not the workers and poor. To stop the stock exchange, currency and bond market speculators, we have to take control over the finance system out of the private companies and investment funds. Expropriate the banks and finance institutions without compensation under workers' control.

- Stop the mass layoffs: no job losses whether compulsory or "voluntary". We have no right to sell the jobs of the next generation. We demand the reduction of working hours, sufficient to absorb all the jobless, without any loss of pay. We call for the expropriation without compensation of all companies which threaten workers with closures, redundancies or cuts in pay, placing them under workers' control.

- Stop the nationalist and chauvinist campaign against the Greek people. International solidarity action with the struggle of the Greek workers and youth.

- Build anti-crisis committees and alliances in all towns and regions and coordinate them nationally and internationally. All trade unions, all workers organisations and parties, all the social movements should join in such action committees and organise militant direct action – mass demonstrations, solidarity actions in the workplaces and offices, occupations, mass political strikes.

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FORUM

• At the final assembly of the ESF in Istanbul, we will set up a European-wide coordination in the struggle against the crisis. As a first step, we will organise a European-wide day of action – strikes and mass demonstrations – against cuts and the EU-austerity packages in September 2010!

A crisis of leadership

Despite the mass anger shown by millions of ordinary people at the huge trillion dollar and euro bail-outs of the bankers, the leaders of the labour movements of Europe universally decided to “act responsibly” and recommend accepting real wage cuts, voluntary redundancies and above all not to encourage or support open resistance.

A militant minority of workers and the smaller, more democratic unions took action. But the big battalions were kept off the streets. If the union leaders thought the capitalists and their governments would be grateful they have been cruelly disappointed in 2010.

The leaders of the major unions are paralysed by their belief that there is no alternative to the solutions dictated by the capitalist governments. Behind the scenes they have even concluded truces with right wing governments, as the “Communist” led CGT did last autumn with President Nicolas Sarkozy in France.

This paralysis by the unions was made worse by the record of several Labour and Socialist governments – Brown’s Labour Party in Britain and Zapatero’s Socialist Party in Spain. Not only did they collude in bailing out of the bankers, but also they launched the process of massive cuts in the public sector. The punishment for blocking a fightback has been a series of electoral victories for centre-right and

neoliberal parties and the rise of populist and far right parties.

These began with the elections to the European Parliament in June 2009. Then in September 2009 came the SPD’s crushing defeat in the German general elections, losing 11

“What the working class needs is a party based on total class independence from the capitalist parties, the state and a revolutionary strategy”

points to score only 23 per cent of the votes. In the Hungarian elections in April 2010 the Socialist Party slumped to 19.3 per cent and the clear winner was the neoliberal party Fidesz (EPP). In May came the smashing defeat of Labour in Britain. In June in the Czech Republic the Social Democrats lost 10 per cent of the vote, giving a clear majority to a coalition bent on savage cuts.

The parties of the European Left – the French Communist Party, Die Linke in Germany, the Left Bloc in Portugal and Syriza in Greece – protested against the cuts and participated in the Social Forums. But they still harbour ambitions to act as junior partners in coalitions with the main reformist parties, which have certainly not broken with imposing cuts and privatisations. Die Linke actually participates in a cutting coalition with the Social Democrats in Berlin.

Rifondazione Comunista (RC)

was already shattered in the June 2008 elections, before the main crisis hit. Its vote fell from 10.2 per cent in the 2006 elections to 3.1 per cent, below the level needed to receive any seats. For the first time since 1945 there were no Communists in the Italian parliament. This was the direct result of RC’s entering the coalition government of the Christian Democrat Romano Prodi in 2006. RC’s leader Fausto Bertinotti had pledged never to enter another Prodi government, at the Florence ESF, to rapturous applause.

Within a year the government was in crisis over the vote to send yet more Italian troops to Afghanistan and open a huge US base near Vicenza – alienating Rifondazione’s large anti-war and working class base. Left wing militants broke from RC; the coalition collapsed. At the same time the Democrats of the Left – the right wing of the old Italian Communist Party – fused with Prodi and the rump of the Christian Democrats. Between them the Stalinists had finally succeeded in destroying the mass party of the Italian working class and replacing it with a copy of the US Democratic Party (even down to the name).

