

SocialistVoice[★]

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For a national day of strikes

Defeat austerity and benefit cuts

The pressure is building for unions to take coordinated strike action from workers in many sectors over the relentless attacks on pay, pensions and working conditions.

The recent TUC conference voted overwhelmingly for the RMT motion that called for a “national midweek day of actions” to be supported by all unions in a day of coordinated national action.

The unions organising industrial action this autumn must coordinate their strikes together if a day national of strikes is to happen.

But to make this happen pressure on the trade union leaders must be increased and accelerated.

Teachers

A wave of strike actions are looming, beginning with the NUT and NASUWT teachers’ unions who have announced a continual campaign of rolling strike action beginning on 30 September and 14 October and culminating in a day of national strikes in November over systematic government attacks.

Education minister Michael Gove has been condemned for his “reckless and

irresponsible behaviour” in refusing to engage with the unions about teachers’ concerns. He has pushed through performance related pay which empowers the school management to arbitrarily change pay and conditions of teachers. Gove aims to drive the conditions of teachers back many decades.

Firefighters

The FBU fire-fighters’ union voted by 78 per cent to take strike action over the plans that are in place to raise their retirement age, forcing them to work until they are 60. At the same time workers can be sacked if they become unfit for work. So for example, if a worker is forced to stop work at 55 they can lose half of their pension. Fire Services are also being hit with drastic cuts.

Post Office workers

The CWU postal workers’ union plans to ballot for action over the planned Royal Mail privatisation, job cuts, closures and the pay freeze despite Royal Mail more than doubling its profits in 2012/2013 to £403 million.

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TUC CONGRESS, A LOST OPPORTUNITY

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Life of our parties

Challenges of the socialist left in USA

Some readers have asked Socialist Voice to say something more about the USA Workers' Voice and their founding conference



The Workers' Voice founding conference on 15 and 16 June established their main positions on the national situation, its political principles, and its internal structure. An important question they face nationally is how to overcome workers' illusions in the Obama administration that retains confidence and support particularly in the black, Latino, LGBT and oppressed communities. This is despite Obama's increasing exploitation of workers to maintain the profits and needs of American big business.

Internationally, Obama talks of democracy, but implements an imperialist project, imposing brutal IMF policies and free trade agreements that attack workers in Europe; established

and supports the puppet regimes in Iraq and Afghanistan; and finances armies in Egypt and Israel; all to ensure economic, political and strategic control over those regions.

At home Obama adopts vicious austerity measures including threats to close basic public services including health and education. And in the private sector workers' pay, health care, conditions and pensions are under serious attack.

The labour movement leadership has failed to fight for and defend workers' rights. They are highly bureaucratized and corrupt and receive immorally high salaries. Many are in the pocket of the Democratic Party.

The left have generally been too afraid to directly oppose Obama fearing it would increase their isolation as they already have trouble winning the leadership of strikes against the bureaucracy, which is pushing some towards opportunism or sectarianism.

Role of Workers' Voice

- Develop workers' understanding of Obama's role in a government for bankers and big business
- Oppose Obama's imperialist policy abroad, and his austerity policies at home
- Build a working class movement independent of government
- For democratic, fighting, and independent unions
- For the left, trade unionists, activists, and progressives to build an independent workers' party
- For a broad unity in action with the left and those willing to fight for workers' rights against the government attacks
- Build a left organisation deeply rooted in the working class and its struggles

Workers' Voice is a sympathising section of the IWL-FI. Web site: <http://lavoziit.com/>

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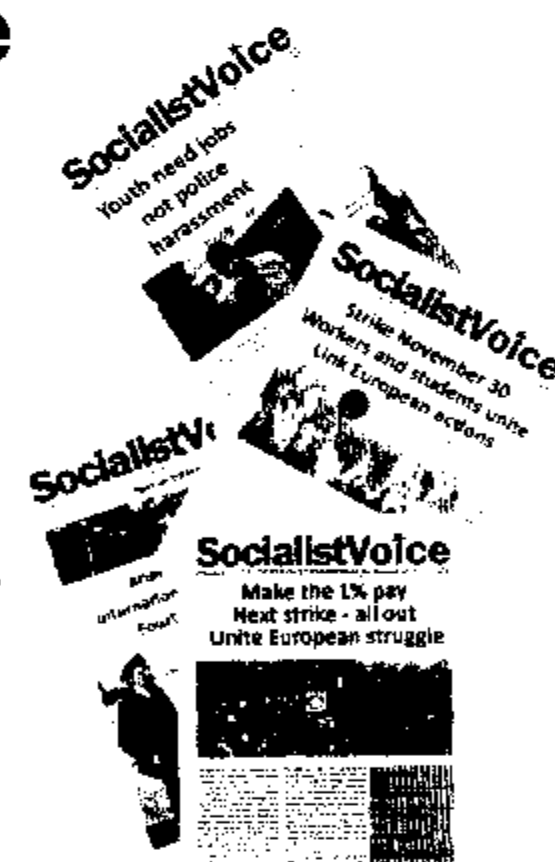
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TUC congress, a lost opportunity

Martin Ralph, International Socialist League

At the TUC congress, held in Bournemouth between 15 and 18 September, delegates were welcomed with the following words: "With an election only two years away, we are now in a critical phase. The TUC's General Council is determined to harness the huge potential of a united movement to win support for a future that works".

This message contained nothing about the looming autumn strikes over pay rises, the Royal Mail privatisation, large cuts in pensions, firefighter staffing levels and teachers' performance related pay. Nor was there a big show against the austerity plans of the coalition government. It was all about the 2015 general elections.

The delegates were welcomed to the Congress by Frances O'Grady, TUC President, who said in relation to the elections: "The choice that the British people make could shape the kind of country we live in for generations". For O'Grady the Labour Party is the main question, but all union members should be warned: do not trust those who put their faith in Labour.

TUC support for banks

The TUC does more than put their faith in Labour. They put their faith in capitalism. O'Grady also said: "Governments may have had no choice about bailing out the banks". May have? The point is that when all the frenzied speculation from the city of London and elsewhere created the biggest pile of fictitious capital the world has ever seen, trillions of pounds, it proved that the banks are the centres of capitalist power.

The banks build their wealth on crisis,



Lobby of TUC demanding a general strike

oppression, exploitation and austerity. Should the working class save capitalism? O'Grady's predecessor certainly thought so as he was an adviser to the Bank of England and is now a Lord for services rendered, and O'Grady certainly thinks so. Her values are "equality, solidarity and democracy". The TUC leadership show that they will never call for a general strike, unless it is already a fact and built by unions that want to fight.

