

# Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



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For a workers' government

**Elections in  
Tunisia** page 3



**Greek workers  
fight back**  
pages 6-7

**AWL conference**  
page 10



## Bosses' Europe in chaos

**See page 5**

# WORKERS MUST REMAKE EUROPE

**Strike on 30 November! Fight the cuts!**

## What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

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



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

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

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

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

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

### We stand for:

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

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## Friends in high places

By Tom Unterrainer

Since leaving office in 2007, former prime minister Tony Blair has, according to the *Daily Telegraph*, amassed a £20 million fortune (estimates vary). How's he done it? Selling himself to the highest bidder.

On the very same day he handed over to Gordon Brown, Blair stepped into the job of official representative to the Middle East for the UN, EU, USA and Russia.

He then set about collecting a series of consultancies, advisory positions and board memberships for institutions like JP Morgan Chase, Zurich Financial Services and the UI Energy Corporation — a South Korean oil firm that operates in Northern Iraq.

He put himself on the "lecture circuit" where he imparts his wisdom at the cost of \$250,000 per ninety minutes.

Now he has set himself up as a "friend for hire". According to the *Telegraph* he "developed a relationship" with Kazakh president Nursultan Nazarbayev when he was prime minister. Now Nazarbayev is paying Blair to "improve [Kazakhstan's] standing in the West."

Nazarbayev runs one of the world's most oppressive governments. According to diplomatic cables released through Wiki Leaks, torture, abuse, suppression of democracy, the death penalty, political oppression, arbitrary arrest, corruption and discrimination are hallmarks of his

regime.

Exactly how is Blair to "finesse" these realities? He could simply lie or explain such state driven measures as people trafficking as geographical and cultural quirks. But a simply internet search would reveal these facts very quickly.

But Blair will not have to "explain away" the realities of Nazarbayev's despotism. The people Nazarbayev wants to do business with are not troubled by such things. Nazarbayev needs Blair to open doors to the JP Morgan's of this world.

With friends like Tony Blair, Nazarbayev will be going places. With friends like Nazarbayev, Blair will continue to line his pockets.

## Wage cuts for 90% of us

A study conducted by the GMB union has revealed that real wages have fallen for 90% of the UK workforce since 2007.

The study provides a breakdown of by occupation, and reveals that workers in energy and skilled manufacturing workers such as moulders, core makers and die casters have suffered losses of more than 20%.

Company secretaries and printing workers have also seen their wages fall by between 15-20%.

More information: see [tinyurl.com/gmbstudy](http://tinyurl.com/gmbstudy)

## No to "work for your dole"

On 19 October the Boycott Workfare coalition protested outside a conference for businesses involved in implementing the government's Work Programme and other welfare reforms.

Dressed as prisoners in a chain gang, adorned with corporate logos, the protest was to highlight how big business "gets something for nothing" under the new measures

People claiming Job

Seekers Allowance could now be mandated to undertake up to 30 hours unpaid work per week for up to four weeks.

An artist also invited passers by to take part in her installation about mandatory work activity, paying them 3p a minute to undertake repetitive tasks such as litter-picking.

This is the same rate as people forced to do workfare in the UK currently receive in benefits.  
• [www.boycottworkfare.org](http://www.boycottworkfare.org)

## Post-riots clampdown is class-hate orgy

By Colin Foster

New government figures show that the clampdown by police and courts after the August riots has been a class-hate orgy.

The riots didn't help the working-class areas in which they took place. The clampdown is doing worse.

66% of the school-age people arrested in the riots were officially classified as having special educational needs. 33% of those aged between 10 and 17 had been excluded from school during the previous year.

Only 13% have been officially tagged as "gang members". These are not hardened anti-social thugs: just young people getting the roughest deal from the

Rioters were people who are getting the roughest deal from the system

system — young people whose families are losing jobs, living standards, decent housing, benefits, and access to education through the Government's cuts.

The response of the cops and the courts has been to block these young people's

access to a decent life even more solidly, by extra-long jail sentences.

Last month the *Guardian* reported that 315 of 1,715 defendants from the riots had so far been sentenced. Other cases are going to the crown courts, with longer delays and longer jailed terms to come.

Even so far, the average sentence for violent disorder has been 10.4 months compared with 5.3 last year. The average for theft has been almost three times longer than last year.

During 2010, just under a quarter of all burglaries dealt with at magistrates' courts in England and Wales led to an immediate jail sentence.

For those arrested in the riots, the percentage jailed has been double that.

## Dale Farm eviction

By Gerry Bates

Police and bailiffs finally succeeded in breaking the resistance of traveller families and their supporters and, on Wednesday 19 October, began clearing plots at the Dale Farm campsite.

Over 100 riot police were mobilised to aid with the eviction and tasers were used on travellers and activists defending the site.

Electricity to the caravans was disconnected, endangering the life of a man whose defibrillator stopped working. He was later rushed to hospital.

34 people were arrested.

Bailiffs also breached a High Court order stipulating that they must give 48 hours' notice before commencing any demolition of caravans or chalets.

Activists will meet on Saturday 5 November in Whitechapel to discuss building ongoing solidarity with traveller communities. That task now looks ever more important.

• For more information, see [bit.ly/rQIz9H](http://bit.ly/rQIz9H)

## Lambeth: save children's services!

The London borough of Lambeth has some of the worst levels of child poverty and youth unemployment in the UK.

Yet the local Labour Council are slashing services for children and young people.

Those services have already been cut by over £12 million worth of cuts in 2010-11. They have almost destroyed the Adventure Playground Service, restricted opening hours in One O'clock Clubs and carried out mass sackings. We are now facing a further £13 million in cuts.

Join the demonstration, to demand Lambeth stop making cuts!

Save Youth Services,  
Save Children's Services,  
Save Free Education.  
Saturday 19 November  
1.30pm, Windrush  
Square, Brixton. March  
to Max Roach Park

# Islamists gain in Tunisian elections

After elections in Tunisia the neo-liberal, Islamist party Nahda will probably be the biggest party in the new Constituent Assembly. As of 25 October the votes are still being counted, but Nahda is estimated to have won around a third of the vote.

The following article was written by Wafa Guiga, a Tunisian activist and member of the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (NPA) living in France.

Some days away from the election of the Constituent Assembly, the political debate is focused on the question of religious identity, in order to hide the social and democratic problems

which persist despite the fall of Ben Ali.

Press reports about Tunisia only concern the Salafist demonstrations. The broadcasting on a private TV channel of the movie Persepolis by French-Iranian Marjane Satrapi was the pretext for violent demonstrations at first by dozens and then by hundreds of Salafists, who went so far as to threaten the Chief Executive of the TV channel with death.

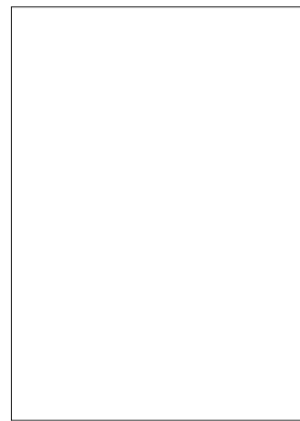
One week before the election, the public debate was reduced to the question of religious identity.

That the representation of God as an old bearded man should provoke such violence shows that

Tunisian society contained a level of obscurantism that the dictatorship covered up by force and repression.

This episode worked to the advantage of Nahda (close to the Muslim Brotherhood), which appears — by comparison [to the Salafists] — to be moderate and non-violent!

The struggle against obscurantist ideas is urgent today, in a country where the Islamists are trying to take over the revolutionary process. Meanwhile, the manipulation of the identity issue, using the far right, is a well-known method! We know how useful it is for maintaining the established order and for making people forget economic and social issues.



Unemployment is as grave as ever in Tunisia. Record inflation is affecting staple food prices. All sorts of speculation has created a milk shortage in a country which has exported it for 20 years. The country is

groaning under the odious debt acquired by Ben Ali. Ben Ali and Co's ill-gotten wealth has still not been handed over to the population.

In this context, the provisional government is committing the country to the "Jasmine Plan", a five-year "relaunch" plan, of €60 billion, with a top-to-bottom restructuring of work. A plan which will force the country further into debt... the example of Greece shows us what the consequences could be!

Police repression is [also] going on, with arrests and attacks on political activists. The media is still running official propaganda.

Faced with this situation,

the mobilisations are continuing, even if they are still dispersed.

Strikes in the banking sector, among artisans in the Medina of Tunis, in textile factories, in the post and the rails are still demanding an improvement in working conditions and an increase in salaries.

The return of students to university in October saw students fighting in several campuses to get rid of old RCDist university managers.

**The leadership of the [trade union federation] UGTT is calling for the strikes to stop until 23 October, entertaining some illusions in the results of the elections.**

## US troops to quit Iraq

By Martin Thomas

On Friday 21 October US president Barack Obama announced that the 46,000 US troops still in Iraq (down from a peak of 170,000) will all leave the country by 31 December 2011.

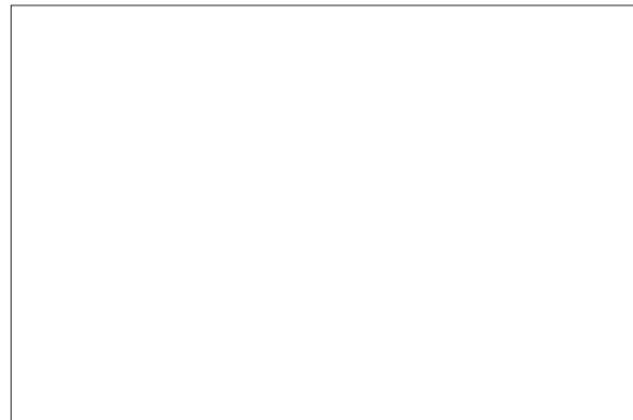
The US had been negotiating to keep 30,000 troops and some bases in the country, and then at least to keep 3,000 trainers. In the end it has had to comply with the letter of the deal which George W Bush signed with the Iraqi government in late 2008 after first and unsuccessfully (in summer 2008) trying for a deal which would license US troops to remain in Iraq for many years, in large numbers and with large powers.

The aim of the arrogant and over-confident US government which invaded Iraq in March 2003, and then held it under US military occupation for several years, was to establish a regime there which would be a stable US ally in the Middle East and a bridgehead for US efforts in the region.

It failed. Iran has more influence in today's Iraq than the USA has.

That spectacular failure has broken a cycle of US policy which started, as Stalinism in Europe collapsed, with the USA's easy victory in the Kuwait war in 1991. The cycle proceeded through its fairly easy victory over Kosova in 1999 and what seemed, at first sight, to be another easy victory in Afghanistan in 2001.

The impact of the economic crisis since 2008, heavier in the USA than in other countries, has combined with the USA's failure in Iraq, and the collapse of its intervention in Afghanistan into a



Obama's withdrawal of troops coincides with the relative decline of the US economy

quagmire, to reduce the USA's clout in the world.

Writers have been proclaiming the relative decline of the USA since the early 1970s. Despite a relative decline on many economic measures, in fact the USA retained or even increased its global strategic, political, financial, and technological clout into the first years of the 21st century.