Another member of the European Left grouping, the Portuguese Left Bloc, recently voted in parliament for the Greek bailout, thus helping to impose massive cuts on the Greek workers. This was an act of the grossest opportunism, made worse by the fact that the 16 MPs of the Bloc include several members of the Fourth International, whose section is a part of the Bloc. The Bloc is also (like Rifondazione Comunista) a member of the European Anticapitalist Left. The Portuguese Communist Party and the Green Party voted against the deal.

It is plain from their recent record that the parties of the

European Left cannot provide an alternative to the mainstream Social Democrats. They are, for all their criticism of the cuts and the “socialist” parties that make them, only awaiting the call to jump into bed with them. Then, under all the pressures of the capitalist state, they will follow the path of Rifondazione.

In Die Linke in Germany and the Left Bloc in Portugal, the Fourth International’s policy of “peaceful co-existence” within parties that have a reformist and a electoralist majority is now coming under strain, as these parties’ existing leaders show their true colours. The task is not merely to place oneself alongside the reformists and hope to grow along with them, but to fight their misleadership, by launching sharp challenges to their policy, not flinching from breaking with their organisations, and rallying fighting workers to an alternative.

In France the FI’s section founded the New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) as a “clean break” from their preceding project of forming a new party with the reformist French Communist Party, which is holding back the struggle to mount effective resistance in France. But a third of the NPA has not abandoned this project, and its leadership will not unequivocally condemn the idea of building permanent political alliances with parties that are prepared to govern in capitalist coalitions, with everything that entails.

What the working class needs, and even more so in a period of crisis and depression, is a party based on total class independence from the bourgeois parties and the capitalist state and a revolutionary strategy. That is what the League for the Fifth International and its sections in Europe are fighting for, at this year’s ESF and beyond.

BRITAIN'S BLOODY OCCUPATION

What are Cameron's real Afghan war aims?

By Tim West & Dave Stockton

On a visit to troops in Helmand province, southern Afghanistan in early June, Prime Minister David Cameron claimed: "This is not a war of choice, it is a war of necessity. This is not a war of occupation, it is a war of obligation." He then added: "We are not here to build a perfect democracy, we are not here to build some perfect model society. We are here to help the Afghans take control of their security so we can go home."

Cameron was fulsome in his praise of the military and took a sarcastic sideswipe at those in those in the media that criticised the war. "It is not the journalist that brings free expression, it is the soldier. So I want you to help me create a new atmosphere in our country, an atmosphere where we back and revere and support our military."

Yet this man is not a supporter of "our boys" – 294 of whom have died needlessly since the war began in 2001. Official statistics show that 103 British servicemen suffered amputations after being wounded in Afghanistan between April 2006 and the end of last year. Of the 54 who had amputations last year, 26 lost two or more limbs. Cameron, like Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, are sending them to their deaths or to horrible injuries for a cause that is not that of ordinary British people. It is based on a pack of lies.

Like his predecessors, what Cameron is worried about is



that the majority of Britons realise this: between 52-62 per cent, depending on opinion polls, are opposed to the war and want to see the troops brought home. Doubtless if the soldiers had the democratic right to make their views known to the press many would say the same.

What Cameron is also trying to cover up is that Operation Moshtarak, the ongoing 15,000-strong military offensive in southern Afghanistan, has failed either to defeat the Taliban fighters or to win the hearts and minds of the populace in the region. Therefore, the statement that the troops will begin coming home by Christmas is another deception.

A war that initially billed itself as one to bring democracy and liberate women, as well as to capture Osama bin Laden and crush the Taliban and Al Qaeda, has failed on all counts. It has ended up with President Mohammed Karzai's government, famed for its corruption, "winning" a rigged election, legalising rape in marriage, and

in early June summoning a jirga (assembly) of tribal elders to woo the Taliban with offers of power-sharing if they would only agree to stop fighting. The US and Afghan governments offer of training in skills like carpet weaving and carpentry to "reintegrate" resistance fighters into society is laughable, especially in a country with an official unemployment rate of 40 per cent.