For the TUC the only way out of the misery of mass unemployment, privatisation and the increasing cost of living is the Labour party, which helped create the frenzy of profits by the banks.

The TUC campaign plan aims to discredit the current government in favour of Labour in the coming elections. Not to defeat it by direct struggle of the working class nor put an end to the social war that imperialism and the European governments are imposing on workers.

All the resolutions approved by the delegates must be understood from this point of view.

The delegates approved 78 motions while only two were voted down. What a unanimous congress! But not one resolution pointed clearly to decisive actions to fight the austerity attacks.

The 2013 Congress shows that the organisation of a general strike, it will have to be made by the combative unions. Despite a motion being passed to consider the practicalities of a general strike in 2012 the TUC has done nothing to campaign in the unions and rank and file for that demand.

General Strike

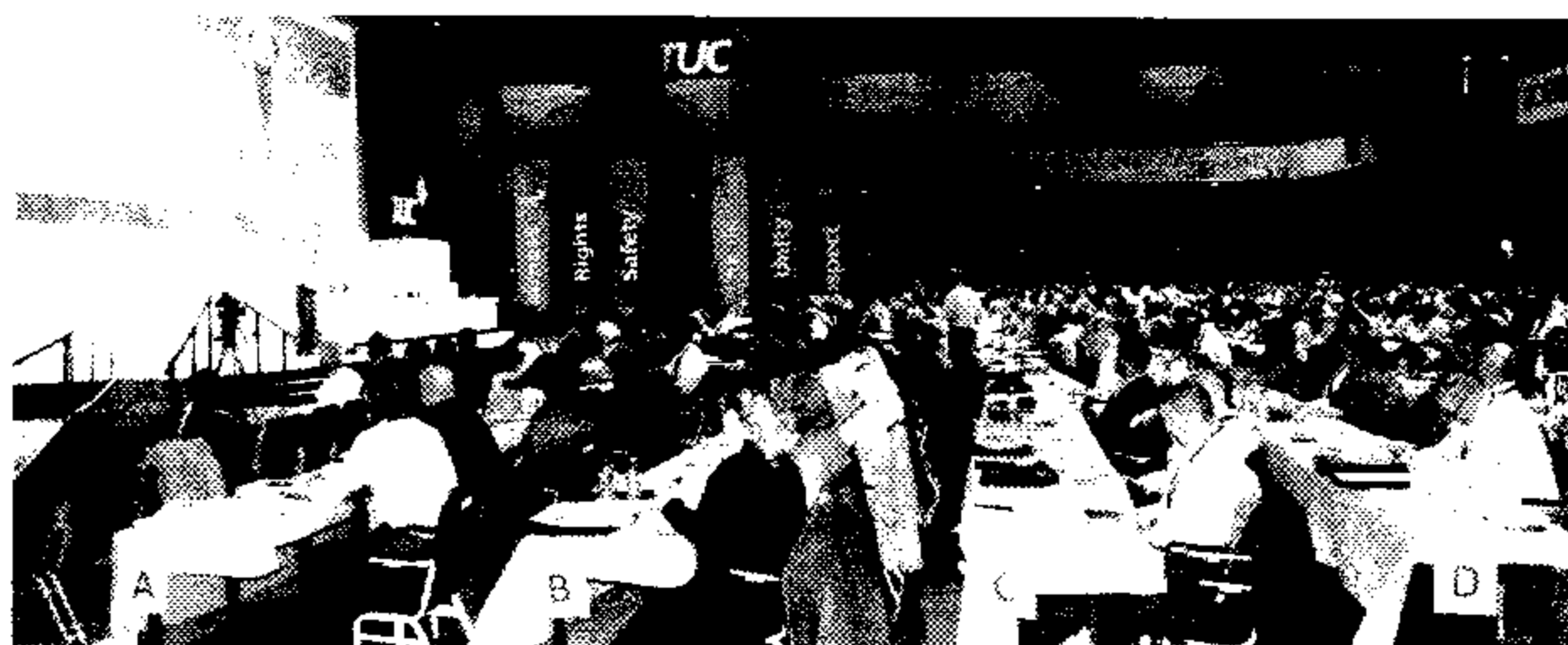
One of the most anticipated discussions of the congress was the question of a general strike. One meeting was called by the National Shop Stewards Network on Sunday morning and there was a lobby to put pressure on the delegates to name the day for a general strike.

But only general motions were passed, without dates or even a time scale for a call, such as this autumn, when a number of unions are planning to strike for their demands. A Unite motion says that the **discussion** of mass industrial actions to oppose the cuts is a realistic possibility. We know that "discussions" are always possible, but now workers need action.

The main input over a general strike were the Railway Maritime Transport union motion, but they were limited to the "practicalities of a general strike should remain" with another call for a "mid-week day of action and protest".

So the TUC congress lost, once more, the opportunity to name the day for a general strike against the government's austerity plans. This will only happen when the rank and file rise up and create new leaders to replace those who refuse to fight.

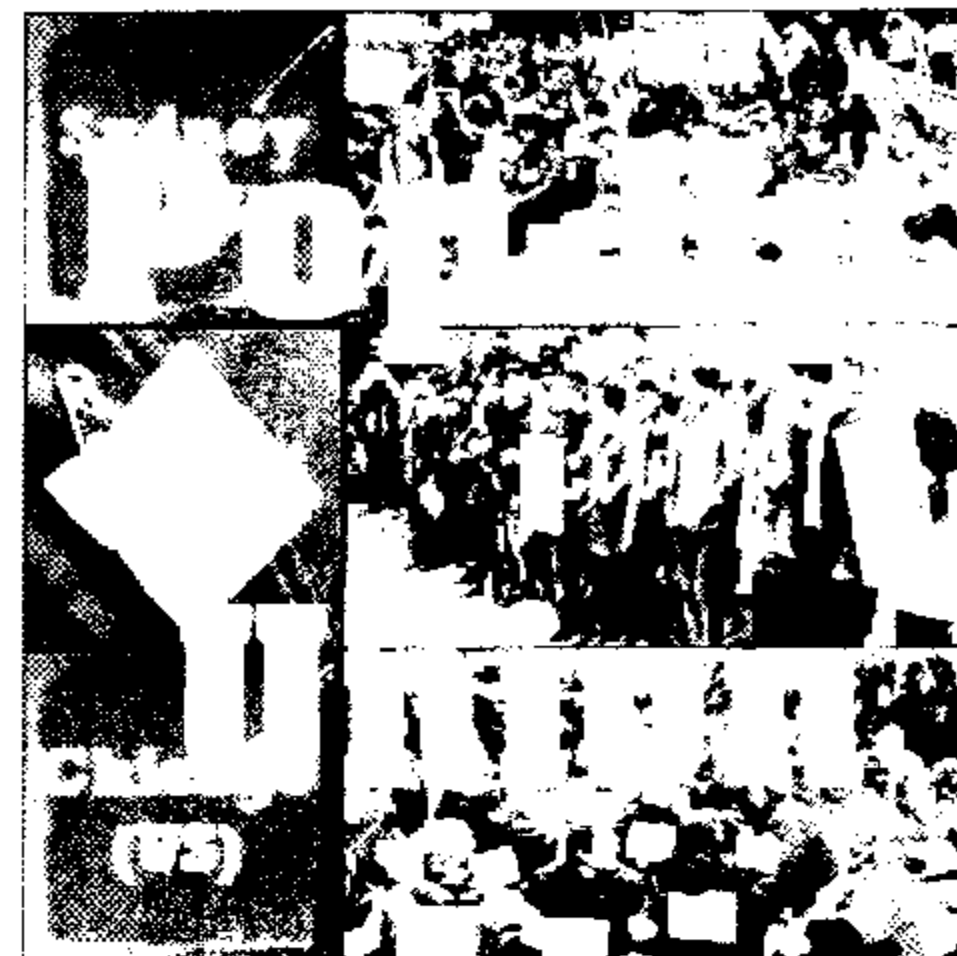
The combative unions and union tendencies have to fight for a national day of joint union strikes.