The USA is still the world's biggest economy, and by far its biggest military power. But relative decline now seems established.

US influence in Iraq will not vanish. The US embassy in Baghdad is gigantic, covering an area roughly equivalent to the whole space between Parliament Square, Charing Cross, and Buckingham Palace, and surrounded by high walls five metres thick. Thousands of private US security guards will continue to operate in Iraq.

But the USA could not govern a large urbanised country by direct military rule, in the manner that the old British Empire ran many countries. It never even tried to do that. And it did not have enough clout and influence to develop a reliable and solid pro-US Iraqi political force

able to govern Iraq.

Iraq fell into sectarian civil war in 2006. The US troop "surge", in 2007, and deals made by the US with Sunni Arab forces anxious about Shia domination in Iraq, helped calm that.

The result was to deliver an at least semi-governable Iraq to a coalition of Shia Islamist parties and Kurdish nationalists.

Iraqi oil revenues have been running at an average of about \$33 billion a year since mid-2007, compared to about \$12 billion in 2003-7.

Civilian deaths from militia violence total 1,105 so far in 2011, as against 2,500 in 2010 and 34,500 in 2006.

As of March 2010, elec-

tricity was available 19.5 hours a day in Baghdad, up from a low of 4.4 hours in January 2007, and output has continued to increase. As of early 2011, about 70% of the population had access to drinkable water, up from 22% in early 2008.

A new Iraqi state has begun to consolidate. But:

- it is dominated by a patchwork coalition of sectarian-based Islamist parties, which draw their votes heavily (though not entirely) through sectarian headcounts;
- many unresolved flashpoints remain, particularly in disputes about demarcation between the autonomous Kurdish area of northern Iraq and the mainly-Arab south;
- social conditions, though less hellish than in 2006, are poor; many people who fled their homes in the worst times remain displaced;
- the new trade unions developed since 2003 still rely only on de facto tolerance, since the anti-union laws of the old Saddam Hussein dictatorship have still not been repealed and replaced by a democratic labour law.

**The unions are heavily harassed, and need our solidarity.**

### Demonstration in solidarity with the Syrian uprising

Saturday 29 October

Assemble 12 noon, Paddington Green, London W2

Arrive at Syrian Embassy in Belgrave Square 2.30pm

Called by Solidarity for Syria

## Qaddafi, looter and despot, dies

By Colin Foster

**Muammar Qaddafi, who was killed by Libyan rebels on Thursday 20 October after 42 years ruling the country as a despot, had more than \$200 billion stashed in bank accounts, investments, and property around the world, or about \$30,000 for every child, woman, and man in Libya.**

That is the latest estimate, from the *Los Angeles Times* (21 October).

The death of Qaddafi, in Sirte, led the National Transitional Council to declare final victory in the war which has raged in Libya since protests began there on 15 February, inspired by the upheavals in Tunisia and Egypt.

On 22 October, the general secretary of NATO announced that its air campaign in support of the rebels will wind down and close completely on 31 October.

### Libyan women oppose Sharia

**Mustafa Abdul-Jalil, chair of Libya's National Transitional Council, has declared that after the fall of the Qaddafi dictatorship the country will now be governed by Islamic Sharia law.**

Without any consultation or democratic decision, he announced on 23 October that current laws restricting (though not banning) polygamy will be scrapped, and that banks will be banned from charging interest.

According to Associated Press, "already several attacks have occurred on shrines in and around Tripoli belonging to Muslim sects [presumably Sufi] whose practices are seen as sacrilegious".

Lindsey German of the Stop The War Coalition, quoted approvingly by the *Morning Star*, saw "little reason for triumphalism" about the death of the despot. Like many on the left, STW and the *Morning Star* allowed their concern to strike a pose against NATO to drown any sympathy they had for the Libyan people.

*Socialist Worker* was a bit better, noting that "the fall of Qaddafi was welcomed across the Arab revolutions, with celebrations in Yemen, Egypt and Syria".

Rightly so. Qaddafi's dictatorship crushed all political organisation in Libya, and that makes the Libyan revolution vulnerable to confiscation by conservative forces such as Islamists. The fall of Qaddafi is only the start of a fight for democracy and workers' rights in the country.

**But it is also a boost to people fighting dictatorship in Syria and Yemen.**

Azza Magrur, a Libyan woman lawyer, riposted: "Whatever we gained in the past era we should not give it up. We don't want what happened in Iraq... There, women lost a lot. We should try for more".

Alaa Murabit of the Voice of Libyan Women said: "Women started this revolution. And suddenly they were now limited to wives, mothers, and sisters... I was extremely upset by this".

The overthrow of Qaddafi means that Libya's women, workers, and democrats have space to fight for rights.

**Abdul-Jalil's statement indicates that they have a formidable fight on their hands, and need our solidarity.**

# As Greece's rich flee, will the workers rush in?



Dave Osler

**It's not often that data from upmarket estate agents features prominently in Trotskyist newspapers. But comrades will thank luxury residential property specialist Knight Frank for the news that wealthy Greeks have spent £250 million on homes in London over the last year.**

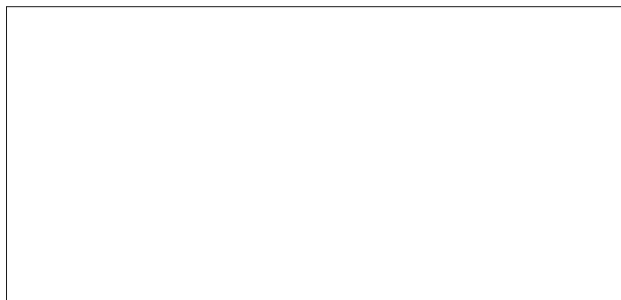
That's just for houses and flats worth £2 million and above, mind you. No doubt others will be slumming it in the kind of hovels that a measly £1 million buys you in the capital these days, but you get the general picture.

It's a safe bet that the story is the same in Paris and New York and other cities favoured by the world's super-rich, too. Anyone would think these guys are running away from something.

So why is a substantial proportion of the Greek bourgeoisie so obviously preparing to decamp? My guess would be that they have looked at the range of possibilities for their home country over the coming period, and decided that from their point of view, none of them are good.

Like many socialists, I have been transfixed by the media reports coming out of Athens in recent weeks. For the first time since Portugal in 1974, an advanced European capitalist country is gripped by a textbook prerevolutionary situation, of the kind debated at length in Comintern documents in 1920s. This sort of stuff isn't supposed to happen nowadays.

It would be wrong to read too much into footage of a few hundred youth in black balaclavas lobbing firebombs at



**Greek youth in action. But what happens next?**

Greek riot cops. And as we know from this country, even mass demonstrations and one-day stoppages organised through official trade union channels often function as safety valves as much as protests.

It is also a necessary corrective to point out that opinion polls demonstrate majority support for the pro-austerity parties. No doubt many of those directly suffering from mass job losses in the public sector, 42% youth unemployment, pension cuts and tax rises and three successive annual declines in GDP still buy into the line that this kind of economic medicine is unavoidable.

By contrast, the scores for the communist KKE and the more radical Syriza/Synaspismos coalition add up to around 20%. Seen from Britain, that might look substantial, but in the context, it is still limited.

So attempts to paint Greek society as one seething mass of unfocused discontent, just awaiting the intervention of a Trot sect lucking out by tabling the right transitional demand at the right time, are probably wide of the mark.

Nor will the policies advanced by the traditional left bring revolution any closer. The Stalinists endlessly reiterate the slogan of "popular power and a popular economy", what-

ever that means. An amendment urging everybody to be nice to their mum didn't make it into the final draft, apparently.

The Synaspismos leadership is heavy on rhetorical attacks on neoliberalism, but in practical terms, seems to see the issue of eurobonds as a workable solution. Even the internal opposition tendency around Panagiotis Lafazanis restricts itself to demanding an exit from the euro. Given the profundity of the debt crisis, that seems astoundingly moderate.

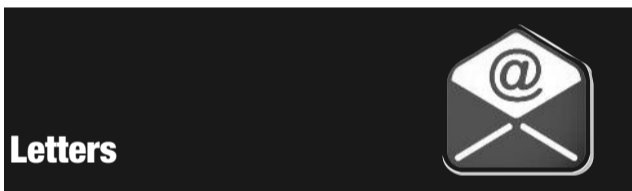
Beyond Synaspismos? From what I can make out, the far left is a splintered as it is throughout the rest of the continent. There is a section of the Fourth International, groups aligned with the SWP and SP in Britain, some sort of Healyite outfit, and no doubt other Trot organisations.

There are also some Maoist currents; apparently it is an unforgivable faux pas to confuse the Communist Party of Greece (Marxist-Leninist) with the entirely distinct Marxist-Leninist Party of Greece.

Are any of them serious political projects, or at least capable of becoming serious political projects? Are they simply "talk a good game" sectarians, or can they articulate socialist politics in even an approximately adequate fashion? Few of us in this country will have even the foggiest idea. But in the struggles ahead, we will no doubt find out.

While a re-run of 1917 is not inevitable, a number of mainstream Greek politicians privately view revolution as a distinct possibility, and some figures in both governing centre-left Pasok and centre-right opposition New Democracy have even said so in public. Even if things don't go the whole nine yards, revolutionaries could hardly ask for circumstances more conducive to growth.

**Meanwhile, the very rich are voting with their feet and setting up bolt holes should their worst fears be confirmed by events. If you have ever considered opening a Greek delicatessen in Mayfair, Knightsbridge or St John's Wood, now could be the time to act.**



Letters

## Schools without punishment

**Some readers have found Jayne Edwards' opposition to punishment in schools (*Solidarity* 220) naive and unrealistic.**

Yet, in Queensland, Australia, many of the most stressed schools use a student discipline scheme which explicitly rejects all punishment.

It does not abolish the dolours of capitalism and poverty, and it is far from perfect, but in my experience (across dozens of state high schools in and around Brisbane) it works better than punishment-based systems.

If students disrupt classes, the teacher (using a prescribed script) asks them what they are doing, what the rule is about that, and what they will be choosing to do if they disrupt again. Generally, schools using the system have an extremely short list of school rules, rather than the longer codes which seem common in Britain.

If they disrupt again, the teacher (again using a prescribed script) asks them what they are doing, what the rule is, and what they have now chosen to do.

By disrupting they will have chosen to go to a special classroom (usually called RTC) for the rest of that lesson. (Next lesson is a clean slate: they go to class as normal). In the RTC the students work on plans to return to the class they chose to quit.

After discussing their plans with the teacher, they return to class.

There are drawbacks. At the edges, students and teachers can slip into seeing the RTC as punishment. Sometimes (not often, even in very difficult cases), students refuse to go to the RTC, and then they will face consequences (in practice, a discussion with a deputy principal) which they find hard to tell apart from punishment.

The scheme, devised by an American psychologist, is expensive to run (training for the teachers; a teacher to run the RTC; back-up from school admin with the few students who end up spending a lot of time in the RTC).

Nevertheless, most harder-pressed state high schools use it, although they run on smaller budgets than British state schools (fewer new buildings, no interactive whiteboards, fewer computers, many fewer teaching assistants and other

back-up staff.) In Queensland, state high schools take only about 60% of students, the better-off 40% going to private schools (which get partial government funding).