Add to this 30,000 civilian deaths and the continued crushing poverty – no wonder Liam Fox, the new Defence Secretary, blurted out the truth that "Britain is not in Afghanistan to send Afghan girls to school."

A similar "gaffe" to Liam Fox's made last month by German President Horst Köhler cost him his job. He said: "Military intervention is necessary to defend free trade routes, or prevent regional instabilities which would have negative effects on [Germany's] trade, jobs and income."

What Fox and Köhler made clear is that war is not to liberate the Afghan people. It is a

brutal attack on them aimed at installing a pro-Nato regime in a key strategic area, in order to guard pipelines from the Caspian base oil fields, check the advance of China's growing influence in the region, and surround Iran. These are certainly the interests of the big oil companies, banks, and generals. The capitalist politicians are playing a new "great game" to divide the resources of central Asia. But these are not in any way in the interests of British, American or mainland European workers.

The working classes of all the occupying countries have no interest in supporting this despicable war. The money spent on it should be invested in jobs and services at home. If we want to aid a free and independent Afghan government to build schools and hospitals then it could only be done with no strings, no threats and no occupying armies.

As socialists, we reject the lie that British workers' "enemy" in Afghanistan is a "fanatical Islamist" threat to "western civilisation". Even US army representatives admit 80 per cent of the Afghan resistance are not Al Qaeda-style jihadists, but are defending their communities and families against a foreign occupation. Like all genuine internationalists since the First World War, socialists in Britain, the US and all the Nato states who have sent troops, must call for their immediate and unconditional withdrawal and indeed stand for the defeat of our "own" side and the victory of the Afghan resistance.

Bangkok burning: the lessons of Thailand

A tense standoff has ended in bloody defeat for the Red Shirts. *Simon Hardy* examines the failure of the movement to defeat the government in Thailand

After more than six weeks of clashes, on 19 May the Thai army stormed into the Red Shirt encampment in central Bangkok, firing semi automatic weapons and advancing with armoured personnel carriers. The leaders of the Red Shirt movement, after marching their followers into a violent confrontation with the state, abandoned them, surrendering and offering no attempt to lead resistance to the attack.

The troops killed at least 16 people and many more were wounded. Survivors who fled the initial attack began to set fire to key buildings like the stock exchange. The footage on the news presented this as proof of the “mindless” violence of the Red Shirts. In reality, it was the desperate reflex of a movement on the verge of defeat.

The government imposed a curfew on Bangkok and, in a clear recognition of the breadth of support for the Red Shirts, on 23 provinces across the country as it sought to control any more outbreaks of resistance. The most dedicated activists, the ones that stayed at the protest until the end, now languish in prison, many facing charges of terrorism and treason which, if “proven”, could result in the death penalty.

A crisis of leadership

The Red Shirts are members of the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD).

They draw most of their sup-

port from the urban poor and peasants, and call for the Thai Parliament to be dissolved so that a general re-election can be held. Many are supporters of ex-prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who was ousted in a military coup in 2006.

The frequency with which the military intervenes into Thai politics, both through hard measures (outright coups) or soft, such as pressurising the courts to ban political figures or parties, is a shocking indictment of the failure of democracy in the country.

In the days leading up to the army attack, the leaders of the Red Shirt movement had given a clear message to the government that they were not going to escalate the confrontation, that they would meet armed attacks with only passive resistance and that they had no strategy to take the movement forward.

The lack of strategy is the crucial reason for the failure of the movement. No matter how militant the tactics used, unconnected from a strategy that could actually undermine the military regime and create a new political situation in the country, the movement was doomed to failure.

The Red Shirt movement did not mobilise either the peasants or, more crucially, the urban workers as independent social forces. As a result, it could not use tactics such as a general strike or strikes within strategic industries that could have tipped the balance of forces decisively in their favour. Instead,

they limited their demands to new elections.