(continued from front page)

For a national day of strikes

Margaret McAdam, International Socialist League



A new name, a new situation arises out of the need for the rank and file to control and build a fighting and democratic union.

Late in March a Pop-Up union was formed by rank and file members of the three recognised unions at Sussex university campus to unite the campaign in opposition to management plans to outsource 235 workers, including catering and facilities jobs such as porters, cleaners, and security. It was driven out of frustration with the lack of action by the recognised unions.

It grew rapidly as, "a temporary single issue trade union" and became the second biggest union on the campus. Most workers on the campus are not unionised, but many found themselves divided by sector into the three established unions.

The Pop-Up was added to the list of trade unions by the certification officer. Joint membership was encouraged and most who joined were members of one of the other unions.

The energy of the campaign came from students and staff themselves and the organising of the Pop-Up came out of the 55 day student occupation of Bramber House in March.

"It's a model of workers' self organisation that hasn't been seen in this country for a very long time and if it's successful it could be hugely significant for the labour movement which has stagnated for so long". Web site of the Pop-Up union.

The support of such initiatives is fundamental to build an alternative trade union movement out of the hands of the bureaucratic union leadership who refuse to fight for the workers' rights. It's fundamental as is the appearance of a new layer of independent activists against the Labour party and the TUC leadership.

Higher Education

The UCU, Unite, Unison, GMB and the Scottish EIS university and college unions have rejected the government one per cent pay offer and all union members are to be balloted for strike action.

Other unions

The PCS civil service workers' union has been involved in a series of strikes over pay, pensions and jobs and the government limit of one per cent public sector pay rise. The RMT rail and transport workers union have been on strike in London. The BFAWU bakers' union have been on strike in Wigan opposing redundancies of permanent staff and the employment of agency workers on 'zero-hour' contracts, as well as partial contracts.

Mass poverty

There are millions, a recent survey estimates 5.5 to 6 million, of workers on 'zero-hour' slave-labour contracts. There are 2.5 million seeking work and there are 11.5 million unemployed, a million of them youth.

There has never has there been a more compelling time to unite all the struggles into coordinated strike action. National coordinated action will strengthen workers and will win the support of the unemployed, students, pensioners, those with disabilities, and all who are fighting the vicious austerity benefit cuts and

sanctions which are pushing people into destitution and dependence on twenty first century soup kitchens, aka as "food banks".

Workers cannot wait

But we know there is no will from the major union leaderships to fight a definitive battle and defeat the austerity plans of the Con-Dem government. They seek to undermine the government to build and support for a Labour victory in the 2015 general elections.

A composite motion by Unite, Unison and PCS was passed stating that the "unions will promote political education and campaigning on the economic choices at the 2015 general election". Thus they are prioritising the general elections and Labour, despite Miliband stating many times that the austerity will continue if Labour govern.

Workers cannot wait for a solution in 2015, because it will not happen. Responsibility lies with the rank and file in workplaces, schools, universities and with the anti-cut movements to win greater control over their leaderships and to fight for the organisation of a national day of strikes. In each and every struggle the union branches and community campaign groups need to link and build a national movement to fight any union leader who seeks to hold the movement back, or betray it, from defeating the economic policy of the government.

Local strikes increasing



Fowler and King workers in high spirits

Post Office workers strike against local attacks

The Post Office management have increased their attacks on the working conditions of Postal workers, as the government prepares for its autumn Royal Mail sell off. As a consequence the Postal workers union, CWU, have been inundated with ballot requests for strike action from union branches.

For example at Bridgwater Delivery Office, Somerset, 110 CWU members took strike action recently.

Most local issues are the same: excessive workloads; a bullying management and managers breaking local and national agreements with the CWU that protect health and safety, earnings levels, and permanent and full-time job opportunities.

Dave Chapple, Bristol CWU Branch Chair and shop steward at Bridgwater's Friarn Street office, said to PO management,

"You have made a serious mistake in trying to beat Bridgwater by starving us back to work. You have seriously underestimated our strength: after 8 days out, we are stronger than ever, thanks to the support we are getting daily from other Royal Mail workplaces, CWU Branches and trades unionists all over the country".

Dave Chapple's branch won.

Hovis strike wins

At Hovis, Wigan, workers struck and held lively pickets to fight zero hour and short term contracts.

Trade unionists, activists and students

joined the picket lines from across the north-west. Wagons were stopped as everyone was shouting "scab".

On one night at 5.00am only seven of the company's fleet of over three dozen trucks, all driven by managers, and which have all usually left the bakery by 3.00am, had been able to get out.

A statement from BFAWU on the significance of their victory says: "Our members at Hovis have achieved an historic agreement with the company. Having already brought about the end of zero hours contracts leading to twenty-four new permanent jobs, the action taken by those workers has ensured that zero hours contracts will not be provided by a third party. It also means that attempts to use the Swedish Derogation model have been scrapped, with manning levels being reviewed and the possibility of recruitment should the need to use agency arise. This landmark action by two hundred and ten members of a modest sized Union along with meaningful negotiations with the company has brought about significant change that could potentially have a positive knock-on effect throughout the entire labour movement".

