For a workers' government

Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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UKIP means scapegoating and division

Scaremongering: UKIP election poster

See page 5

For a workers' united Europe!

What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

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

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

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

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

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

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

We stand for:

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

Contact us:

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

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Tories plan for water cannon

By Michael Johnson

Home Secretary Theresa May is considering letting police forces in England and Wales use water cannons against protestors.

In January, Boris Johnson wrote to May in his capacity as the Mayor of London saying that he was "broadly convinced of the value of having water cannon available" in the capital.

The Association of Chief Police Officers (Acpo) thinks "ongoing and potential future austerity measures" is an argument for arming police with water cannons.

Though they have been used with impunity in Northern Ireland since 1969, water cannons have not been seen elsewhere.

Water cannon victim

Two prototypes were developed during the riots across Britain in the early 1980s, but were never used.

During the riots of the summer of 2011, Cameron announced contingency plans to make water cannons available within 24 hours but they were not judged to be necessary and would not have arrived in time.

Chief Constable David Shaw, author of the Acpo report, told the *Guardian* that the 2011 riots were a catalyst for new work on public order policing, though he added: "... it's not a direct response to 2011, or anything we've got now. These things can last 30 years. And things happen over three decades."

Met police commissioner, Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, said he wanted water cannons to prevent "more brutal alternatives". Water cannons are themselves brutal.

In the UK they are designated "less lethal" in recognition of the fact that they can kill. A 2013 report by the British government's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory found "good evidence … to indicate that serious injuries have been sustained by people subjected to the force of water cannon".

A 69-year-old man was blinded in one eye and lost most of the sight in his other eye when hit in the face in Stuttgart in 2010.

Most of the dangers come from injuries from falls. Loss of hearing and damage to long-term balance have been reported after victims suffered direct hits to the ears.

Much of the impact will be on the atmosphere of protests. Belgian police inspector Koen Vandewalle, told the Guardian that: "There's a psychological effect — the sense that now it's getting more serious."

Cops' "targets": make more stop-and-searches, record fewer crimes

By Gerry Bates

A report by the Metropolitan Police Federation has exposed the use of target-setting.

One officer reported: "We are set individual targets of four arrests per month and 10 stop and searches. There should be at least one positive stop and search per month (i.e. leading to arrest), and there is also the 'suggestion' that should you be called to an incident, perhaps stop and search them first or whilst investigating the incident (obviously that is a serious breach of procedure and law) in order to get a search figure."

As black people are 6.3 times more likely to be stopped and searched, the police are racially harassing people to meet their targets.

The report speaks of "culture of fear" in the police, with one unnamed officer complaining that: "Every month we are named and shamed with a league table by our supervisors..."

It also warns that "unhealthy and arguably unethical behaviour has become the norm in several boroughs... as the end is used to justify the means when it comes to meeting performance targets. These behaviours include figure fiddling and policy breaches."

Data manipulation, said to be "rife", is a particular concern in cases involving rape and sexual assault.

In November 2013, Met whistleblower PC James Patrick told the House of Commons public administration committee that Met figures on rape artificially kept down to boost apparent performance.

One method of massaging the figures is the practice of recording allegations as "crime-related incidents" rather than crimes, leading to cases not being investigated properly. In 2009, the *Guardian* revealed that as many as six boroughs in the Met had used this technique.

Patrick also told MPs that: "A preference had developed to try to justify 'no crime' on the basis of mental health or similar issues of vulnerability or by saying that the victim has refused to disclose to them."

When asked by Committee chair Bernard Jenkin if "this would finish up with trying to persuade a victim that they weren't raped, for example?", Patrick replied: "Effectively, yes."

10,000 in Montreal against cuts

On 3 April, students in Montreal held a 10,000-strong "national protest against austerity measures and for a more egalitarian budget."

Students are concerned about the ruling Parti Quebecois's cuts to public services, education and health and price rises for hydro electricity.

The demonstration was called by the Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante (ASSÉ), the militant student organisation which organised widespread student strikes in Quebec in 2012.

Six minutes before it was due to begin, Montreal police declared the march illegal under the city's controversial municipal bylaw P6 which bans masks at demonstrations and requires that an itinerary be submitted before any demonstration in Montreal.

At least two demonstrators were arrested "preventively." Police had arrested six protesters by the end of the demonstration.