The fundamental reason for this is that the Red Shirts’ leaders only ever saw the mass mobilisations as a stage army, a passive force to back up their own bid for power. They could not call for strikes and uprisings throughout the country because a mass movement would have threatened the entire ruling class with a social revolution – and their own wealth and power.

The alternative strategy

Keeping ‘the people’ united behind a capitalist leader or party inevitably means limiting the movement to the goals of that leader or party.

The leaders of the Red Shirt movement only ever envisaged using their peasant and urban poor followers as an auxiliary force in their own power struggle with the government.

For socialists it is always the self-activity of the working class and the poor which is the key question. Are they organised along class lines and fighting for their own interests?

In short, the movement has to fight for a sovereign Constituent Assembly, a new constitution, not just a new prime minister.

To ensure that this Assembly is convened, and convened democratically, the movement must create its own organisations: in the countryside, peasants’ councils; in the cities, workers’ councils. These councils will need to build their own armed forces, their own militia, first to force the existing gov-

Red Shirt Protester



ernment to retreat but then to organise and oversee elections to the Assembly.

Within the movement, revolutionary socialists will fight to build a workers’ party based on a programme that recognises that to win, and then maintain, the democratic rights of the workers and poor peasants it will be necessary go beyond political revolution to social revolution; the overthrow of capitalism and the building of a socialist republic based on the rule of the workers’ own organisations and their allies, the poor peasants.

Only this political strategy, the strategy of permanent revolution, can lead the existing struggle for democracy independently of the narrow interests of the cliques of bourgeois politicians. Only a revolutionary party can lead the workers and peasants of Thailand in a struggle for control over the economy so that the wealth of the country can be used to raise the living standards of the overwhelming majority.

World Cup is a poisoned chalice for workers and poor

During the World Cup, billions around the world will be celebrating the festival of football, but in South Africa the poor face repression and social exclusion, writes *Keith Spencer*

For the World Cup, the city of Durban built the Moses Mabhida Stadium, a state-of-the-art sporting venue with pitch, swimming pool, restaurant, executive box. It was named after a Communist Party member who was part of the resistance to Apartheid and buried with full state honours in 2006.

The irony is that none of the people Mabhida fought to liberate are allowed anywhere near the stadium for the duration of the World Cup – the Durban Council has driven out the poor to make way for tourists and TV stations.

The World Cup is an international celebration that brings billions together. But in order to have the tournament in South Africa, football's governing body FIFA extracted concessions from the African National Congress (ANC) government that will boost profits at the people's expense.

FIFA's rules

FIFA won three main concessions from the South African government. First, new stadiums had to be built in affluent areas, not poor ones. One FIFA spokesperson said: "A billion television viewers don't want to see shacks and poverty." FIFA even demanded that a new stadium was built with Table Mountain in the background rather than refurbish an existing one.

In order to build these new stadiums, local councils have gone to the courts to rob com-



South Africans protest against destruction of their village

munities of land and services. For example, the only two schools in Nelspruit were demolished to make way for a stadium – over 1,000 school students protested against the demolition. COSATU, the major trade union federation, has exposed the fact that money is being diverted from much needed community projects.

Second, FIFA decreed that only official sponsors can sell goods near the stadiums, in order to make the 2010 World Cup the most commercially successful one yet. While Adidas, Sony, Visa, Emirates, Coca-Cola and Hyundai-Kia Motors all paid \$125m each to sponsor the tournament, the police have driven out market stallholders from these exclusion zones unless they buy a concession stand at a price of up to £5,000 – well beyond their means.

The police have also targeted migrant workers, arresting and deporting them, which gives the lie to the South African World Cup slogan of it being a "Celebration of Africa".

Third, the government has banned demonstrations and strikes for the duration of the World Cup, including anything that may criticise FIFA and the tournament. South African Marxist Patrick Bond described some of the measures being taken in Durban: "sweeps by fighter jets, joint border patrols with neighbouring countries, police escorts for cruise ships and teams of security guards with 'diplomat' training". The aim is to "prevent domestic extremism, strike action and service delivery protests".