Fowler and King workers strike

Workers at an aerospace factory in Liverpool, which exports to Canada, have so far held strikes over three weeks in September. Around 50 workers at King and Fowler, based at Brunswick Business Park decided they had had enough of low pay and management greed.

Staff have not received a pay rise since 2008 and want to see their wages go up in line with inflation. They are paid minimum or very low wages while the director earns £750,000 a year.

UCU victory at Liverpool University Unite and Unison, reject new contracts

The ISL applauds the UCU and its members who have achieved a big victory against the university who threatened dismissal without even redundancy pay in order to impose new contracts. It would have meant no defined maximum hours, removal of TOIL (time off in lieu), and the right to change contracts without negotiation.

The UCU has forced management to back down and have gained more, such as mutual flexibility - that is both sides must agree to changes in flexibility. Another big victory is their agreement to negotiate with the union to a greater extent than before.

UCU rank and file showed their determination and strength by fighting in unity and prevented the creation of division between the academic and the academic support staff such as librarians, computer staff and many others essential to the functioning of the institution.

The ballot result for strike action was the turning point in the dispute. It proved that the rank and file is willing to fight and it proved to management that there was going to be strikes in September and October over their attempts to "dismiss and re-engage".

Bosses and government afraid of strikes

They did not want a strike as it would damage their image and it could be an example for the rank and file of Unite and Unison to put pressure on their leadership to strike together.

Liverpool university was a national test case, and won support from the rank and file across the country and the whole union. The strike could have been a starting point for national strike action over pay after the national ballot for strike action at the end of September. No doubt the national management and even the government do not want strike action that will increase the idea that it is possible to fight and win.

This victory is an example that should be repeated throughout higher education.

It also means that all UCU members must stay mobilised and organised. The management will try many tricks at Liverpool to unravel the agreement - don't let them!

Vote yes for national strike over pay.

Labour abandons workers, they abandon Labour

Marcos Margarido,

International Socialist League and member of CSP-Conlutas, Brazil

The summer period has not gone well for the Labour Party. While Prime Minister David Cameron occupied the headlines trumpeting that now the economy is "on the mend" due to a meagre 0.6 per cent growth in the last quarter, Ed Miliband is criticised for his inaction and lack of political initiative.

And if we take into account the polls, the population has the same opinion in relation to Labour. In the Guardian/ICM poll in September, Ed Miliband's party with 36 per cent has just a four point lead, down from seven-points in June, over the Tories. The lead over the Conservatives is decreasing as the Tories claim there are signs of a "growing" economy.

Apparently, voters are choosing the Tory policy of austerity and cuts in the hope that the maintenance of economic growth will lead to better days, despite their current sacrifice. However, appearances are deceptive, because the current growth has feet of clay.

The attacks will increase

Nothing indicates that attacks on workers and the most vulnerable will decrease because of this growth. On the contrary, it is the success of these attacks that is promoting an improvement in the economic situation. Falling wages, worsening working conditions and increases in the intensity of work pleases capitalism. That's how profits increase, the stock market rises and the capitalists get richer.

Unemployment in Britain, with 11.5 million, has become permanent, with only 2.5m seeking employment. The latest release of the unemployment figures shows a 0.2 per cent decrease to 7.8 per cent.

But this does not expose that new jobs are mainly part-time or zero-hour contracts, which are growing in all businesses, in the big franchises of the services sector like Sports Direct, MacDonald's, Wetherspoons, Amazon, but exist also in hospitals and education and even Buckingham Palace.

At least half of the 145 UK universities and two-thirds of further education

colleges use zero hour contracts which do not guarantee work and often deny holiday and sick pay.

According to a survey by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development zero-hour contracts could affect 1 million of the labour market, but as new facts surface the figure of 6 million is realistic.

In this scenario it is difficult to believe that workers prefer Tories to Labour. So the question is: why is Labour falling in the polls and why is the failure of Ed Miliband taken for granted?

Labour defends the same economic policy as Tories

A major problem for the lack of Labour's political initiative is that its shadow cabinet supports the same political attacks on workers as the Tories do and merely criticises excesses or the pace at which cuts are made. They say the cuts are going too far and too fast.

Facing the scandal of the zero-hours contracts, the Labour Shadow Business Secretary, Chuka Umunna, limited his statement to say that they should be the exception to the rule: "While some employees welcome the flexibility of such contracts, for many zero-hours contracts leave them insecure, unsure of when work will come, and undermining

family life".

Even Miliband at the TUC Congress said that zero-hour contracts were acceptable for some jobs, like supply teachers and "young people working in bars".

They merely want to replace the Tory economic policy of low interest rates, quantitative easing and house speculation. Michael Meacher, a firm supporter of Miliband, wants to expand the economy by directing funds from quantitative easing into public-private partnerships and instructing the state-owned banks to lend more.

The only complaint Labour can raise to explain their lack of political initiative is that the Tories robbed all their ideas.

Workers abandon Labour, it's time for a new workers' party

The explanation for Labour's decline in the recent polls should not be thought of as a sign of approval for Tory policy. The workers are abandoning the Labour Party because they know it is no longer their party.

A poll conducted with 712 Unite members between 10 and 17 July 2013 showed that only 12 per cent would pay to join the Labour party as an individual member, if contributions to the political fund no longer meant automatic



Mobilise to protest at the Tory Party conference - to fight not to ask

affiliation, 73 per cent said they would not. But astonishingly 61 per cent said neither Ed Miliband nor Len McCluskey really represented them or the things they cared about. This means that neither Labour nor their union leaders represent workers.

The response of the Labour Party has been to quickly move to the right, trying to break its links with the trade unions and gain votes from the middle class. Recently the shadow Work and Pensions Secretary, Liam Byrne, criticised Tesco and Next for hiring foreign workers, trying to revive their xenophobic campaign of "English jobs for English workers".

Byrne also criticised the Tories for wasting £1.4 billion in implementing its policy of cutting benefits. But, far from asserting that Labour would end the cuts if in government, Byrne said he wanted to "bring social security spending under control". "We will have to be laser-focused on how we spend every pound" he said.

As stated in *The Guardian*, 1 August, "The focus of Byrne is not challenging the substance of reforms... but criticism of his failure to deliver them properly".

He was following the Miliband line, who had already stated at the conference to make his position crystal clear.

"We stand to inherit a very difficult situation. After three wasted years of lost growth, far from balancing the books, in 2015 there is now set to be a deficit of over £90bn ... We won't be able to reverse all the spending cuts and tax rises the Tories have pushed through. And we will have to govern with less money around.

"The next Labour government will have to make cuts, too. Because while jobs and growth are vital to getting the deficit down - something this government has never understood - they cannot magic the whole deficit away at a stroke".