Ugandan anti-gay law passes

By Paul Penny

On 31 March, Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni was guest of honor at an inter-religious, "national thanksgiving rally", held at the Kololo Independence Grounds in Kampala, to "celebrate" the passing of the Anti-Homosexuality Act.

Other guests included Rebecca Kadaga, the speaker of the Ugandan Parliament; Stanley Ntagali, the Anglican Archbishop of Uganda; invited Catholic, Muslim, and Pentecostal religious leaders; sheikhs, senior pastors, bishops, and civil society leaders.

The five hours of celebrations, attended by thousands of Ugandans, commenced with a march through Kampala, headed by the notorious homophobic pastor Martin Ssempa.

The "celebrants" carried placards reading "Museveni, thank you for saving the future of Uganda," "Homosexuality + AIDS = 100%," and "Obama, we want trade not homosexuality."

Speaker after speaker, including David Bahati, the MP who proposed the original bill, extolled Museveni for his "courage" and "strong leadership" in signing the bill into law in the face of intense international opposition.

A Ugandan friend living in Kampala sent me the following message as the rally was happening:

"The anti-homosexual rally has taken off today at Kololo Independence grounds. Students marched from Freedom Square here at the University. The mastermind is Pastor Martin Ssempa. Very upsetting here with me."

Other LGBT people reported feeling unable to even leave their homes for fear of being identified and attacked in the street.

Inter-religious "celebration" of passing of the law

Museveni told the excited crowd he was "mobilising to fight gays" who "deserved to be punished severely" because "homosexuality is criminal and it is so cruel".

Ugandan LGBT rights activist, Frank Mugisha, the director of Sexual Minorities Uganda, wrote in the *Guardian* (20 March) "I have been on an advocacy trip in Europe and the US, encouraging the international community to speak out against the ... anti-homosexuality act, which myself and a core group of Ugandans who support human rights are now challenging in the constitutional court. As I prepare to return home, I know a law has been passed that will tyrannise my life and that of many Ugandans... The outlook is bleak. As a gay Ugandan, I know I am one of thousands. But as someone who has chosen to be 'out' and is still living in Uganda, I am in a minority of fewer than 20 people."

On 4 April, the Walter Reed Project, a non-profit partnership between Makerere University (Kampala) and the US Military HIV Research Program, was raided and closed down by Ugandan police.

The project had provided vital services for many people living with HIV.

Ugandan government spokesman Ofwono Opondo said the police had "busted" the premises for allegedly "training youths in homosexuality".

Opondo also alleged that a "top diplomat" had been involved in the a "training". A Ugandan working for the project was arrested and interrogated by police.

• African LGBTI Out and Proud Diamond Group. www.opdg.org. facebook/opdgroup

Shahrokh Zamani hunger strike: sign the petition!

Iranian trade unionist Shahrokh Zamani, jailed for building an independent union, has been on hunger strike for over 30 days.

Zamani, an activist in the Painters, Union, was jailed for the crime of "endangering national security" and "participating in an illegal organisation". He has been subjected to physical and psychological abuse, denied medicine and prevented from receiving visitors.

He began his hunger strike in solidarity with Gonabadi dervishes who have also been imprisoned by the Iranian state. He decided to extend his strike indefinitely after being transferred to the Ghezel Hesar prison, 20 kilometres north-west of Tehran. His new prison is known for torture and execution.

Zamani is not alone in his hunger strike. His fellow prisoner, left-wing student activist Arash Mohammadi, has also begun refusing food in solidarity.

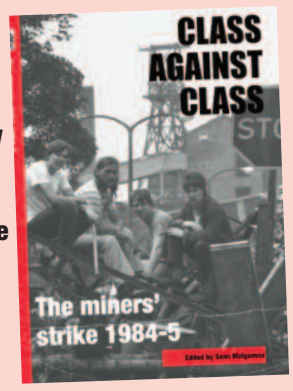
Since 2013, Workers' Liberty has been petitioning to "Free Shahrokh Zamani" and to bring the plight of persecuted Iranian working-class activists to public attention.

Given these developments, getting signatures for the petition is more urgent than ever. A campaign of solidarity and an international outcry could make a crucial difference to how the murderous Iranian regime treats Shahrokh and other prisoners.

We urge all readers to sign the petition and share it with friends, colleagues and on social media.