The ANC rules for the bosses

The ANC came to power in 1994 to sweep away Apartheid and improve the lives of non-white people. Yet after 16 years of rule:

- Unemployment is upwards of 40 per cent.
- The top 10 per cent have more than half of the wealth.
- 30 per cent of homes have no electricity.
- The government's own figures have 48 per cent of households living below the poverty line –

not much of an improvement on the 53 per cent in 1995.

The ANC is in power for the bosses. It carries out neoliberal policies and, as exposed during the World Cup, is prepared to boost the profits of the few at the expense of the many.

The danger is that the cost of the games will contribute towards South Africa's national debt of \$80bn – the cost of the 2006 Olympics was one of the contributing factors to the Greek crisis – and that workers and the poor will be made to pay.

Already there are local activist organisations and social forums fighting privatisation and campaigning for better services. There have also been huge strikes among transport workers, miners and public sector staff over pay, jobs and working conditions. In addition, people have protested against the World Cup corporate rip-off.

But the main trade unions in COSATU are still tied to the ANC despite the government ruling for the bosses. The workers and poor need their own party to fight beyond the democratic demand of the ANC's "one person, one vote" slogan and for socialism.

Billions across the globe will enjoy the World Cup. But the wealth from the tournament should be spent on improving the lives of the millions not bolstering the coffers of FIFA and its sponsors.

• **More on the corporate nature of the World Cup in South Africa at www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs/**

ISSUES

Far right take to streets

After the BNP's election rout, the far right English Defence League threatens a summer of marches through Muslim areas. *Bernie McAdam* asks how the fascist EDL can be stopped

The failure of the British National Party (BNP) to win in Barking and its loss of 27 councillors was one of the better stories from May's elections. But before victory is proclaimed, it should also be noted that the BNP's vote rose by 1.83 per cent to 514,819. This is a hefty figure and no one should be complacent.

The past year has also seen the rise of the English Defence League (EDL), a street movement deliberately targeting Muslims. Earlier mobilisations in Birmingham and Harrow saw local antifascists driving EDL thugs from the streets to deny them the opportunity of peddling their racist filth. Since then, however, larger EDL mobs have marched in the north and midlands, with inevitable attacks on Muslim targets.

The EDL deny that they are fascists and say they only want to stop some mythical "Islamification" of Britain. They wave Israeli and Indian flags on their demos – just to provoke Muslims of course. The EDL even joined forces with the Zionist Federation in June to denounce the Gaza flotilla.

The EDL leaders have made a simple decision. They want to build a UK fascism, not old style German fascism. As a result they have ditched anti-semitism, back Israel and are even prepared to black and Asian youth to join with their overwhelmingly white base to attack Muslims.

What is fascism?

Fascism aims to become a mass movement in a period of deep capitalist crisis. It uses slogans



that relate to people's real fears but supply false solutions, for example "Stop immigration to end unemployment". The nature of the scapegoat may vary – the Nazis targeted Jews, the EDL targets Muslims – but the aim is always to deflect attention from capitalism and break class solidarity.

There is nothing "inherently German" about fascism: as the EDL shows, Britain is perfectly capable of creating "its own" type. What distinguishes fascism from other reactionary movements is its desire to build a mass street fighting force that can physically attack its targets. We remember with horror the holocaust of six million Jews, but the key to Hitler's rise to power was the smashing of trade unions and working class parties.

Because of this historic role

of fascist parties, we believe they have to be stopped from organising their forces. This is the policy of "No platform for fascism". Wherever fascists seek a political platform, it is always accompanied by a campaign of terror against ethnic minorities, trade unionists and socialists. That's why antifascists fight to deny them that platform.

Stopping today's fascists

Clearly the targeting of Muslims in the wake of Britain's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is an easy way for fascists to return to the streets for the first time since the 1970s. Some Nazis, like Combat 18, never liked the BNP's focus on elections; others now believe Nick Griffin's turn has run its course. Either way, the EDL provides a new focus for Britain's fascists.

EDL thugs recently attacked mosques and Asian cabbies and businesses in Harrow, Leeds, Stoke and Dudley. Its slogan "No more mosques" clearly targets all Muslims, not just "extremists" as they claim. An undercover reporter from The Guardian filmed an EDL member boasting before the Bolton march: "We're going to get to twat some Pakis – I can feel it."