There is only one answer to Labour's preparation for social war against workers, build a new workers' party, where the rank and file decide. Where there is no room for the unions' bureaucracies or Labour politicians. Where the goal is to defeat the austerity and benefits cut policy of governments, whether Tory or Labour.



The TUC is calling a march and rally on 29 September at the Tory Party Conference. 50,000 people are expected to attend the march and protest against the destruction of the NHS, the benefits cuts and the coalition government's austerity policy.

The Con-Dem government plans to replace the NHS system of public funding and mainly public provision and public administration with a competitive market of corporate providers. In such a system the government finances but does not provide health care, a system equivalent to Medicare and Medicaid schemes in the US, where millions of people are not assisted by public health.

It is the obligation of every left militant, community activist or trade unionist to be there. And, most of all, the workers who are striking and fighting the government and the capitalists for pay rise, pensions and better working conditions.

The health workers have special reasons to protest. The privatisation of the NHS that is taking place will cut thousands of jobs, reduce wages and open the sector for widespread zero-hour contracts.

TUC's call is not enough

The TUC want us to, "tell the Conservative to save our NHS, defend jobs and services and stop austerity". We think it's not enough to ask the hangman not to cut our neck, or the pickpocket not to rob our wallet, or the boss to

maintain our job. We need to fight and defeat them with the arms we have.

And, for the working class, the most powerful weapon we have is to prevent the capitalists from profiting and the government from ruling by organising a national day of strikes and defeat them by means of direct action.

Unfortunately, the TUC refuses to do this (read the article on TUC congress). It is up to the working class rank and file to put pressure on their leadership and build a national day of strikes from the bottom up.

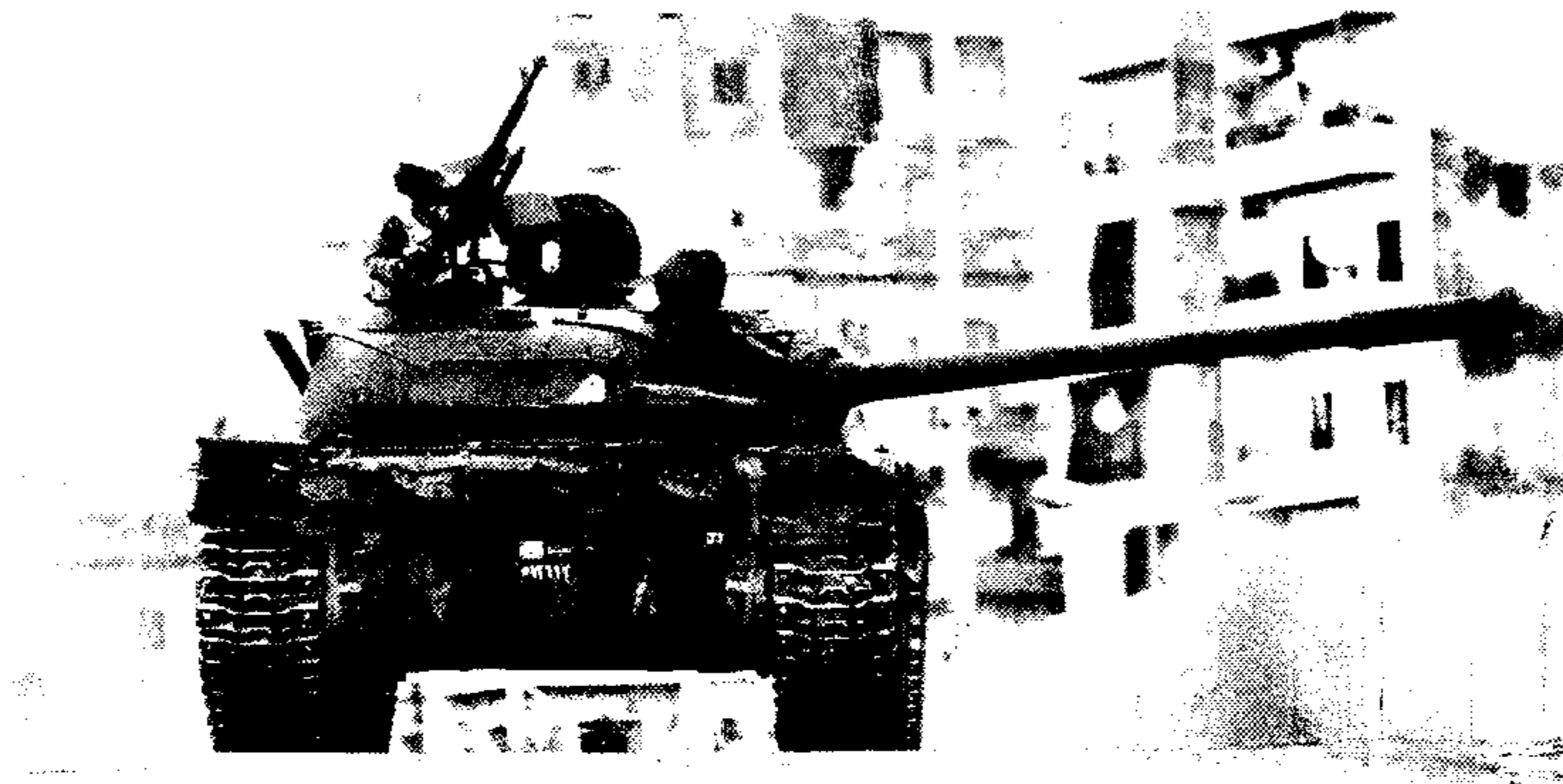
The Labour and the demonstration

Will the Labour and Ed Miliband be on the speakers' platform? No matter what happens, the workers cannot trust in the Labour pledges of better days after the 2015 general election. They have already said that the benefit cuts will be maintained, the NHS privatisation will not be reversed and even zero-hour contracts will have the "right" to exist in some sectors under a Labour government.

We will be at the march to protest against the Tories, but also against Labour's betrayal. But, at the same time, we will be talking to every worker and person who wants to fight and saying, "don't wait for the elections, organise in the workplaces, in the schools and in the communities for a national day of strikes now"!

Out with Bashar al-Assad! No to Imperialist Intervention!

International Secretariat (IWL-FI)



This article was published on 31 August before the US, the Syrian regime and al-Assad started to make a deal.

The governments of the main imperialist powers, including Turkey, are preparing a military attack on Syria. Even after the defeat in the British Parliament, which voted against the participation of England in the conflict, the Obama administration stated that it was prepared to make a unilateral US military action, possibly, with the support of France.