State schools with fewer classroom management problems save money by not adopting the scheme; some with problems use cut-down versions of the scheme to reduce costs. The cut-down versions work much less well.

Even there, though, the approach is much less punitive than what I've seen in British state schools. Sending "misbehaving" students to stand in the corridor, for example, seems to be routine in London schools. Teachers in Queensland are not allowed to use humiliating punishments of that sort.

*Martin Thomas, Islington*

• The scheme was described in articles in the *TES* in 2005: [bit.ly/nopunish1](http://bit.ly/nopunish1), [bit.ly/nopunish2](http://bit.ly/nopunish2), [bit.ly/nopunish3](http://bit.ly/nopunish3)

## October and its discontents

**Paul Hampton (*Solidarity* 221) takes issue with my statement that Stalinism was born of the workers' movement.**

I'll reply to the accusation that I am misrepresenting Serge in a forthcoming article on Serge, Trotsky and Kronstadt but for now I would like to correct one misapprehension. Although I think that Serge's theoretical work on the USSR is important, I think his critical analysis of Stalinism actually lies in his fiction — specifically *The Case of Comrade Tulayev* and *Midnight In The Century*; the analysis of the rise of the bureaucracy was in earlier novels such as *Conquered City*. As Paul explicitly states I shouldn't be using Serge as some kind of mask for my own views. So here we go.

Firstly, I think that Trotsky never understood the nature of Stalinism. He simply couldn't understand why the "highest mediocrity" of the party [Stalin] and his acolytes could destroy a revolution from within. This is because he was viewing October through the lens of previous bourgeois revolutions and of course how could he not? He was trying to make a diagnosis and a prognosis with a model that history had given him. This also led him to abdicate arrogantly from the struggle at decisive moments.

Secondly, the development of new class forces as Paul rightly points out is critical. Classes are made and self-made and constantly in a process of recomposition. However what Paul conveniently tries to forget is that most of the Left Opposition came to see Stalinism as a bureaucracy which had swung to the pole of the workers and the peasants by the late twenties and that "primitive socialist accumulation" and the dispossession of the kulaks were seen as "Trotsky-

ist" policies adopted by Stalin as he swung away from the influence of Bukharin, Rykov and the pro-peasant wing of the party.

Neither the capitulators nor Trotsky saw what was really happening — the revolution had been betrayed (but from within, not without) and it had no specific ideology except that of a peculiar, monstrous, bureaucratic "socialism".

Thirdly, the key point, Stalinism was an extension of October in new directions and not a counter-revolution. October was an adventure and a gamble. It failed and the tiny working class which had forged that revolution was destroyed creating a monstrous, hybrid social formation that could not move forward to socialism. Others, like Luxemburg, warned of imminent despotism. As the revolution fought for its life it committed crimes and a nascent totalitarianism was born in the cellars of the Cheka.

Perhaps the only hope for this revolution in 1921 was to combat these tendencies within the party as the party began to be taken cell by cell by the Stalinist bureaucracy: with political liberties, trade union organisation, the reform of the party apparatus, and so on. The forms and trappings of revolutionary Marxism shrouded the deeper nature of the emergent class dictatorship of the bureaucracy; it was a summation and extension of all that had gone before, not some kind of decisive break with the Bolshevik tradition. It was a scene of almost tragic grandeur. The first workers' state destroying itself; a left opposition exemplifying the highest form of humanity dying in the prison camps of Stalin; a revolution made by them and destroying them.

The consequence was a century of almost complete defeat for the working class. In retrospect the filth that accrued to the Marxist tradition because of Stalinism was not the least important aspect of that defeat. Better that October had done without the Cheka and gone the way of the Paris Commune — to a different defeat but one which inspires — rather than paving the way for totalitarian darkness and genocide. Who knows? Much like Spain in 1936 an extension of the libertarian and revolutionary gains may have also led to a different kind of victory.

I think one can be pro-October and still not believe that "rivers of blood" separate Bolshevism from Stalinism. But there could have been so many different routes from that moment in April 1917 when Lenin came to the Finland Station. Our tradition should know better than simply defending the assaults on liberty that led to the final victory of the bureaucracy.

**I often think that if you had a time machine and you wanted to destroy a revolutionary, liberatory future or you wanted to destroy an imminent future totalitarianism you would choose the same people to go back and eliminate — all of us in that tradition of Bolshevism. The germs of both are embryonic in us today.**

*Martyn Hudson, Teesside*

## Workers must remake Europe

**What's behind the series of crises in the eurozone?**

**As Karl Marx explained over 100 years ago, a developed credit system both gives greater elasticity to capitalist production and accentuates capital's tendencies to overproduction and overspeculation.**

From the early 1980s to 2008, global credit markets expanded enormously. They developed a dizzying variety of new forms of credit, and a dizzying speed at which different forms of credit could be exchanged with each other.

That expansion helped propel the expansion and restructuring of capitalist production known as "globalisation". It set the scene for a series of crises, but until 2007-8 the whirl of expansion was able to pick up again relatively fast after each crash.

The crash of 2008 was big enough that governments had to nationalise or bail out major banks — "socialism for the rich", "socialising losses" after an orgy of "privatising gains" — and world trade shrank sharply in 2009.

A crisis, as Marx explained, brings "a tremendous rush for means of payment — when credit suddenly ceases and only cash payments have validity". Except that in today's capitalism there is no really "hard" cash.

**Every form of "cash" — US dollars, British pounds, euros — is only an IOU issued by one government or another, or, for the euro, a group of governments.**

**But that's three years ago...**

**Capital has been unable to go back to a more "sober" way of life. The lurch of capitalist policy away from neoliberalism which many predicted in 2008 has not happened.**

Capital is still drunk on credit. The global amount outstanding on foreign exchange derivatives rose from \$14 trillion in 1999 to \$63 trillion in mid-2008, then fell back to \$49 trillion (mid-2009), but has risen again to \$58 trillion (mid-2010).

Capitalist governments have more extensive credit than banks. They were able to intervene to save the banks in 2008. But that intervention strained their credit, and in a time when global credit markets were becoming tighter. At the same time governments' incomes shrank because of the downturn in trade and production following the financial crash.

Most governments now depend on getting credit in global financial markets, not on siphoning savings from their own citizens as they used to. For eurozone governments the discipline is especially tight, since they cannot print their own money, and the European Central Bank was set up with rules that limit its assistance to governments.

Some eurozone governments were bound to run into credit difficulties. The first were Greece, Ireland, and Portugal. For Greece especially, each "bail-out" (they are actually "bail-outs" for the mostly French and German banks which have lent to the Greek government, not for the Greek people) has only made things worse.

The cuts imposed on Greece have reduced production in Greece, and hence the Greek government's income, and made it even more unable to borrow on global markets.

If the Greek government is left simply unable to make its due payments, then the consequences not just for Greece but for capital across Europe will be huge.

French and German banks which hold Greek government debt will become insolvent and need to be bailed out (again

by the French and German governments.

The French government's credit rating has already been put in doubt because of the mere risk of such a thing happening. At the next step down the road, France would become another, but much larger, Greece.

Lenders in the global credit markets who have seen Greece go down will wonder who's next, and become more reluctant to lend to, for example, the Italian government. That will be self-reinforcing: because Italy won't be able to get new loans, it will be unable to pay back old ones, and so it will be even less able to get new ones. Already Italy has to pay interest rates well above the odds to borrow on global markets.

**Can the eurozone and EU summits set for Wednesday 26 October fix things?**

**Such "crashes" would be much bigger than the collapse of Lehman Brothers, which set off the global crisis in September 2008.**

They could well lead to the collapse of the eurozone, and a retreat by European governments back to national currencies (or possibly smaller currency unions). The impact of that on European capital, which depends day to day on the low costs of doing business across Europe, will be huge. Because the costs of not doing so would be so big, European leaders will come up with some scheme or another on 26 October.

**They will find some way to patch things up for a while. As the previous so-called "bail-outs" patched things up for a while, only to make them worse longer-term.**

**Just patch things up for a while, or solve the crisis?**

**In principle the big powers of the eurozone have the financial clout to solve the credit problems of Greece and even of Italy.**

We should not underestimate the power and resourcefulness of capital. The cuts programmes in Ireland and Spain are brutal, but they are "working", so far, in capitalist terms.

Since the EU's leaders know that the crisis is so dangerous, it is possible that on 26 October they will do something more radical than expected. But radical enough to stabilise government finances across Europe? That seems pretty much impossible, if only because the processes of compromise necessary for eurozone and EU decisions are too cumbersome.

Wolfgang Münchau writes in the Financial Times (24 October): "The triple A rated [strong credit] countries [like Ger-

many] have left no doubt that they are willing to support the system, but only up to a certain point. And we are well beyond that point now... I believe... European leaders will agree a deal. My concern is not about failure to agree, but the consequences of an agreement....", which he says, could put the EU on course for a "catastrophic" outcome, "maybe only a few weeks or months away".

Moreover, given who is devising it, any deal is certain to include further attacks on workers' conditions and rights, and not only in Greece. The probability is a deal which attacks workers' conditions and rights, but only delays the crisis.

**The outside chance is a deal which patches things up for a bit longer, but at the cost of even sharper attacks on workers' conditions and rights.**

**Won't a breakdown of the capitalist EU be a step forward for the opponents of capitalism?**

**No. It is not true that the worse for capitalism, the better for socialists. Anguish from crashes and crises may provoke a fightback that brings great progress, but only if the socialists are, and are seen to be, fighting for a rational programme to mend things.**

A break-up of the existing economic coordination of Europe will bring huge economic disruption, unemployment, pauperisation, and a boost to right-wing, nationalist, backward-looking politics. It is not within the power of socialists either to prevent, or to provoke, such a break-up, but it is within our power to argue for a better form of economic coordination, rather than short-sightedly rejoicing at the break-up.

The project of the European single currency was botched from the outset, in 1999-2000 — hurried through on the wave of capitalist triumphalism typical of the time, and with questions about how it would deal with tricky imbalances glossed over.

**Against regression to a Europe with new barriers between countries, we should counterpose European unity on the basis of democracy, social levelling-up, and workers' unity across the frontiers.**

**What would that mean?**

**European high finance is endemically crisis-prone. European banks have \$55 trillion outstanding in loans, four times more than US banks do.**

To make those loans, they have borrowed \$30 trillion from "wholesale" markets — essentially, from other banks and corporations, rather than less volatile borrowing from households — ten times more than US banks.

The latest declaration by the European Trade Union Confederation calls for:

"Eurobonds to facilitate investments for sustainable jobs, a financial transaction tax..., the end of tax havens, tax fraud and evasion, and a halt to tax competition". That is too little, too abstruse, too disconnected from action on the ground.

Labour movements across Europe should unite to demand, as an emergency measure, the expropriation of European high finance, and its conversion into a Europe-wide banking, mortgage, and pension service.