• The petition can be found here: http://chn.ge/R0rzcM

Class against Class



To mark the 30th anniversary of the 1984-5 miners' strike, Workers' Liberty has reprinted our history of the strike. The new book contains a new introduction giving an overview and a context to the heroic strike, as well as a blow-by-blow account and a comprehensive timeline.

A gallery of front-pages of our newspaper of the time (*Socialist Organiser*) shows what revolutionary socialists were saying, and how the strike posed political questions about the state, the police, and how society should be organised.

***Class Against Class* also contains material on the role of women in the heart of the resistance, showing the transformative impact of class struggle.**

An appendix charts how Polish miners in Solidarnosc offered support and solidarity to their British counterparts, in a display of internationalism against both capitalist and Stalinist rulers.

The defeat of the miners paved the way for the dramatic triumph of neo-liberalism in Britain and the wider world. Yet it is from these defeats, wrote Rosa Luxemburg, that we draw our "historical experience, understanding, power and idealism."

***Class Against Class* seeks to re-acquaint an older generation and educate a new generation in this historical experience and its lessons for the class struggle today.**

Buy it online at www.workersliberty.org/miners — £9.60 including p&p. Or send a cheque (to "AWL") to 20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG.

Countdown in Afghanistan

By Rhodri Evans

The presidential election in Afghanistan on 5 April, with a second round probably due on 28 May, is part of a countdown to the scheduled withdrawal of US and British troops from Afghanistan at the end of 2014.


Election precedes US and British troop withdrawal

It's over twelve years since the US thought it had cleared out the Taliban with a brisk attack done jointly with the Northern Alliance (anti-Taliban, non-Pashtun Islamists which then controlled some northern parties of the country), and need worry no more about Afghanistan. The Taliban fled from Kabul on 13 November 2001, from Kandahar on 4 December.

Then, year after year, US claims that they would decisively defeat the Taliban proved false. By antagonising the people, with its arrogance, its military recklessness, and the corruption of its local allies, the US helped the Taliban recoup.

The US turned to hopes that a deal could be negotiated with the Taliban or sections of it before US withdrawal, but those failed too. The Taliban is now strong in areas of Afghanistan and in large areas of neighbouring Pakistan.

The reactionary nature of the Taliban is signalled by its death threats against anyone who votes in the election, which has nonetheless had a large turnout in urban areas.

The US wants a deal to maintain sizeable forces in Afghanistan after the end of 2014. Hamid Karzai, president since 2001, has refused such a deal, but a new president, once elected, may make one.

The new president will need to keep US aid. Since 2001 the US has spent over $100 billion on civil reconstruction in Afghanistan, on top of the spillover from its huge military spending. Most of the Afghan government's income comes straight from the US. This has created a monstrously lopsided and corrupt economy, with startlingly little benefit for most Afghans' living standards.

After the USSR withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, the local Afghan Stalinists held on to Kabul for another three years; and the Taliban never conquered the whole country.

Socialist Organiser (forerunner of *Solidarity*) had demanded the Russian withdrawal; but we also expressed our solidarity with the cities resisting Islamist conquest after the withdrawal.

The same solidarity would be due to the people of Afghanistan's (now much bigger) cities today, facing a Taliban offensive after US withdrawal or semi-withdrawal. But their ability to achieve more than an uneasy stand-off will depend on whether the labour movement in Pakistan can undermine the grip of the Islamists there.

Children need parents. Parents need support.

The right to stay at home

Letters

I would like to respond Esther Townsend's article "The things we do for love" (*Solidarity/Women's Fightback* 4 March).

On becoming a mother at the age of 21 I believed feminism was something that fought for me to have choice, the choice to work like my elder sister, or stay home, like my mum. But I found that SAHMs (stay-at-home mothers) are seen as out dated and my rights as a mother revolved solely around my right to return to the workplace. My right to stay home is poorly accounted for and the decision to do so is often viewed negatively. Esther's article reflects this.

Esther indicates the route forward to support mothers should be the fight for free, flexible, quality childcare, and flexible working hours for parents.

There's no doubt the system of childcare and maternity leave in this country is inadequate. Statutory maternity pay often goes nowhere near covering the loss of a wage. Childcare for under-fives can cost nearly as much as you earn, making the return to work untenable for some women.

High cost of childcare is caused in the main by the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage, tighter regulations demanding more paperwork, staff training, and tighter OFSTED rules.