Imperialism cynically claims that armed intervention would have “humanitarian” aims and that it would be to “protect Syrian civilians”, using as a pretext the brutal and despicable attack with chemical weapons on the outskirts of Damascus, which killed at least 1,400 people.

In the context of our full and unconditional support to the struggle of the Syrian people to overthrow al-Assad, we say that any intervention by imperialism is not or will not be for this purpose.

Its intervention will not be “humane”. It will not be to “save lives” or to “defend human rights”, nor for “the triumph of the revolution”. If the US really wanted to help the Syrian rebels to topple al-Assad, it would have already provided them, a long time ago, with heavy weapons such as aeroplanes, tanks and anti-aircraft missiles.

Imperialism's hypocrisy has no limits. While Syria's President Bashar al-Assad was able to ensure stability, Obama and the key European powers closed their eyes to all the repression and crimes of his bloody dictatorship.

It withdrew its support from the dictator – not the regime itself – only after realising that maintaining it against the armed struggle of the Syrian people had become unsustainable. And from the point of view of the main interest of the US, which is to stabilise the country and defeat the revolutions throughout the region.

However, the position of imperialism in favour of the departure of al-Assad does not mean that it has abandoned the policy of negotiating a way out, as far as possible, between the regime and the pro-imperialist sectors of the opposition, such as the Syrian National Council (SNC).

US imperialism seeks control. It will try to prevent the Syrian people and the rebels, who are in the frontline of the fight and whose martyrs are giving their sweat and blood for the revolution, from governing after the defeat of the tyrant.

Instead, they will disarm all revolutionaries in order to have a military monopoly and to “stabilise” the country in their interests, using if necessary, puppet governments. But there is nothing that says the realisation of these plans will be an easy task for

imperialism given that a great revolution is taking place in Syria and all over the region.

Over recent months the military regime made great advances, recovering strategic positions which had fallen into rebel hands. But these victories were sustained mainly because of the superiority of armaments and the material assistance received from the external help of Hezbollah, Iran and Russia. Without this military superiority and foreign aid, it would be very difficult for these advances to happen.

This can be seen in the difficulties the regime has in maintaining large-scale ground operations with its own troops, since some do not have the same morals and discipline as the rebels have. Therefore they make systematic use of sieges supported by airstrikes or missiles, which do not require direct combat. There are reports claiming that the regime is facing many difficulties and has to impose internal repression to avoid a mass desertion of its soldiers and officers.

This explains why the different forces of resistance continue to control a significant part of the territory. The Free Syrian Army (FSA), despite the recent counter-offensive in which they lost lives and materials, still control whole districts on the outskirts of Damascus.

The aim of the escalation in attacks, including poisonous gas, cannot be other

than for extermination, that is to clean Damascus of the rebels and take over by using terror on the entire population.

Imperialism, facing the dynamics of unpredictable consequences, is trying to solve in its favour a situation that is dominated by an entrenched civil war which has dragged on for two years.

It will interfere to demonstrate its military presence in the region and force a negotiation with al-Assad, for a "transition" that will stabilise the country and the region. An important condition for further imperialist plunder. If negotiation is not possible, it will try to impose a new government without al-Assad, under the direct control of Imperialism

Supporters of Castro-Chavez, use the threats of imperialist intervention to

justify further support to the genocidal dictator – just as they supported the bloodthirsty Gaddafi. They argue that if al-Assad is attacked it is because he is a "leading anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist". They are appealing to the people and the left to support and unite with al-Assad, for his alleged role in a "resistance" to imperialism.

But reality is the exact opposite. The regime of the al-Assad clan is not "anti-imperialist". It has been an important part of the scheme of Zionist imperialist domination in the region, especially in the last few years, a faithful supporter of neoliberal policies of the IMF and a guarantor of the boundaries of the Nazi-Zionist state, against whom there has not been a single shot fired in 40 years, while it massacred its own people.

We are totally against imperialist intervention, but this cannot lead us to support the bloody dictatorship of al-Assad, which slays its people, who are bravely fighting to end his regime. This is what the supporters of Castro-Chavism do, and have thus become accomplices to the horrendous crimes of these dictators.

It is necessary that in the imperialist countries we destroy the campaign to justify military intervention, and that we mobilise against governments that prepare plans for armed intervention.

The solution must be different: full support to the rebels. That means sending, unconditionally and immediately, heavy weapons and materials such as medical drugs and equipment, for the resistance in Syria. It also means the opening of national borders to allow the passage of aid and those who are willing to fight against al-Assad.

At the same time we demand, in all countries, the immediate breaking of diplomatic and trade relations with the Syrian dictatorship.

Out with al-Assad. No to imperialist intervention!

Mobilise in all countries to support the revolution in Syria and against the imperialist invasion plans!

We demand the breaking of diplomatic and trade relations with the Syrian dictatorship!

For the governments of the world to send weapons and medicines to the Syrian rebels!

For the triumph of the Syrian revolution!



Socialist Party bows to Western media

Socialist Voice comment

The Socialist Party published a statement on 28 August, "No to imperialist intervention in Syria", we agree only with the title. The statement is a complete capitulation to the Western media which states that the Syrian struggle is a sectarian conflict, in order to deter support for the working class and their revolution.

For the SP "the uprising against Assad's dictatorship has been skewed now into a sectarian conflict". Therefore their only concern is the possible imperialist intervention – opposing Western intervention is correct. They say the internal conflict there should be a "human response" and not a revolutionary one.

The SP's second argument is that there is no real working class interest in Syria.

For them, "There is no shortcut to the building of... independent working class forces that can unite the poor and oppressed in their common interests against both the forces of imperialism and their semi-feudal and capitalist allies in the region".

We agree that there is no revolutionary leadership in Syria with a socialist revolutionary program, but revolutions are as they are: they do not follow a predetermined pattern. It is necessary to look at them objectively, to see how they develop in practice. The Syrian people cannot build a revolutionary leadership according to someone's schema, it has to be built in the midst of government bombings and the fight for al-Assad's overthrow. That's what we aim for.

Our main criticism is that the SP does

not say a word in support of the fall of al-Assad. They only say that it would be worst without him, "... the dictatorial and repressive Qatari and Saudi regimes who would welcome a defeat of Assad as a blow against Iran and Hezbollah". Or "given the significant funding and growth of Al-Qa'ida in Syria there are also serious dangers of a 'blowback' of increased terrorism".

So, it does not matter which side wins the war, because "there is no real capitalist solution to this conflict", which means that only when the SP builds a revolutionary party to fight for socialism the "real solution" would come. For us, on the contrary, the revolutionary party is to be built now on the ground and on one side: that of the revolutionary masses against al-Assad.