**Greece's debt should be cancelled, and a new beginning made. Social minima and workers' rights should be levelled up across the continent.**

## Is this as Good as it Gets?

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Protests continue in Spain. Valencia on 15 October

## Protests hit 719 cities

By James Bloodworth

**In reporting the recent occupy and protest movements that have sprung up across the world, the bourgeois media has focused most of its attention on developments here and in the US.**

However, discontent has reared its head internationally, with unprecedented rebellion and protest erupting everywhere from Chile to Belgium to Mexico, to name but a few.

In Chile, nearly six months after they began, student protests show little sign of abating. One of the demands of Chilean students is a not-for-profit education system that is free for everyone. Chile's education system is one of the most privatised in the world, and the student protests in the country have seen universities occupied and huge protests on the streets of the capital, Santiago, and elsewhere.

On several occasions, they have drawn 100,000 people on to the streets.

Last Thursday, dozens of youths disrupted a Senate committee hearing before occupying the Senate office building for eight hours demanding a referendum on how to resolve Chile's social problems, especially education.

Chilean students have won sympathy from about 80 per cent of the population, according to opinion polls. Meanwhile, President Sebastian Pinera's support has dropped to

between 20 percent and 30 percent.

On October 15, demonstrations against capitalism took place in 719 cities in 71 countries.

In Frankfurt, about 200 people camped in front of the European Central Bank.

In Chicago, 175 protesters were arrested after refusing to leave Grant Park when it closed at night.

The final tally of arrests in New York after last Saturday's marches on Times Square, a Citibank near NYU and Washington Square Park, was 92.

In Rome, there were 20 arrests but at least 100 people were hospitalized after a protest near the famous Colosseum.

In Spain, the 15-M Movement, also called the Spanish Revolution, has been ongoing since May.

In Japan, about 200 people recently marched through Tokyo carrying various signs, including "No More Nukes" and "Free Tibet."

Protesters in several countries have been ordered by police to dismantle their tent cities and have faced increasing repression from the authorities for refusing to do so.

**While the protests sweeping the globe are inevitably diverse in nature, there is one thing they all have in common: In every instance people are rebelling against a ruling class that is demanding the full burden of the financial crisis be imposed on the working class.**

## Workers' Liberty at Occupy London

By Ira Berkovic

**Workers' Liberty members have been participating in the Occupy London protest camps (some staying semi-permanently and others visiting) at St. Paul's and Finsbury Square.**

The atmosphere at the camps is incredibly febrile — all sorts of politics and perspectives are buzzing around, with impromptu meetings and discussions springing up all the time, and the daily General Assemblies taking in everything from how to liaise with trade unions to setting up "healing spaces".

Some ideas in the camp AWL members disagree with — there is a religious and spiritualist element, a strong presence from the crypto-anti-Semites of the "Zeitgeist Movement", and lots of people who think that the camp, rather than a symbolic protest and space for discussion, is the actual embryo of a new society (effectively modern-day utopian socialists). But our presence at Occupy London isn't about hectoring people we disagree with; it's about adding our own — working-class, socialist — ideas to the mix and attempting to persuade people about them.

On Saturday 22 October, when a zero-hours worker told the General Assembly that her employers had stopped giving her work with the claim that the toilets she cleans are blocked by the camp, AWL members helped facilitate a large discussion about the occupation's relationship to workers in nearby workplaces and workers more generally.

The following night, we participated in a working group on worker outreach and helped draft a leaflet for workers in the cafés and restaurants (including multinational chains like Starbucks) around the occupation.

The group also agreed to seek links with RMT Stratford

No. 1 branch, which organises workers at the nearby St. Paul's tube station. In discussions, there was substantial agreement for our idea that capitalism fundamentally "happens" in the workplace, and that while the occupation was hugely important, the system it sought to protest against could ultimately only be disrupted and overthrown at its nucleus — by workers, in workplaces.

As well as participating in that kind of practical activity and discussion, we've also held pop-up meetings to discuss Marxist ideas. AWL members drew a crowd of nearly 50 people for a performance of the "Great Money Trick" from Robert Tressell's *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*. We think this neat exposition of how capitalist exploitation works can help occupiers build an understanding of what exactly it is we're fighting against.

The occupation is in many ways redolent of the Climate Camps at their best. But while that movement contained an organised core of ideologues with an ingrained hostility to Marxist ideas and Trotskyist organisations (selling newspapers or other literature was formally forbidden), people at Occupy London are open and keen to discuss ideas.

**The common criticism of the movement — that it is negative and vague, positing only catch-all opposition to "the system" (undefined) without proposing concrete alternatives or any agency to achieve change — is not without legitimacy, but it is not the case that occupiers want to turn that lack of concrete politics into a permanent state of affairs. Talking about ideas is very much the order of the day.**

• To join AWL members at the occupation, please email [hlthompson87@gmail.com](mailto:hlthompson87@gmail.com) or ring 07527 064326. For updates from the protests, see: [twitter.com/occupylsx](https://twitter.com/occupylsx) and [twitter.com/occupyfs](https://twitter.com/occupyfs)

## Greek strikes

By Theodora Polenta

**After the two-day general strike on 19-20 October, strikes and occupations are continuing across Greece.**

Bus, tram, and tube workers strike for 24 hours on Tuesday 25 October. Transport workers strike for 24 hours on Thursday 27 October.

Public sector workers have announced occupations of ministries and public sector buildings for Wednesday 26 October. Lawyers will have a four day strike on 26-27 October and 3-4 November. Teachers have a 24-hour strike on Wednesday 26 October.

In the words of a transport worker: "Workers have the knowledge, the means, and the ability to overthrow this ugly reality".

Only the workers' struggle can guarantee that the austerity packages and privatisation plans agreed in parliament cannot be implemented. Only the workers' actions can invalidate and trash the sophisticated economic modelling of the Troika (European Union, European Central Bank, and IMF), which has not taken into account the most important parameter: the impact of the growing militant working-class movement.

The economic crisis has brought an unprecedented crisis of political representation. The whole political mainstream spectrum is discredited. On a European and worldwide scale, centre-left and centre-right governments alike respond to the economic crisis with an autopilot program of cutbacks and attacks on the welfare state and workers' rights. They all follow policies that have resulted in the richest 10% of the population owning 100 times more wealth than the poorest 10%.

All factions of the ruling class are at meetings after meetings, summits after summits, trying to gain some time and make political manoeuvres that will allow them to rescue themselves and their class.

### SCENARIOS

**Different political scenarios of survival are being explored by the Pasok government, ranging from elections through coalition governments, referendums, or governments with technocrats.**

Parliament does not have the answers to the workers' needs and demands. The "betrayal" by the Pasok party is not just a matter of its leadership. The Pasok government is following the choices of the capitalist class in an era of a global economic crisis.

A government led by the main opposition party, New Democracy (Greek equivalent of the Tories), or a national emergency coalition government, would follow exactly the same policies.

It falls to the left and the working class organisations to defeat the ultra-right wing scenarios emerging across Europe. In Greece the ultra-right populist party LAOS (roughly similar to UKIP in Britain) has provided political support to the Pasok government for the last two years. The possibility of a coalition government with the participation of LAOS, in the name of "rescuing the country" (i.e. crushing workers' resistance) is under discussion.

LAOS politicians, members, and supporters have direct links with Xrysi Aygi (the Greek equivalent of the BNP). Despite their current political disagreements, LAOS and Xrysi Aygi were united in previous years pogroms and mobilisations against refugees.

For the working class there is only one alternative: the continuation and escalation of the occupations and strikes.

The working class should go further than one and two day strikes. To the coordination of the ruling class attacks, the working class should respond with a coordination of its actions — with a general strike called and organised from below, by workers, not relying on the union bureaucracy.

Politically bankrupt and therefore dangerous, the Pasok government has escalated its attacks by using the notorious ELAS riot police.

On the first day of the protests, 19 October, as the demonstrators arrived at Syntagma Square, in Athens, outside the parliament building, the police used gas. The square resembled a war zone.

A lot of protesters were hospitalised with breathing problems. Doctors and ambulance drivers had to leave the demonstration to assist the injured protesters.

The protesters proved their resilience and determination by refusing to obey police orders and staying in Syntagma square for several hours.

The next day, 20 October, thousands of protesters flooded

# escalate. Political alternative needed

## Syntagma Square in Athens before the police moved in

the centre of Athens with banners saying: “We owe nothing. We are not selling. We are not paying”.

Tens of thousands of people assembled outside the Greek parliament and the nearby streets as the cuts were about to be voted on.

Inside the Greek parliament heated discussions took place. Despite cosmetic disagreements between the government and the opposition, they were all in agreement on the principle: public spending cuts and privatisations demanded by the French and German banks, President Sarkozy, Chancellor Merkel, and the Troika.

Some Pasok MPs raised verbal disagreements and differentiations, reporting the effects of the second austerity package on people’s lives, feeling the pressure of their constituencies. Former labour minister Louka Katseli voted against a key article of the bill and was subsequently expelled. The rest of the Pasok MPs were blackmailed to vote in favour of cuts by the prime minister Georgios Papandreou and the economics minister, Evangelos Venizelos.

The austerity measures passed by 154 to 144 votes in the 300-member parliament. But the consensus of most of mainstream journalists and media is that the measures cannot be implemented with the majority of people in the streets and on strikes.

## CLASHES

**The end of the two day general strike was dominated by the violence that erupted between the bloc organised by PAME (a front organisation of the Greek Communist Party, KKE) and the so-called anarchist black bloc. A 53 year old PAME construction worker died from heart failure as a result of the attack, and 73 other protesters were hospitalized with injuries.**

Three or four hundred protesters of the so-called anarchist black bloc had marched to Syntagma Square, unimpeded by the ELAS police, and armed with Molotov cocktails. They violently attacked the PAME bloc.

As the PAME workers and stewards fought off the attack, the black bloc anarchists responded with petrol bombs and rocks. The sophistication of the black bloc’s weapons betrays the premeditated nature of their attacks.

The riot police subsequently got the excuse to intervene, attacking PAME protesters and members of the black bloc alike.

The role of the Greek police and its “darker” not-so-legal parts, their relations with LAOS, and their use of infiltrators is up for investigation. (Compare the recent exposures of the British police role in infiltrating the environmental movement, inciting and even committing acts of violence).

KKE secretary Aleka Paparyga has made serious accusations about the black bloc protesters. She pointed to web sites that predicted the attacks on the PAME block a couple of days in advance, and questioned the reluctance of the riot

police to prevent the attack taking place by stopping the black bloc from approaching Syntagma Square.

She claimed that police and members of the black bloc celebrated together on the evening of 20 October), and that she had photographic evidence of police changing into black bloc gear.

*Rizospastis*, the KKE newspaper, has provided photographic evidence of the similarity of the weapons used by the riot police and by the black bloc.

This has alarmed the Pasok government, and the secretary of state has ordered a legal enquiry.

As well as infiltrators and provocateurs, for whom the black bloc gives such easy openings, there are sections within the movement influenced by anarchism who reduce the defeat of corporate capitalism to the smashing of corporate capitalism’s window screens.

They reduce the defeat of the capitalist state to a guerrilla-type confrontation with the police. They believe that the government can be overthrown if only they get through the police lines and break into the parliament building. They try to artificially speed up the maturation of the working class movement by acting for the working class but without the working.