These new demands have caused child-minders to leave the profession, forcing children into expensive institutional childcare that is traditionally inflexible.

However, as we discuss childcare inadequacies, and difficulties mothers face returning to the workplace, we forget to ask if mothers actually want to return so quickly. Are they doing what's right for them and their child? Or is it financial strain, fear of losing an old position, or social pressures suggesting staying home is outdated when feminism has ensured we can "have it all"?

Socialists, and feminists do well to fight for our workplace rights and as a woman I am ever grateful that this battle is fought so strongly. However, this fight for a mother's right in the workplace has diluted the right to be at home into insignificance.

Language used to describe the existence of a SAHM at times makes me shudder. Words like "drudgery", "burden", and even "domestic" leave me cold. The assumption that our existence is a negative and somehow worthless waste of life is a direct contributor to any oppression a SAHM may encounter. It paints a stereotypical image that people can use against us in the worst possible ways.

On a personal level my own decision to stay home felt empowered. It was far from staying home to serve a man and bear the burden of household drudgery. I was fighting against the state's insistence my children should spend their early years in institutionalised childcare. In a climate where I was expected to work because now I absolutely could, my decision to not conform felt anarchistic.

Having a baby takes a huge toll on women's life, and I would argue adequate time for recovery, adjustment and bonding is vital for every woman after every birth.

If we made financial investment in mothers enabling them to stay home if they wish (let's say up to two years to align with WHO breastfeeding guidance) it could have many benefits. A period at home could raise breastfeeding rates with benefits for both mother and child. Decreased financial pressure could lower incidents of PND. Making mothers financially independent could offer a way out of abusive relationships.

And, it could drive down costs of childcare. Under twos need a more time consuming programme of care, creating higher overheads for providers, so less demand could lower overall costs. There is evidence to suggest that home-based care with a parent or a child-minder provides well for the many developmental and emotional needs of children under the age of two.

If we can find ways forward to subsidise childcare, we can find ways forward to subsidise care which the parent provides.

The fight for mother's rights does need to change tack. Our rights to breastfeed uninhibited, decent recovery and adjustment time after birth, community, basic income, to educate our own children how we see fit and not as the state dictates, and our right to be viewed in a positive manner as contributors to society, are as important as free, flexible childcare tailored to parental need.

The provision of adequate recovery time is the only way to fully support women in their choices through the journey of motherhood. So maybe, in the run up to 2015, the real battle is gaining recognition of the worth of the parent at home, as well as smoothing the transition back to the workplace when those parents are ready.

SAHMs don't need those who fight with us to look upon us as oppressed women in need of liberation. We need those who fight with mothers to see us as liberated women in need of a union.

Sue Myhill

Diagonal communication

Your debate on organising and the internet has caused me to consider the strengths and limitations of using social media to advance the class struggle. My experience is broadly positive but we cannot assess the merits of the networked culture that mass internet usage is creating without a consideration of the context.

The growth of internet access, mobile telephony, and social media, has not occurred alongside a remobilisation of organised labour. Whilst it has lowered the barriers to entry for individuals seeking answers to the predicament of our class, it is not led to an immediate cultural change within existing organisations, where top-down communication channels have often been defended with expulsions in the name of democratic centralism

Consider the costs in the past of an individual organising unit — a few activists, clustered geographically, and aligned to a certain current in the labour movement — finding out what is going on in other parts of the country, the continent, and beyond. Reports of a meeting in one place — decisions taken, matters discussed — can now be shared instantly. It is now commonplace for conferences to encourage delegates to use a certain hashtag to link text, images, video footage.

The pluralism engendered by multi-channel methods of communication can be escaped by limiting your "friends" or "follows" to people with whom you are in the same organisation, but we wouldn't behave that way in "meatspace" interactions with comrades. On a picket line or a demo, I don't see people from rival organisations refusing to acknowledge each other, reading each other's papers, and so on.

It is true that prior to the internet there were forums for serious political debate — journals, newspapers, meetings — but crucially these tended to be vertical (belonging to the organisation of which we are members) and horizontal (involving only those directly involved in our branch)

Patterns of communication which were vertical are now potentially diagonal. A "status update" I posted to Facebook about my experience as a delegate to the People's Assembly recall conference prompted responses from comrades who are members of different organisations — the AWL, Counterfire, the SWP — and living in different parts of the UK.