Where is Amarildo?

Oliver Tressell



Where is Amarildo? This is the being asked all over Brazil. Amarildo Dias de Souza was a casual construction worker with no labour contract, father of six and resident of the Rocinha favela, Rio de Janeiro. He was last seen on 14 July as he was taken by the UPP (Police Pacification Unit), which part of the Military Police. Amarildo lived in a shack and earned just 300 reais per month (£75). Now his family goes hungry.

On the day he was seized the two cameras installed in the area "coincidentally" did not work. Whilst there is no proof, it is very likely he was killed in the police station.

Amarildo was black, poor and a slum resident, and this case would normally pass by unnoticed but for the continuation of street protests that began in June.

Since his disappearance, social networks have been full of photos of people holding placards asking the question, Where is Amarildo?

The protests have spread internationally with support from England, USA, Spain and the Lebanon among others. It has also been a focal point in many of the street protests still taking place across the country and has even reached Globo News, the main Brazilian TV network.

UPP 'pacify' for World cup

The government of Rio de Janeiro state, headed by Sergio Cabral of the right-wing Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB) use the UPP to "pacify" poor neighbourhoods. Police units are installed to allegedly fight drug dealer.

The reality is very different. The real reason for using the UPP is in order to "rebuild" Rio, push out the poor and black people, and open the land for

vast speculation, especially in the run up to the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics.

This has resulted in a genocide against young black men in Rio's poor neighbourhoods, with more than 10,000 murders in the last decade (three murders per day).

The UPP is used for the criminalisation of poverty and the removal of "undesirables" from potentially lucrative residential zones. Rocinha, for example, is located on a hill beside the most valuable neighbourhood of Rio, Barra da Tijuca.

Sergio Cabral is also a target of the mobilisations. The PMDB is allied to the Worker's Party (PT) in the Federal government, ruled by Dilma Rousseff.

Military Police

In June, spontaneous protests took place across the country to fight an increase in public transport fares and were met with brutal police repression. Because of inflation, unemployment and many other social problems the aims of the protests expanded but the level of police repression has remained, leading to calls for the demilitarisation of the police.

The goal of the military police is to oppress any protest that occurs. They must be dismantled and replaced with a civil police force, controlled by the population, with union rights for police officers and for the election of senior officers by the people.

- For the resignation of Sergio Cabral, Governor of Rio de Janeiro
- Justice for the family of Amarildo (and all other "Amarildos")
- End the UPP and the military police
- End the genocide of the black community

Quilombo Race and Class, in London

Marcos Margarido



Tamiris Rizzo, a 23 years old from Brazil, was in Britain following an invitation from the RMT transport union, to attend a TUC BEM (Black and Ethnic Minority) fringe meeting on 8 September.

She is a leader of Quilombo Race and Class, a Black organisation affiliated to the trade union federation CSP-Conlutas.

Tamiris spoke on the mass movement that erupted in Brazil in June (see the last issue of *Socialist Voice*) and the fight for Amarildo (see story on this page).

After the successful meeting of 50 people, Tamiris expressed her feelings, "It was a unique moment in the history of my activism. Despite my initial insecurity (since it was the first time I had to speak in a Congress in a foreign language), it did not take long to 'feel at home', surrounded by black women and men and immigrants from various countries. I could see, understand and experience the similarities of the manifestations of racism here and in Brazil".

Tamiris also participated in a number of activities related to the trade unions or race issues, most sponsored by RMT branches. She participated in the anti-fascist march and met Sisters Against the EDL and others. Two of the most significant were the meeting of the national Black and Ethnic Minorities Committee of the RMT and meeting with various representatives of the pan-African movement in England.

In all of them, the report on Amarildo's case caused excitement and indignation. Photos with posters saying, "Where is Amarildo?" symbolised the unity of the English Black people with their brothers in Brazil.



Bill Hunter's Archives**Rank and file movements in the Second World War***(Continued from back page)*

of the trade unions”.

Government blames Trotskyists for strikes

The capitalist press had conducted a campaign against Trotskyists from time to time, but at the end of 1943 and the beginning of 1944 the campaign became more rabid and widespread when the government prepared further anti-working class legislation to curb industrial and political unrest. Bevin was about to introduce a new regulation, 1A(a), which further increased the curbs on strikes and made illegal any proposal of strike action outside of an officially and legally constituted trade union meeting. In the press campaign, Trotskyists were accused of being responsible for the growing number of strikes. It was said they were the ‘hidden hand’ behind the big wave of industrial struggle. The Daily Mail of 7 October 1943 declared that the Trotskyists:

“...play on the weariness of workers who have had four years of war and exaggerate grievances into a campaign to suppress the workers after the war. Why they have been allowed to have so much success is incomprehensible”.

Trotskyists arrested

Four Trotskyists, Jock Haston, Roy Tearse, Heaton Lee and Ann Keen, were arrested and charged with conspiracy under the Trades Disputes Act (1927) and with furthering an illegal strike. Under the Trades Disputes Act, a punitive measure against the trade unions passed after the General Strike, an illegal strike was one which “is not a trade dispute within the trade and is designed to coerce the government”.

These four Trotskyists were the first victims of this Act, which had originally been denounced as an infamous attack on workers’ rights by the very Labour and trade union leaders in the Cabinet which used it in 1944. The Newcastle jury flung out the conspiracy and incitement charges, even though, in a summing up hostile to the four accused, the judge directed them to support the charges. The Trotskyists were however found guilty of ‘furthering an illegal strike’, even though, in a previous judgement in the House of Lords it had been ruled that a strike could only be ‘furthered’ if it was already taking place and not before

it had begun.

Letters to jail

Letters sent by Rachel Ryan, who then wrote daily to her sister, Ann Keen, in Durham Jail. In a letter dated 18 April, the news is about Regulation 1A(a) and how it appears to be directed against the whole of the workers:

“Anyone who speaks for strike action, however peaceably, except at a TU branch meeting, is liable to £500 fine and/or five years penal servitude. This is really vicious and will shake the whole of the labour movement.

The letter ends by saying that the TUC ‘have apparently’ accepted Regulation 1A(a). The next letter, dated 24 April, reports busworkers’ strikes and the solidarity shown by soldiers who were being compelled to drive and conduct buses:

“The London busmen have gone back to work today, but the Manchester busmen are still out. They are all giving a magnificent answer to Bevin. I don’t know whether you saw the item in the Herald to say that [with] the fares which the soldiers had collected on the buses, amounting to about four pounds at one garage, they had taken the drivers and conductresses out to the local pub and treated them and had a good old sing-song together. Real fraternisation all right.