They try to create “revolutionary situations” outside the needs and the level of struggle of the working-class movement. They dismiss working-class structures, such as trade unions, as hierarchical structures of power, oppression, and corruption. They oscillate between throwing Molotov petrol bombs and the comfort of their sofas.

The different political perspectives and ways forward for the working-class movement should be tested during the struggle and should be discussed and debated openly in general meetings, rather than bypassed and hijacked by arbitrary actions by the black bloc.

Even if we assume that the black bloc was not infiltrated by the police, still their action did not advance the struggle. On the contrary. It polarised the PAME workers and supporters against the fictitious enemy of the “other left”, and rescued the KKE leadership from the pressure, exerted by the rank and file, for a united workers’ front.

At the same time we should not fall into the trap of prettifying the politics and tactics of the KKE. The KKE was trying to protect its bloc against all other blocs of demonstrators. KKE was not protecting the working-class movement. It was protecting the parliament against the anger of the majority of the working-class protesters.

The Stalinists’ exclusivist claim that KKE is the sole consistent representative of the working-class movement and KKE’s stridency against other tendencies of the movement have rightly angered big sections of the workers.

However, KKE’s sectarian and opportunistic stance does not justify the violent attacks of the black bloc

For revolutionary Marxists the confrontation with KKE’s reformist politics is first of all a political confrontation. Our

## Black bloc actions have harmed the movement

paramount duty is to politically speed up the self-organisation and radicalisation of the working class and contribute to the build-up of a real revolutionary party around the organised labour movement.

The solution lies in the power of workers’ struggles. As the struggles evolve and escalate, the workers are looking for solutions to defend their lives and rights, outside the “whole system” and its laws and structures.

It is essential for the revolutionary left, not only to participate and observe the struggles, but to help organise, coordinate, support, self-defend, escalate, and politicise the struggles.

## PROGRAMME

**The revolutionary left should be at the vanguard of all the struggles and win the workers to a radical, anti-capitalist program of transitional demands.**

- Abolish the debt. Not a penny to the creditors
- Freeze and abolish workers’ debts
- Civil disobedience and refusal to pay government-imposed taxes
- Nationalisation under workers’ control of the banks and the big business with no compensation
- Workers’ control of prices, wage increases, reduction in working hours, work for all
- Pension increases in line with wages, reduction in the age of retirement
- Ban redundancies. Unemployment benefit in line with wages
- For a public sector in the service of the people and society’s needs against today’s public sector tied up with corporations, contractors and corruption
- For an extension of education, health, transportation and welfare state provision.

It’s time for politics. Time for anti-capitalist revolutionary working-class politics from a revolutionary left which is not going to confine itself to being the left-wing version of the existing political establishment and the discredited and decaying parliament.

From a revolutionary left which is going to place itself on the vanguard of struggles against the poverty and destitution of the working class, with a revolutionary anti-capitalist manifesto, and a united-front logic and culture, in connection with the strategic aim of the revolutionary overthrow of the system.

A revolutionary left which is going to reinvent politics not as a technique to manipulate the masses but as a medium for self-liberation of the masses.

**At the end of the Argentinian revolution, a helicopter rescued the president from the angry crowd. Let’s hope that an helicopter will not be enough to rescue the Greek ruling class.**

AWL conference:

# Learning to think in the crisis

By Stephen Wood, Hull AWL

The conference of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, held on 22-23 October, reflected on the state of our movement and our organisation, and the impact of events like the Arab Spring and the Eurozone crisis on class struggle across the world. Discussions were sharp, while remaining comradely over disagreements or differences.

The conference started on a point of procedure: should the AWL have a "nominating commission" (an elected group that would recommend a slate) for our National Committee elections? Duncan Morrison (South London AWL) argued that nominating commission recommendations would not damage democracy — "off-slate" candidates would still be nominated and the vote would still be free — but could help get a more balanced and focused National Committee. Cathy Nugent (also S London) argued that the commission would not ensure a better process and could siphon off debate into a small group away from conference floor. Conference narrowly voted against setting up the commission.

Martin Thomas (North East London) introduced the main perspectives document. In Britain there is a partial lull; but globally the crisis is entering new turmoil, which will ricochet back into Britain.

The debate also discussed our continuing attitude to the Labour Party. The document noted the survival of the link between the Labour Party and the trade unions into a period of crisis and Tory offensive, the limited political alignment of the Miliband leadership with the union leaders against the government (albeit it on a timid and inconsistent basis), and the slow but significant stirrings within the Labour Party structures.

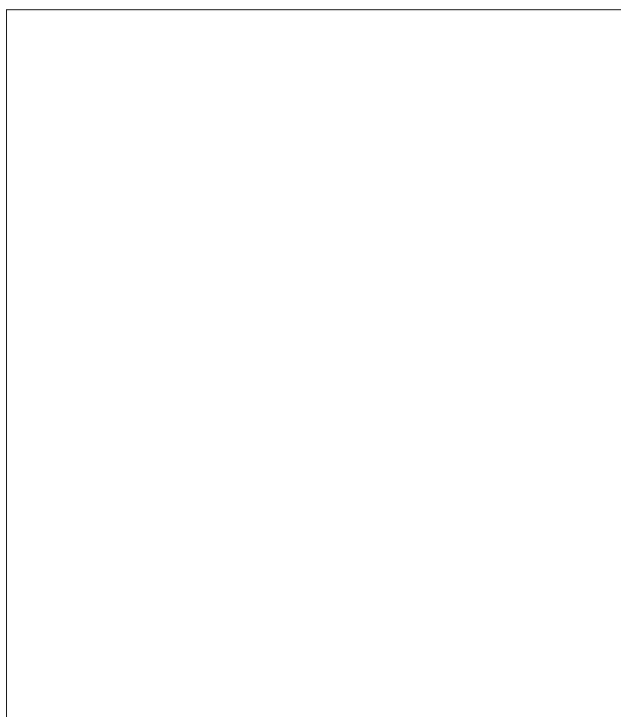
Bruce Robinson (Manchester AWL) moved an amendment that disputed some of this optimism. While recognising that the link remained, he did not believe we could talk of realignment or much significant revival within the Labour Party. The amendment was defeated, and the document as a whole passed.

**CONFIDENT**

**Sacha Ismail (South London) moved a document on building the AWL. In the discussion, comrades felt that we are growing and becoming more confident in asserting ourselves as AWL members.**

Our visibility as an organisation is increasing. Several speakers highlighted the need for consistent education of all comrades and especially those who have recently joined.

A report on socialist-feminist work was moved by Esther Townsend (South London). Esther reported on the relaunching of Women's Fightback as a bi-monthly socialist-feminist newspaper and urged comrades to use it to discuss socialist ideas with working-class women drawn into activity against the cuts. "Is This As Good As It Gets?", the AWL's upcoming class struggle feminist event on 26 November, was also highlighted.



The student report built on last year's perspectives and recognised the work we have carried out in the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts (NCAFC), as well as new attacks posed by the government's Higher Education White Paper and the mobilisation for the NCAFC/NUS demonstration on 9 November.

The documents from the AWL's newly-refounded Industrial Committee highlighted the group's perspectives for building up rank-and-file confidence and power, particularly in the context of the public sector pensions fight.

The AWL's "inside organising" policy — about the sectors and industries we encourage our comrades to seek work in in order to maximise their potential as class-struggle militants — was also debated for the first time since 2007. The discussion included a call from Rosie Huzzard (Sheffield AWL) for more debate within the organisation about how unionised workers employed by parts of the armed state machinery (such as border agency staff or police admin workers) fit into our understanding of class and the labour movement.

**REVOLUTIONARY**

**The final document, moved by Clive Bradley (North East London), dealt with the Middle East and North Africa in the context of the revolutionary wave dubbed "the Arab Spring".**

Clive argued that the development and growth of independent workers' organisations, particularly in Egypt, is the most encouraging and important element in the situation from a socialist point-of-view. Although a message to the conference from Olivier Delbeke (*Le Militant*, France) ar-

gued otherwise, the conference also concluded that we had been right to prioritise the survival of the Libyan uprising above abstract "anti-imperialist" posturing and, while maintaining principled opposition to NATO, refuse to campaign against its intervention.

Daniel Rawnsley (North East London AWL) urged comrades to read Leon Trotsky's article "Learn To Think", which explains why socialists do not simply say the direct opposite of the ruling class in all situations. Daniel said we should be exhorting the left to "learn to think".

The conference received solidarity messages from, among others, the Greek Trotskyist group OKDE, Mauritian socialists Lalit, Raymond Adams on behalf of the NPA in France, and David Finkel of the Political Committee of American socialist group Solidarity.

**Yves Coleman of French journal *Ni Patrie, Ni Frontières* addressed the conference, criticising some of our recent polemics against anarchism. Antonin from L'Etincelle (a tendency within the NPA) and Gona Saeed from the Worker-Communist Party of Kurdistan also spoke.**

**Members' views of conference**

**Three new members of Workers' Liberty give their thoughts on their first conference.**

**Sarah Weston is from Merseyside AWL. She joined in August 2011.**

"I found the level of discussion was really interesting, informative and educational considering the fact that most of it was based on lengthy texts. I felt like I was learning a lot from being there. The fractions were really good for discussion, but perhaps it'd be more worthwhile if they were longer."

**Harry Sinclair Waugh is from Brighton AWL. He joined in September 2011.**

"This was my first conference and I had a brilliant time. In a sense it was overwhelming because there was a lot to take in, but listening to and meeting other comrades really inspired me and made me proud to be a member of the AWL. The discussion was constantly interesting and informative and helped consolidate my support for the group. I didn't speak much, but I felt that observing helped me gain a wider understanding of the way the group works. Conference made me excited for many more and I look forward to spending the next year attempting to revitalise the AWL in Brighton and progressing as an active socialist."

**Emily Muna is from North East London AWL. She joined in September 2011.**

"The conference was really inspiring. It was really interesting to see live and active debate among members, and it was lovely to meet comrades from all over the UK."

## Measuring unions' online "klout"



**It's a corporate dream come true: imagine if a company could find out exactly which customers — and potential customers — could influence others.**

If one could identify with precision those consumers who influence others in their buying decisions, one could make a fortune.

That's the reasoning behind a number of new web-based projects that are basically watching all of us online, seeing what we do on Twitter and Facebook, and attempting to measure our influence.

These sites then find companies interested in knowing who are the "influencers" so they can tempt them with free samples and other perks.

But, as if often the case on the net, what was intended for

one purpose can be used for an entirely different one. Take, for example, Klout ([www.klout.com](http://www.klout.com)). Measuring our activity on Twitter, Facebook Linked In and other social networks, it rates every user on a scale from 0 to 100. The average rating, they say, is about 20. Super-famous celebrities can make it into the 80s or 90s.

Klout claims to measure "true reach" (how many people you influence), "amplification" (how much you influence them) and "network impact" (the influence of your network).