The radical transparency enabled by the internet does mean a risk of surveillance, victimisation, and also state repression during periods of heightened class struggle, but I think being open about our politics, and acknowledging where we agree and disagree will be crucial in remobilising the labour movement.

For those of us who have grown up with the internet as a fact of social life, it seems incredible that the networked culture has not been embraced sooner by our movement.

James Doran, Darlington

Help us raise £12,000 by October

Every year, Workers' Liberty hosts a weekend of socialist discussion and debate. Ideas for Freedom is designed to serve two important goals. We want to persuade people of socialist ideas, and of the revolutionary, democratic and anti-Stalinist socialism of our tendency in particular. And we want to promote a culture of debate and free discussion on the left. Organising events where people can listen to and take part in conversations about big ideas is essential to both these tasks. If you agree, make a donation to help us organise Ideas for Freedom.

We want to raise £12,000 by our AGM in October 2014

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

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

This week we have raised £156 in new subscriptions.

Grand total: £2810.

For a workers' united Europe!

The UK Independence Party (UKIP), the far right, anti-Europe, anti-immigrant party may top the vote in May's European elections, according to recent opinion polls. A recent YouGov poll in put UKIP at 34%, Labour at 27% and the Tories 20%.

UKIP leader Nigel Farage boosted his party's profile in two recent TV debates with LibDem leader Nick Clegg. The party currently has 35,000, members and in the last two European elections polled over two million votes.

Although the polls also suggest many fewer people would vote UKIP in a general election (about 12%, currently) UKIP is dragging the traditional parties to the right on questions of Europe and immigration. And its anti-foreigner rhetoric is preparing the way for a stronger, more aggressive political right in Britain.

Demagogically presenting itself as a party for "outsiders", in opposition to "the Westminster elite", UKIP is nothing of the sort.

UKIP's leader, Nigel Farage, is no outsider. He is a rich man, a former City trader. UKIP would not only pull the UK out of Europe but would slash health spending, cut pensions, and abolish inheritance tax and progressive taxation by introducing a single flat rate of income tax.

UKIP is for a large increase in military spending. They also advocate a range of peculiar social policies designed to appeal to the established political right: opposition to gay marriage, opposition to wind farms, support for the monarchy and the established church.

UKIP is the home for a rag-bag of right-wing oddballs, including Godfrey Bloom, who recently lost the UKIP whip after attacking a BBC journalist in the street and referring to UKIP's women members as "sluts". Previously Bloom had condemned overseas aid as help for "bongo bongo land". In January, David Silvester, then a UKIP councillor in Henley-on-Thames, suggested the recent floods were caused by David Cameron's support for gay marriage.

Part of UKIP's appeal is disgust for post-expenses scandal politics, and for politicians who are seen to be detached and corrupt. Maria Miller's recent performance in parliament — parading her contempt in a 32 second apology for expenses fiddling — will help Farage. But "disgust" is a negative political response, and can be easily manipulated by right-wing loud-mouths.

Farage falsely presents himself as an anti-establishment outsider.

Matthew Goodwin and Robert Hood, academics at the University of Nottingham and authors of a recent study of UKIP, *Revolt on the Right*, think the degree of alienation among UKIP voters is high. However they believe the party has not, yet, got a broad enough base to make a significant breakthrough in a general election.

Goodwin and Hood say Farage is attempting to spread the party's appeal by reaching out to "left behind" alienated white workers, who may have voted either Conservative or Labour, but would be prepared to vote BNP. His appeal is for a return to a (mythical) Golden Age, before the EU and mass immigration, with bobbies on the beat, Union Jacks and the Queen, Empire.... and full employment.

So on the one hand UKIP magnifies and strengthens every backward, narrow, xenophobic message put out by the main political parties. And on the other it stirs up the economic insecurity felt by particular sections of society. UKIP is polluting — already tawdry and conservative — mainstream British politics.

UKIP's increasing support is part of a broader trend across Europe. The main beneficiaries so far of the 2008 economic crisis have been the parties of the right. The Front National made gains in last month French regional elections.

And UKIP's message is popular partly because of the weakness and failures of the left. The Labour leaders have allowed Farage to define the terms of the debate on Europe and immigration.

Labour does not challenge UKIP clearly and openly. They are scared of losing votes by confronting populist British nationalism, standing up for refugees' rights, migrant workers and links with Europe.