To combat this new and growing threat, we need a workers' united front against fascism and an Antifascist Defence League. At the moment, we have neither.

The united front

Unite against Fascism is an alliance of MPs from all parties (even David Cameron is a member!), several trade unions and the Socialist Workers Party. This popular front limits its arguments and tactics to what the capitalist politicians and the right wing of the labour movement will accept, and often busses its supporters away from the EDL before violence erupts.

Instead UAF argues for state bans. But the state is not neutral; it will use such bans against the left as well, and will always come down on the side of the fascists because it is first and foremost a capitalist state.

A real workers' united front would break from this rotten policy. It would confront the EDL on the streets, call strikes against BNP councillors, and urge media workers to block coverage of fascists on radio, TV and the papers. It would help organise an Antifascist Defence League to draw black and white fighters into the struggle, not leaving it to Asian youth to defend their communities.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

Workers Power is a revolutionary communist organisation. We fight to:

- Abolish capitalism and create a world without exploitation, class divisions and oppression
- Break the resistance of the exploiters by the force of millions acting together in a social revolution smashing the repressive capitalist state
- Place power in the hands of councils of delegates from the working class, the peasantry, the poor - elected and recallable by the masses
- Transform large-scale production and distribution, at present in the hands of a tiny elite, into a socially owned economy, democratically planned
- Plan the use of humanity's labour, materials and technology to eradicate social inequality and poverty.

This is communism - a society without classes and without state repression. To achieve this, the working class must take power from the capitalists.

We fight imperialism: the handful of great capitalist powers and their corporations, who exploit billions and crush all states and peoples, who resist them. We support resistance to their blockades, sanctions, invasions and occupations by countries like Venezuela, Iraq or Iran. We demand an end to the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the Zionist occupation of Palestine. We support unconditionally the armed resistance.

We fight racism and national oppres-

sion. We defend refugees and asylum seekers from the racist actions of the media, the state and the fascists. We oppose all immigration controls. When racists physically threaten refugees and immigrants, we take physical action to defend them. We fight for no platform for fascism.

We fight for women's liberation: from physical and mental abuse, domestic drudgery, sexual exploitation and discrimination at work. We fight for free abortion and contraception on demand. We fight for an end to all discrimination against lesbians and gay men and against their harassment by the state, religious bodies and reactionaries.

We fight youth oppression in the family and society: for their sexual freedom, for an end to super-exploitation, for the right to vote at sixteen, for free, universal education with a living grant.

We fight bureaucracy in the unions. All union officers must be elected, recallable, and removable at short notice, and earn the average pay of the members they claim to represent. Rank and file trade unionists must organise to dissolve the bureaucracy. We fight for nationalisation without compensation and under workers control.

We fight reformism: the policy of Labour, Socialist, Social-Democratic and the misnamed Communist parties. Capitalism cannot be reformed through peaceful parliamentary means; it must be overthrown by force.

Though these parties still have roots in the working class, politically they defend capitalism. We fight for the unions to break from Labour and form for a new workers party. We fight for such a party to adopt a revolutionary programme and a Leninist combat form of organisation.

We fight Stalinism. The so-called communist states were a dictatorship over the working class by a privileged bureaucratic elite, based on the expropriation of the capitalists. Those Stalinist states that survive - Cuba and North Korea - must be defended against imperialist blockade and attack. But a socialist political revolution is the only way to prevent their eventual collapse.

We reject the policies of class collaboration: "popular fronts" or a "democratic stage", which oblige the working class to renounce the fight for power today. We reject the theory of "socialism in one country". Only Trotsky's strategy of permanent revolution can bring victory in the age of imperialism and globalisation. Only a global revolution can consign capitalism to history.

With the internationalist and communist goal in our sights, proceeding along the road of the class struggle, we propose the unity of all revolutionary forces in a new Fifth International.

That is what Workers Power is fighting for. If you share these goals – join us.