“I expect you have seen the Daily Worker, although coming out mildly against the new legislation as not necessary, since the Defence Regulations and the E[ssential] Works] O[orders] could be strengthened, have lost no time in trying to incite the Government to use the new legislation against us in their article on the bus strike”.

There was a great deal of support from

activists in the trade union movement and in the left of the Labour Party in the campaign against the arrests.

All the sentences were later quashed on appeal. The state and press propaganda did not arouse a great deal of hostility to Trotskyism among the working class in the industrial areas. There was wide support among trade unionists for the campaign against the arrests...

To be sure, the state was worried about the increase of struggle, particularly among the miners, and nervous that the circulation and influence of Trotskyist propaganda could rapidly advance. But the state’s main attack was directed against the workers’ increasing combativity, mainly in engineering and mining, and the aim of the witch hunt against Trotskyists and of the arrests was to split and push back those who were struggling. The propaganda about subversives and the ‘hidden hand’ was meant to build up the atmosphere for further drastic measures against strike action, which Ernest Bevin as Minister of Labour was preparing to introduce.

Before I leave the 1944 arrests there is a story to relate of a significant victory against our Stalinist branch president, Len Hines, who was a leading Communist Party member in the area. He was convenor of Lincoln Cars factory, which became part of Ford’s and was at the Chiswick end of the Great West Road. Members had to attend the Amalgamated Engineering Union branch meetings in order to pay their subscriptions. There would be 60 or 70 workers seated in the room with a queue at the back paying subscriptions. Hines dominated the meeting until we began to win support and eventually defeated him on a number of resolutions, including backing for the four Trotskyists who were arrested.

Lifelong Apprenticeship - Life and Times of a Revolutionary. Bill Hunter

These pages are crowded with thumbnail sketches of Trotskyist and working class fighters of the period before, during and after the second world war.

Lifelong Apprentice shows Hunter’s part in the international struggles of the Fourth International against capitalism and Stalinism, and includes an inside account of the Trotskyists’ response to the 1956-57 crisis in the Communist Party. It ends with the launching of the Socialist Labour League in 1959.

Price £8 including P&P 15L, c/o News from Nowhere, 96 Bold Street, Liverpool L1 4HY

Bill Hunter's Archives

Rank and file movements in the 2nd World War

The phrase "the spirit of 1945" has inspired many activists this year. Ken Loach's film of the same name led to discussions of what that spirit was.

But what is less known is the deep processes taking place in the working class during the Second War World. There was a determined effort by militant workers to break Labour from the coalition national government and to use strikes to fight for their conditions against the Labour Party, the Communist Party and the trade union leadership whose line was: don't strike support the war, we are all in it together against fascism. Meanwhile the capitalists continued to get fat on war profits.

Then, as today new rank and file organisations needed to develop if workers were going to fight and win against the employers and government. It continued an old tradition of rank and file actions.

Post-war history is shaped in part by rank and file committees expressing independent struggle against union leaderships who would not fight, who were opposed for example to calling a general strike and in the Second World War any strike!

Here we re-publish Bill Hunter on the 1944 "Apprentices' strike". We are not in a World War but there is a brutal social war taking place. Rank and file struggle is vital today as the TUC majority back the Labour Party just as they did then.

Today we must fight to place decision making into the hands of mass meetings of the rank and file.

Socialist Voice will continue to publish Bill's writings on rank and file movements in future publications.

In *Marxists in the Second World War*, Labour Review, December 1958, Bill explains about the rising movement of the class, "Working days lost by strikes, which fell to 940,000 in 1940, rose to 1,530,000 in 1942, 1,810,000 in 1943 and

SUPPLEMENT TO
**SOCIALIST
APPEAL**
ORGAN OF WORKERS INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE
FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

DURHAM MINERS STRIKE THREE PITS OUT

BY ANN KEEN
LUMBERMEN HAVE BEEN CALLED ON STRIKE FOR THE LAST THREE WEEKS FOR THE JUSTLY DEMANDS FOR A 10% INCREASE IN WAGES GOING IN FOR SOME TIME BEFORE THE WINTER HOLIDAYS FOR INCREASES IN THE PRICE OF SOME GOODS

SECOND FRONT WILL NOT END FASCISM

1,500 R.O.F.
WORKERS
STILL OUT

3,710,000 in 1944. By the beginning of 1944 the government was faced with the prospect of a general strike throughout the coalfields. In the last months of 1943 there had been a wave of strikes, most of them in defence of young workers who had been conscripted for underground work".

This story is from a chapter of Bill Hunter's *Lifelong Apprenticeship: Life and Times of a Revolutionary, Volume 1: 1920-1959*. It is about the struggle of young engineering workers against conscription to the coal mines and the way the State tried to prepare an attack on militant workers by blaming the strikes on Trotskyists.

Strikes in war challenged union leaderships

The Labour and trade union bureaucracy was extremely worried at the biggest wave of industrial action since the 1926 General Strike, and at the growing political movement of hostility to the political truce.

As we have seen, at the beginning of 1944 no fewer than 44 resolutions were tabled for the Whitsun Labour Party conference demanding the end of the coalition government. The following year this movement in the Labour Party was to eject the party's leaders from the Cabinet.

At the end of March 1944, 50,000 engineering apprentices went on strike. Their rank-and-file organisation, the 'Apprentices' Guild', which had begun on the Tyne, was demanding that Bevin,

the Minister of Labour, withdraw the new legislation that would conscript engineering apprentices into the mines, their names being chosen by ballot.

The Tyne Apprentices' Guild expressed the deep feelings of young workers who, living in a coal-mining area, had the common opinion that they would rather go into the army than down the pits. One of their leaflets declared:

"The Government has adopted, and is now enforcing, the so-called Ballot Scheme. By this scheme, which was introduced without consulting the lads who will be driven down the pits, they claim they will solve the coal crisis. But this dictatorial measure has been taken against lads 18 to 21 years of age, who cannot legally demonstrate their hostility to, and lack of confidence in, the infamous pit compulsion scheme, because we lack the elementary rights of the Parliamentary vote.

"We apprentices declare that it is the greedy coal-owners who are responsible for the present coal crisis. They have soaked the miners for generations, grown fat on the sweat, tears, blood and broken bones of the miners. They have allowed the machinery in their pits to become antiquated, outdated and unproductive in their lust for profit. But the government has consistently refused to take real compulsory measures against the coal-owners. It is against the mass of unprotected youth that further dictatorial measures are taken.

"The government must nationalise the pits and operate them under the control

(Continues on page 11)

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