So, how are trade unions doing? Oddly enough, not badly. Topping the list of a random selection of a couple of dozen major unions are three based in the USA — the AFL-CIO (the American TUC), the Service Employees International Union, and Working America — an innovative community organizing project of the AFL-CIO. Those three are rated 70, 67 and 66.

But just below them are two British unions — UNISON with 62 followed by PCS with 61. Unite is not far behind with 58. These are quite high numbers.

Toward the very bottom of the list — though still with above-average numbers — are global union federations like

the IFJ (journalists), IMF (metal workers) and IUF (food workers), with ratings from 21-29. (The AWL rates higher than all of those, with a score of 33.)

In general the global trade union movement isn't nearly as influential — according to Klout — as national unions. The International Trade Union Confederation, which represents 175 million workers, is rated as having less influence in social networks than LabourStart.

Unions that use the net well are considered more influential by Klout than unions that have massive numbers of members. So the tiny Industrial Workers of the World gets a high rating than the Canadian Auto Workers. But in the real world, the CAW is a far more influential group than the IWW.

Tools like Klout are going to get better, including more social networks (Linked In was only recently added). Unions will also get better about signing up their members a subscribers to their Twitter feeds and as fans of their Facebook pages.

**When that happens, the gap between real-world influence and online "klout" will shrink.**



# Why anti-EUism is not left-wing

In the 1930s, when the Stalinised Communist movement responded to the rise of National Socialism in part by competing to out-do its nationalism, Trotsky explained what was wrong with that “national communism”.

Those explanations are relevant today, with such things on the left as the Socialist Party promoting the “left” nationalist “No2EU” project..

## “PEOPLE’S REVOLUTION”?

In response to the fascist slogan of the “people’s revolution” to win “national liberation” for Germany, the German Communists responded by saying that they too supported these things.

In “Thaelmann and the People’s Revolution” (1931), Trotsky responded. His arguments are relevant to arguing against similar populist ideas put forward in a left-wing framework today.

**It is understood that every great revolution is a people’s or a national revolution, in the sense that it unites around the revolutionary class all the virile and creative forces of the nation and reconstructs the nation around a new core.**

But this is not a slogan; it is a sociological description of the revolution, which requires, moreover, precise and concrete definition. As a slogan, it is inane and charlatanism, market competition with the fascists, paid for at the price of injecting confusion into the minds of the workers...

“Now the new turn: the people’s revolution instead of the proletarian revolution. The fascist Strasser [leader of the ‘left’ Nazis] says 95 percent of the people are interested in the revolution, consequently it is not a class revolution but a people’s revolution. Thaelmann [German Stalinist leader] sings in chorus. In reality, the worker-Communist should say to the fascist worker: of course, 95 percent of the population, if not 98 percent, is exploited by finance capital. But this exploitation is organized hierarchically: there are exploiters, there are subexploiters, sub-subexploiters, etc. Only thanks to this hierarchy do the superexploiters keep in subjection the majority of the nation.

In order that the nation should indeed be able to reconstruct itself around a new class core, it must be reconstructed ideologically and this can be achieved only if the proletariat does not dissolve itself into the “people,” into the “nation,” but on the contrary develops a program of its proletarian revolution and compels the petty bourgeoisie to choose between two regimes.

**The slogan of the people’s revolution lulls the petty bourgeoisie as well as the broad masses of the workers, reconciles them to the bourgeois-hierarchical structure of the “people” and retards their liberation.**

## FOR A WORKERS’ UNITED EUROPE

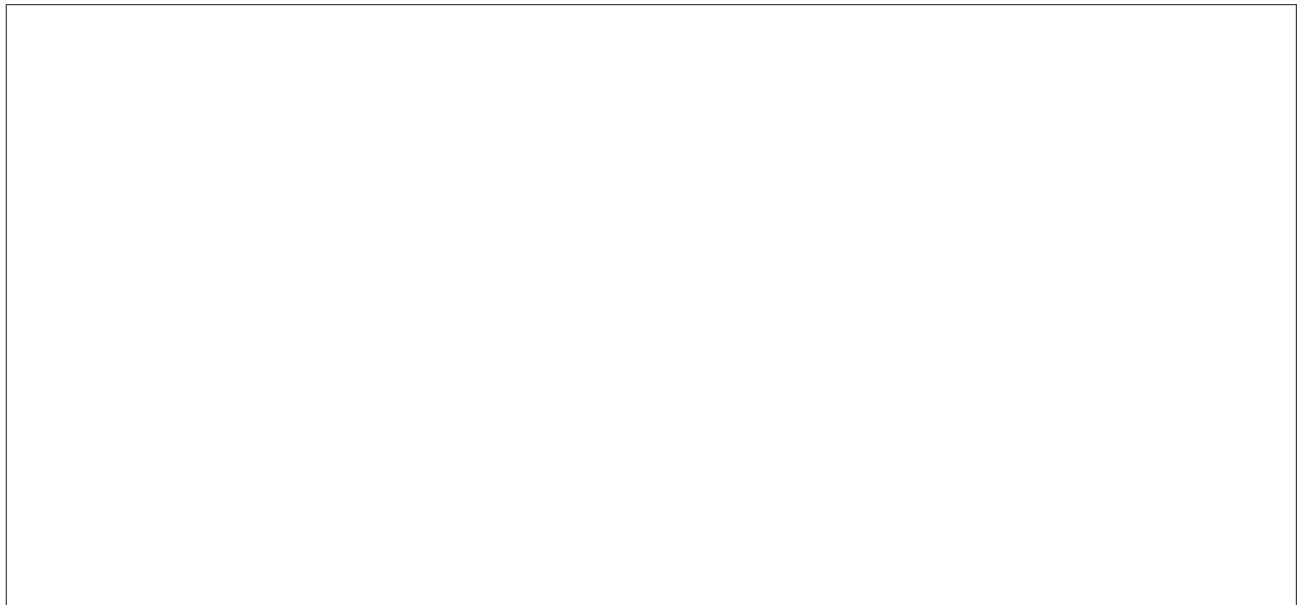
In “The Programme of Peace” (1915), Trotsky argued that even a bourgeois united Europe achieved by militarism would be a partial step forward, and socialists should not want a return to more isolated national states.

**Let us for a moment grant that German militarism succeeds in actually carrying out the compulsory half-union of Europe, just as Prussian militarism once achieved the half-union of Germany, what would then be the central slogan of the European proletariat?**

Would it be the dissolution of the forced European coalition and the return of all peoples under the roof of isolated national states? Or the restoration of “autonomous” tariffs, “national” currencies, “national” social legislation, and so forth? Certainly not.

The programme of the European revolutionary movement would then be: the destruction of the compulsory antidemocratic form of the coalition, with the preservation and furtherance of its foundations, in the form of complete annihilation of tariff barriers, the unification of legislation, above all of labour laws, etc. In other words, the slogan of the United States of Europe – without monarchies and standing armies – would under the indicated circumstances become the unifying and guiding slogan of the European revolution...

Precisely in case of a stalemate in the [First World] War, [it could be argued from a bourgeois point of view], the indispensability of an economic and military agreement among the European great powers would come to the fore against weak and backward peoples, but above all, of course, against their own working masses. [This] would mean the establishment of an imperialist trust of European States, a predatory share-holding association. And this perspective is on occasion adduced unjustifiably as proof of the “danger” of the slogan of the United States of Europe, whereas in reality this is the most graphic proof of its realistic and revolutionary significance. If the capitalist states of Europe succeeded in merging into an imperialist trust, this would be a



**The anti-EU populism of the left and some trade unions has nationalist implications. Proper campaigning against neo-liberal EU policies (above) should not mean idealising pre-EU “national” British capitalism as a progressive alternative.**

step forward as compared with the existing situation, for it would first of all create a unified, all-European material base for the working class movement.

The proletariat would in this case have to fight not for the return to “autonomous” national states, but for the conversion of the imperialist state trust into a European Republican Federation...

To view the perspectives of the social revolution within a national framework is to succumb to the same national narrowness that forms the content of social-patriotism... Generally speaking, it must not be forgotten that in social-patriotism there is active, in addition to the most vulgar reformism, a national revolutionary messianism, which regards its national state as chosen for introducing to humanity “socialism” or “democracy,” be it on the ground of its industrial development or of its democratic form and revolutionary conquests. (If a completely triumphant revolution were actually conceivable within the limits of a single, better prepared nation, this messianism, bound up with the program of national defence, would have its relative historical justification. But in reality, it does not have it.)

Defending the national basis of the revolution with such methods as undermine the international connections of the proletariat, really amounts to undermining the revolution, which cannot begin otherwise than on the national basis, but which cannot be completed on that basis in view of the present economic and military-political interdependence of the European states, which has never been so forcefully revealed as in this war.

**The slogan, the United States of Europe, gives expression to this interdependence, which will directly and immediately set the conditions for the concerted action of the European proletariat in the revolution.**

## NATIONAL BORDERS

In 1931, the German Stalinists supported the Nazi-initiated referendum to overthrow the Social Democratic government of Prussia, Germany’s largest state. Trotsky wrote “Against ‘national communism!’” in response.

**Ideas have their own logic. The [so called] people’s revolution is put forth [by the Stalinists] as a subordinate method of “national liberation.”**

Such a statement of the question cleared a way to the party for purely chauvinistic tendencies... you [the Nazis] have a people’s revolution and we have one, too; you have national liberation as the highest criterion, and we have the same; you have a war against Western capitalism and we promise the same; you have a plebiscite [the Prussian referendum], and we have a plebiscite, still better, a “red” one through and through.

[Stalinist leader] Thaelmann put the idea that “Germany is today a ball in the hands of the Entente.” It is in consequence primarily a matter of national liberation. But in a certain sense, France and Italy also, and even England, are “balls” in the hands of the United States. The dependence of Europe upon America... has a far deeper significance for the development of the European revolution than the dependence of Germany upon the Entente. This is why – by the way – the slogan of the Soviet United States of Europe, and not the single bare slogan, “Down with the Versailles Peace,” is the proletarian answer to the convulsions of the European continent.

But all these questions nevertheless occupy second place. Our policy is determined not by the fact that Germany is a “ball” in the hands of the Entente, but primarily by the fact

that the German proletariat which is split up, powerless, and oppressed, is a ball in the hands of the German bourgeoisie. “The main enemy is at home!” Karl Liebknecht [founder of the German Communist Party] taught at one time. Or perhaps you have forgotten this, friends? Or perhaps this teaching is no longer any good?...

[Nationalists attracted to the Communist Party] look favourably upon the cause of the Communist Party as the direct continuation of the Hohenzollern war [World War 1]. To them, the victims of the hideous imperialist slaughter remain heroes who have fallen for the freedom of the German people. They are ready to call a new war for Alsace-Lorraine and Eastern Prussia a “revolutionary” war. They agree to accept – for the time being, in words – the “people’s revolution,” if it can serve as a means of mobilizing the workers for their “revolutionary” war.

Their whole program lies in the idea of revanche [revenge]: if tomorrow it will seem to them that the same aim can be achieved by another road, they will shoot the revolutionary proletariat in the back... By the cheap phrase of revolutionary war, the Stalinist bureaucracy attracts dozens of adventurists, but repulses hundreds of thousands, and millions of Social Democratic, Christian, and non-party workers.