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Boycott apartheid Israel

By Marcus Halaby

Israel's siege of Gaza since June 2007, its indiscriminate bombardment of Gaza's people in December 2008 and January 2009, and now its attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla have all brought about an increased momentum in favour of the campaign for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS).

The Swedish dockworkers' union has called a boycott of Israeli goods and ships coming to and from Israel. They have appealed to other unions to take similar initiatives, and have called for a general blockade of Israeli goods, until Palestinian rights have been recognised and the siege has been lifted. A few days later Norwegian dockers joined the boycott call.

This excellent example of workers' solidarity with the Palestinian people, taking action where it matters, and at a time when the Swedish parliament could only debate issuing the mildest (and therefore meaningless) verbal protests at Israel's piracy, and the Swedish government preferred none at all. It is an entirely appropriate response to Israel's economic blackmail of the Palestinian people, and should be publicised and followed by other unions.

Certain voices on the left oppose the idea of a boycott in principle. They object on the grounds that this is "singling out" Israel for criticism.

This is rubbish – socialists fight for the working class to boycott all regimes that are engaged in genocide and wars of oppression against subject peoples. We called for a workers' boycott of apartheid South Africa, for workers sanctions against fascist Chile, and most recently the trade union sanctions against Sri Lanka's genocidal war against the Tamils.

The claim that Israel is being singled out is an attempt by Israel's supporters to distract attention from Israel's crimes.

We should support the Palestinians through extending the boycott launched by the Swedish dockers, pushing support

for it through union branches, publicising solidarity actions and supporting the movement by teachers and unions to launch an academic boycott.

Isolating Israel, by forcing our own governments to cease their support for its oppression of the Palestinians, is one of the strongest weapons we have in forcing it to end the siege of Gaza and to abandon its most repressive measures, like its vindictive policy of house demolitions, and its periodic near-total restrictions on Palestinian freedom of movement.

Israel is an illegitimate state, founded on ethnic cleansing, which only exists by pursuing an expansionist project

Israel was founded 60 years ago by ethnic cleansing – Arabs were driven from their land so that a Jewish majority state of Israel was created in Palestine, where there had previously been an Arab majority. The only way Israel can survive as a majority Jewish state is through large-scale Jewish immigration, and laws that discriminate against non-Jews and forbid expelled Palestinians from being able to return. Underpinning all this is a racist ideology – Zionism – that wants a specifically Jewish state in Palestine and is prepared to deny Palestinian Arabs their rights in order to keep it that way.

The hold of Zionism over the Israeli-Jewish population is strong, binding them to their bosses through privileges over the Arabs and nationalist lies. So every bit of international pressure on Israelis – not just words, but actions that really affect them – which shows them that the Zionist ideology works against their own interests can be tremendously important.

The most frequently raised objection to a boycott is that this hurts "ordinary" working class Israelis and the small and beleaguered minority of Israeli activists who have been willing to speak out against the actions of their state. But like in South Africa in the 1980s, where it was the black workers' unions that called for international sanctions against apartheid, it is the oppressed Palestinians themselves who are calling for a boycott, to help them against the power of the Israeli state.

We should all play our part in supporting Palestinians by extending the boycott as far as possible – by pushing it through our union branches, publicising the solidarity actions by Swedish and Norwegian dockers and supporting the movement by teachers and unions to launch an academic boycott of Israel.

In every workplace and every industry, in every school and college, workers and students should get together and form groups to push active solidarity with the Palestinians and active support for the boycott.

Where unions do not officially back the boycott, activists should take action unofficially if necessary and appeal to the broader movement for support.

Action like the Swedish dockers' shows what can be done when workers show solidarity across borders. It is like a beacon of hope for the future, because it highlights the possibility of creating a really international working class movement able to come to the support of people in each country when they need it.

In a world where capital is international while workers are divided, this active internationalism is the key to building a successful fightback not just against the oppression of subject peoples like the Palestinians, but against imperialist war and occupation, and against the worldwide attempt of capitalists to make workers pay for the crisis.

That's why the fight for a workers' boycott of Israel is part of the fight for a new internationalism.