“This means that you recommend to us to imitate the pacifism of the Social Democracy” some particularly profound theoretician of the new course will object. No, we are least of all inclined to imitation, even of the moods of the working class; but we must take them into consideration.

Only by correctly estimating the moods of the broad masses of the proletariat can they be brought to the revolution. But the bureaucracy, imitating the phraseology of petty-bourgeois nationalism, ignores the actual moods of the workers who do not want war, who cannot want it, and who are repelled by the military fanfaronades of [Stalinism].

Marxism, of course, cannot fail to take into consideration the possibility of revolutionary war in the event that the proletariat seizes power. But this is far removed from converting a historical probability, which may be forced upon us by the course of events after the seizure of power, into a fighting political slogan prior to the seizure of power. A revolutionary war, as something forced upon us under certain conditions, as a consequence of the proletarian victory, is one thing. A “people’s” revolution, as a means for revolutionary war, is something altogether different even directly opposite...

The revolution, to us, is not a subordinate means for war against the West but on the contrary a means for avoiding wars, in order to end them once and for all. We fight the Social Democracy not by ridiculing its striving for peace, which is inherent in every toiler, but by revealing the falsity of its pacifism, because capitalist society, which is rescued every day by the Social Democracy, is inconceivable without war.

The “national liberation” of Germany lies, to our mind, not in a war with the West, but in a proletarian revolution embracing Central as well as Western Europe, and uniting it with Eastern Europe in the form of a Soviet United States. Only such a statement of the question can unite the working class and make it a center of attraction for the despairing petty-bourgeois masses.

**In order for the proletariat to be able to dictate its will to modern society, its party must not be ashamed of being a proletarian party and of speaking its own language, not the language of national revanche, but the language of international revolution.**

# What is Marxist dialectical thinking?

Vasilis Grollios contributes to the discussion opened by Dave Osler in *Solidarity* 219

**The core of socialist-Marxist thinking is its methodology, dialectical materialism. But the term was not systematically analysed by Marx or Engels. One has to synthesise its meaning from thousands of pages of their collected works.**

Thinking in terms of dialectical materialism means trying to identify the essence of the thing under consideration, to understand what the thing is in itself. It means that we try to bring to light the real content of each social form, whatever this might be – state, representative democracy in its bourgeois form, value as money.

The real content of each form is nothing other than the way in which the most important of human relations, labour, is constructed. All social forms are the expression of class struggle, of exploitation. Dialectical materialism reveals that social forms are products of the perverted form of our doing, of our everyday activity.

Since the antagonism between capital and labour is in the essence of the social form, contradiction is also in the essence of the social form and permeates our existence. The logic of the topsy-turvy world is dialectical since contradiction is in the essence of the inverted social forms.

As “personifications of economic categories”, we live under the domination of these inverted, distorted forms that express the perverted form — abstract labour — that our doing must take in order to continuously beget money from money.

Materialism’s “ad hominem critique” helps us understand that in the capitalist system, our doing is restricted due to the bonds of abstract labour. The transformation of doing in our everyday lives into abstract labour and into money comprises the content of different fetishes, the content of the aforementioned different social forms.

Although economic categories and social forms appear to have a life of their own, they are in fact just manifestations of our doing.

The dialectical element within the Marxian notion of dialectical materialism is the negation of the subordination of our everyday activity in this totality. Negative dialectics are the “dialectics of our misfitting”, “the negative restlessness of misfitting”, unfolding in “the power of No” (as John Holloway puts it).

Our misfitting is the fact that we cannot fit our daily activ-

ity into the logic of capital, into the logic of transforming our activity into abstract labour, into money.

In the Marxian method, theory can be realised in a people only insofar as it is the realisation of the needs of that people.

“We are not to philosophise about concrete things; we are to philosophise, rather, out of these things” as “...dialectical logic respects that which is to be thought the object”.

In the negative dialectics approach, the potential does not come from outside social reality but only from inside it. The untruth of identity is revealed because “...the concept does not exhaust the thing”. A remainder always remains. This is the potential we must focus on.

It is the development and enforcement of the still undeveloped power of labour that can change the essence of the society and thus also its form. That is why dialectics in its Marxian version embraces historical development, meaning the social forms take their content by the advancement of the class struggle.

Maybe the most important concept of dialectics is “non-identity”. Forms such as the state, value as money, the bourgeois form of democracy, appear as fetishes, as natural phenomena, as if they have always existed.

## LIBERATE

**It seems that we cannot liberate ourselves from them. It seems that we cannot stop being obliged to act as “personifications of economic categories”, to act according to our class position, by taking roles that we have to, that we did not choose to take.**

Identity identifies the notion under consideration with its present appearance, its form. It sees only the form-fetish in its appearance. It cannot penetrate this appearance and bring to the fore its essence. It cannot reveal the fact that it is a historically created form, according to how people came in contact to each other and to nature in order to satisfy their most basic needs.

Thus by thinking in non-identity terms we think in terms of a dialectic between form and essence and of a dialectic between how the form-fetish appears and what it really is when we see its historical creation and development. When we do this we demystify that form-fetish and we defetishise it.

By defetishising the form we realise that if we change the essence, the most important relation in society, how we come

in contact with each other and with nature in order to satisfy our most basic needs, then that means that we will no longer produce under privately owned means of production in order to accumulate wealth, and the form will also change.

**State, value as money and the representative system under the bourgeois form of democracy are the forms that correspond to a specific constant-essence, that of capital. Defetishisation entails class struggle.**

## Further reading:

- From Marx, best read the introduction to the *Grundrisse*. For me, the classical text in the 20th century is Adorno’s *Negative Dialectics*. Maybe one should read first his *Lectures on Negative Dialectics*. Also:
- Werner Bonefeld’s article *Social form, Critique and Human Dignity*, [bit.ly/bonefeld](http://bit.ly/bonefeld).
- John Holloway’s latest book, *Crack Capitalism*.
- My own article: “Marx and Engels’s critique of democracy: the materialist character of their concept of autonomy”, *Critique*, v. 39, n. 1, 2011.

## “What is dialectics?” by Edward Conze

**A Workers’ Liberty pamphlet**

[workersliberty.org/dialectics](http://workersliberty.org/dialectics)

**£2.50: pay online or send a cheque (payable to “AWL”) to 20E Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London SE1 3DG**

# Left must be clear against the Europhobes



**The Tory right mobilised on 24 October, with the help of the right-wing tabloid press, to demand a referendum on British withdrawal from the European Union. They recorded 81 votes against the government.**

The Tory right resents the limited legal rights which British workers get from European Union legislation driven by countries where labour movements are stronger and less legally shackled than in Britain.

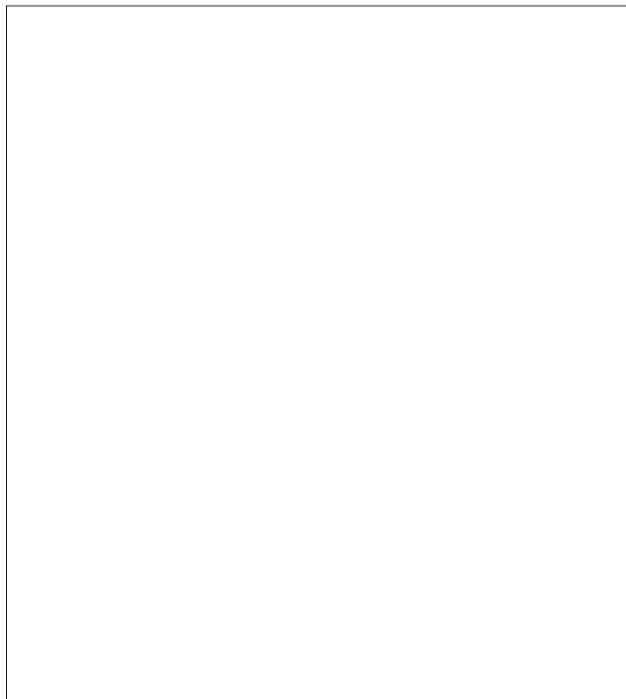
They would like to see Britain become “offshore” from Europe economically as well as geographically, offering transnational corporations a low-cost production site close to Europe where exploitation can be carried on free from EU regulation. Many also want to see Britain more closely linked to the free-marketing, low-welfare, weakly-united USA than to continental Europe.

The Tory right’s mobilisation displays the real meaning of anti-EU agitation. It is not, except demagogically, a protest against the EU’s capitalist nature, or its lack of democracy. Anti-capitalists and democrats can best fight those issues by campaigns for social provision and for democracy across Europe, not by striving to re-erect the barriers between countries.

The Tory right, and UKIP and the BNP, want a Britain outside the EU which will be more unrestrainedly capitalist and whose international connections will be decided by global markets with no democratic control at all.

Yet some of the left and the labour movement still let themselves be the “useful idiots” whom the Tory right can employ to give themselves cover as “patriots” and “democrats”.

Forty years ago, when Britain joined the EU, it looked more as if “keep out of the EU”, or “get out of the EU”, were left-wing causes. Trade unions, the mainstream



**The left should not give any cover to UKIP and the rest of the racist, anti-EU right**

Labour left, and almost all left groups other than Workers’ Fight (forerunner of AWL) campaigned for Britain to keep out of the EU and then for a vote to withdraw in the 1975 referendum. They dismissed the concurrence of their views with the *Daily Express* and some right-wing Tories as a secondary detail.

It has long been clear that the alleged secondary detail was the truth of the matter. Maintaining or restoring barriers between countries is a right-wing, not a left-wing, cause, even when counterposed to a botched, bureaucratic, capitalist lowering of barriers like the EU.

To say you want to maintain or restore those barriers as a step to a socialist united states of Europe, as some would-be Trotskyists do, makes the argument more stupid, but not more left-wing.

Much of the mainstream labour movement has corrected itself on the issue, but in an unspoken way. Groups like the SWP and the Socialist Party have never admitted they were wrong. They have just gone relatively quiet, presumably hoping that people will forget.

Logically they should applaud the 19 Labour MPs who voted with the Tory right on 24 October. Logically they should applaud the People’s Pledge campaign, fronted by former Labour left-winger Mark Seddon, though founded by former Tory students’ chair Marc-Henri Glendenning and “pro-car” campaigner Stuart Coster, and boasting sponsorship from many Tory right-wingers. In fact they have been quiet on the Tory rebellion.

The usually shameless *Morning Star* has been muted too. It quoted RMT rail union leader Bob Crow (who is politically close to the Communist Party of Britain, the group behind the *Morning Star*, and supported a “No2EU” slate in the 2009 Euro-election). Crow claimed that MPs’ choice on the Tory right-wingers’ parliamentary motion had been to “kowtow to your supine [party] leaders and endorse this drift towards fiscal fascism or stand up for democracy and represent the people that elected you”. (“Fiscal fascism” presumably means cuts. As if the Tory right has any objection to cuts!)

But the *Morning Star* noticeably did not quite endorse Crow’s comment. It “balanced” it by quoting George Guy, assistant general secretary of the construction union UCATT, who “warned that David Cameron may try to appease Eurosceptic backbenchers... by seeking to remove Britain from many of the existing EU directives on employment, social affairs, and safety... UCATT said that the European legislation underpinned many of the most basic rights enjoyed by British workers”.

**As the eurozone plunges into crisis, demagogic right-wing nationalist responses are likely to flourish. The left should clarify itself on the issue.**

# Rank-and-file must control the pensions battle

By Stewart Ward

**Activists in “N30” unions — the unions that are set to participate in the mass public sector strike over pensions reform — are working hard to build for 30 November.**

Most of the best work is being driven locally by reps and activists on the ground. The unions nationally are punching well below their weight; in

some areas, activists are having to rely on link-ups with neighbouring branches (rather than their national union) for materials and support. There's an effective radio silence on what's going on in the behind-the-scenes negotiations. The *Financial Times* reported on 25 October that the latest round of negotiations “ended in an impasse” — but what was discussed? What was the unions' negotiating posi-

tion? Workers shouldn't have to rely on the house paper of the bosses for information on the status of negotiations about their own pensions! TUC secretary Brendan Barber is asking for further scheme-by-scheme negotiations, but this framework creates the danger that workers in one scheme (NHS, civil service, local government, teaching etc.) could be played off against workers in another.

Union members must fight for control over their own dispute. They must demand that the content of negotiations is made open, so that workers can judge for themselves whether any pressure from union leaders to de-escalate the action comes on the basis of any real concessions from government.

We can speculate about whether the union tops would prefer the strike not to go ahead, or whether

they want to use it as a one-day-only posturing exercise in the hope of getting a few more crumbs from the table. Either way, the dispute is too important to be left in their hands.

**Grassroots activists should link up within and across unions to deliver a monster strike, led from below, that will challenge the power and control of the bureaucrats as well as terrify the government.**

## Tube bosses plan new jobs massacre

By a Tubeworker supporter

**An “Operational Strategy” paper from London Underground management, leaked by tube union RMT, has revealed plans for a radical restructuring of the tube that could see 1,500 jobs axed.**

The plan, based on across-the-board financial cuts of 20%, would move the tube towards greater automation, with drivers replaced by train attendants. It would also see every single ticket office on the entire network close, with 30 “travel centres” set up to replace them. Recruitment would be frozen, and the existing de-staffing programme escalated to leave dozens of stations across the network effectively unstaffed.

Coupled with the news that tube fares will rise by 7% in 2012, the plan represents tube bosses to make passengers and workers take the hit for the financial crisis. And this is despite figures from Ken Livingstone (hardly a friend of tube workers) claiming that Transport for London is sitting on a “cash mountain” of over £700 million.

RMT General Secretary Bob Crow said: “This document tells us everything we need to know about the operational strategy of London Underground — massive increase in fares alongside an unprecedented attack on jobs and safety.

“Every single ticket office would be closed, stations left unstaffed and drivers would be thrown out of their cabs without a single thought for passenger safety.

“This ill-conceived and finance-led document ignores reality in favour of austerity and would impact on every single staff member on London Underground.”

**Resisting the bosses' plan is not enough; tube unions and passengers' groups should work together to produce a workers' and passengers' plan for restructuring the Tube on the basis of public service and workers' rights.**

• For more on tube workers' struggles, including the campaigns for justice for victimised drivers Jayesh Patel and James Masango and the battle for workers' rights during the Olympics, see [workersliberty.org/twblog](http://workersliberty.org/twblog)

## Members take lead in Islington

By a Islington Local Government Unison activist

**My branch has produced a lot of material on pensions, including some great postcards designed by a neighbouring branch in Tower Hamlets.**

We had an open branch meeting with about 150 people attending; still not great, but much better than it's been for years. There was a good representation from different areas of the council with lots of teams/offices sending one or two people.

The branch has also de-

cidated to hire a “battle bus” to go round workplaces and organise for the strike, and to design “why we're striking” leaflets for the public. We've also offered support to local health branches.

I'm an area convenor, and my area (adult social services) is one of the best organised areas of the council in terms of members, though we're fairly short on stewards. Most of the offices now have monthly shop meetings.

I've been pushing a “run a safe service”-type campaign which focuses on caseload and workload levels and stress, and seems to have caught a lot

of people's attention, including management!

At a recent local rally, senior Unison official Heather Wakefield seemed to imply that a strong yes vote might mean we wouldn't even have to go on strike. We also had the local Labour councillors queuing up to support us even though they're also attacking us through local cuts.

**We've passed a version of the AWL model motion on building for the strike, so we'll continue to focus on building workplace meetings where members can have a say in the running of the dispute, at least locally.**

## How to build the strike in your workplace

By a PCS activist

**As we run up to the 30 November strike, union branches should be making their final preparations to win members over to take action on the day.**

Members' meetings should be happening now. This is not only to firm up the members but also to beat the ban on such meetings being held in offices that many parts of the civil service try to enforce closer to a strike day.

If branches can have them in the workplace, so much the better — if not, then meetings in car parks, local venues etc. should take place.

All the way up to the 30th branches must try and recruit non-members; flooding workplaces with recruitment forms and literature as to why staff should join the union.

In many work places there is a ban on such activ-

ity — where this is in place, then staff should be leafleted on the doors into the work place. The formation of such “information lines” where activists stand outside the workplace talking and leafleting is good preparation for the picket lines to come.

Union notice boards should be cleared of all old material and only stuff concerning the 30th should be put up. PCS, as like many other unions, has an ordering system where branches can order picket arms bands, posters etc. Orders for this material should be placed as soon as possible — it is too late on the day to find out that you don't have the right material.

Research timings of postal and other deliveries to your workplace; try to persuade postal and other workers not to make deliveries on the 30th. Indeed if you can talk to the local CWU branch in advance that would be good.

## Use N30 to build local disputes

By Tom Unterrainer, Nottingham NUT and Notts Trades Council (pc)

**Nottinghamshire Trades Council has convened a series of meetings to discuss arrangements for 30 November.**

These meetings act something like a strike committee, bringing together representatives from the unions set for action or balloting the membership. This set-up has limits, specifically the lack of rank-and-file involvement. A focus on mobilising and organising larger layers of the union membership and in recruiting new members must become a central part of the committee's work.

The Nottingham City branch of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) has already discussed plans for an education workers' rally in the run-up to the strike day. The situation has been complicated — in a good way — by plans to ballot members for action on the separate issue of changes to school holiday patterns. Nottingham City Council is attempting to force through a change to a

five week term, which will not only mean a shorter summer holiday but will put the city out of synch with surrounding areas, causing massive complications for any teacher with children in different school systems.

The timeline for the ballot coincides with the build-up for action at the end of November and any action will have to be taken before Christmas — that is, shortly after the national action. All indications from the local NUT membership point towards large-scale support. This situation is a lesson for other trade unionists: in the current circumstances, workers may be prepared to do things that in other circumstances they would be unlikely to consider. Wherever our movement can build on the big explosions of activity with supplementary local activity on a smaller scale, we will be in a better position to sustain any new organisation and structures. We will also be able to sustain a mood for actively opposing this government.

**Such opportunities may turn up in the most unexpected and unlikely places!**

# Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

## University boss will now be NHS privatiser-in-chief

By Sacha Ismail

**Malcolm Grant, the Provost of University College London, has been nominated by health secretary Andrew Lansley to head the new NHS commissioning board responsible for implementing the Tories' health "reforms".**

So Grant, who has distinguished himself attacking students and workers at UCL, will now also be responsible for dismantling the NHS.

He will remain "full time" head of UCL, on a salary well above £300,000 even after taking a 10 per cent pay cut. (He is the highest paid university head in Britain.)

After a hard fought campaign by UCL cleaners and their academic and student supporters, Grant promised more than a year ago to pay the cleaners the London living wage — but is now stalling on implementation, while continu-

ing to outsource UCL cleaning work.

The night *Solidarity* went to press (25 October), the Student Union council of UCL was due to discuss an emergency motion (seconded by NCAFC national committee and NUS executive member Michael Chessum). It comments:

"...the Provost has consistently lobbied for a lifting of the tuition fee cap... the Provost was at the centre of a controversy about the London Living Wage... he described it as a "luxury" that could not be afforded... in taking up the position of NHS Commissioning Board Chair, Malcolm Grant is complicit in the carving up of the NHS as a public service... Grant has developed a track record of actively undermining public services..."

**UCL student activists hope to hold a union general meeting in the next couple of weeks to declare no confidence in Grant.**

Striking transport workers

# Greek workers stage biggest general strike

By Theodora Polenta

**The two-day general strike on 19-20 October was the biggest of all the general strikes of the last two years of struggle in Greece.**

Over 500,000 public and private sector workers, pensioners, students, self-employed, community activists marched on Athens and over a million all over Greece. The slogans shouted by the strikers and demonstrators demanded the overthrow of the government and the withdrawal of the austerity measures and the policies

of the Troika (European Union, European Central Bank, and IMF).

Many different sectors of the working class participated, from the relatively "privileged" workers of the ministry of foreign affairs to the minimum-wage private sector workers. At the front of the Athens demonstration on 19 October were the refuse workers who have led a militant strike for the last three weeks.

Their banners read: "We are refusing to obey army orders. We are going to carry on striking until we win".

School students and uni-

versity students joined the demonstrations. Ambulances, lorries, tractors and taxis joined refuse workers' vans at the front of most demonstrations.

Public-sector, utility, and ministry buildings were occupied, with many demonstrators going on from the march into the occupied buildings to express their solidarity.

50,000 workers demonstrated in Thessaloniki, 20,000 in Hrakleio, 5,000 people demonstrated on the small island of Chios, 4,000 in Rethymno, 3,000 in Kozani, 2,000 in Agrinio etc.

For two days Greece was

in a standstill. Every mode of transport — buses, trams, underground, trains, cargo ships, ferries, tourists boats, taxis, tractors, lorries, airplanes — was brought to a halt. The only buses and trains moving were the ones that transporting strikers and demonstrators.

**Most small shopkeepers closed their shops. Some bakers decided to open their shops and distribute their bread and buns free.**

• Strikes and occupations are continuing across Greece. More: centre pages.

## 30 November strike: rank-and-file must control pensions battle

Workers' Liberty trade union activists have produced a model motion advocating a rank-and-file strategy for the 30 November pensions strike and beyond. Versions of it, or motions similar to it, have already been passed by Croydon NUT, Islington Local Government Unison, DWP East London PCS, Tate Museums PCS and Lambeth Local Government Unison. Find the text of the motion online at [tinyurl.com/n30modelmotion](http://tinyurl.com/n30modelmotion). For more, see page 11.

**NATIONAL DEMO. WALKOUT.**  
DEFEND  
EDUCATION  
FIGHT  
PRIVATISATION

**9th Nov  
2011**

**CENTRAL  
LONDON  
12 NOON**

**NCAFC**  
national campaign against fees & cuts  
[ANTICUTS.COM](http://ANTICUTS.COM)

Above: AWL members act out the "Great Money Trick" from Robert Tressell's *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* at the Occupy London protest camp. More on the camp and the AWL's activities at it: pages 6-7.