And the far left has often collapsed into "left" versions of little-Britain, nationalist, anti-EU nonsense. Seemingly the far left has not seen that the first victims of an EU-pull out will be Eastern European workers in Britain. Our support for migrants and opposition to the EU are in flat contradiction.

There will be no return to the days of Empire. Capitalist globalisation and the ever-tighter integration of economic and political life across Europe will continue — unless some political catastrophe intervenes, and rolls Europe backwards.

Capitalist globalisation is a fact. Mass immigration is here to stay. The capitalist ruling classes have brought Europe together. Our job is not to unpick their work. We are for a united Europe — but our Europe, a workers' Europe, a Europe based on solidarity.

We say the unions and left must welcome migrant workers by unionising them and fighting for their rights. Across Europe we must campaign for a levelling up of conditions at work, pay, union rights and access to health care and welfare.

UKIP is the opposite of what we stand for. We stand for workers' unity across borders, and international socialism.

***Solidarity* is skipping a week for Easter. *Solidarity* 321 will be dated 23 April.**

Why Maria Miller thinks that fiddling "only" £5,800 is innocent

"From the members of the Commune downwards, the public service had to be done at workers' wages", wrote Karl Marx, celebrating the short-lived workers' government of the Paris Commune in 1871.

The idea that the work of managing enterprises is no special entitlement to riches is the simplest of our democratic and egalitarian ideas. It is the opposite pole to the attitude of Tory minister Maria Miller, who has signalled that she resents even being investigated for over-claiming housing expenses as an MP. She regards the parliamentary committee's decision that she should repay £5,800 (rather than the £45,000 proposed by the investigating commissioner) as pretty much an acquittal.

The Miller case has blown up because many Tories want to scapegoat her for the Government's legislation for gay marriage.

Yet it also shines a light on the whole system.

The principle of capitalism is that the producers, the workers, get paid a quota determined by what it takes to bring the working class back to labour each week more or less fit and competent. The new value we produce is quite another quantity, and constantly expanding as the bosses squeeze out more productivity.

The surplus value, the extra value produced by workers' efforts above what we get back in wages, then flows around the capitalist class and its hangers-on through a million different channels.

Since the rise of the giant corporation, the channels are complex. Revenue flows through dividends, cashed-in share price rises, fees, and payments which are formally "wages".

The top bosses who are on paper "wage-workers", assume, and by their class position must assume, that they "deserve" an elasticity of income through "bonuses" and "expenses".

The government estimates a yearly total of £73 billion in fraud, almost twice the total education budget. Only a tiny proportion is benefit fraud (£1.6 billion: and that's far less than its converse, benefits which people are entitled to but don't claim).

Much of the £73 billion is the sort of "grey fraud" that Maria Miller thinks she's done: things rich people do on the assumption that they may have to pay a bit back if found out, but that's all.

Take three examples. A columnist in the *Daily Telegraph* was asked by a manager what to do about another manager found to be systematically claiming false travel expense claims for meetings which never took place. The columnist replied: maybe reprimand him. Beware of sacking him, because you may end up paying even more in a tribunal case.

A retired head teacher was brought to court last year for using the school's budget to pay out £2.7 million, over some years, to himself and cronies in bonuses. He got a suspended sentence and sad words about his great services to education.

The big banks are currently setting aside tens of billions of pounds or dollars for fines and compensation for mis-selling financial gimmicks or fiddling interest and exchange rates. It is taken for granted that they will settle the cases by agreeing a fine or compensation, not by any top boss suffering personally.

That "grey" fraud stands on top of a greater mass of white fraud, where bosses use company or public money openly to pay for lavish offices, or luxury travel to and "entertainment" at meetings which really do take place.

No wonder Maria Miller couldn't stop herself telling us that she resents being reprimanded over a mere £5,800 misappropriation.

To overturn this system of inequality, we must first overturn it within our own movement. Most union leaders reckon that they should benefit from the same principle that sees the managers in a company get much more pay and more lavish expenses and side-benefits than the workers do.

Union service too should be done, as in the Commune, "at workers' wages".

• http://data.gov.uk/dataset/nfa-afi

Opposing Russian imperialism, fighting neo-liberalism

Voices from the Russian and Ukrainian left

We reprint* below, in abridged form, a range of different (and sometimes conflicting) opinions about recent and current events in Ukraine, expressed by Ukrainian and Russian left activists. The original articles were published by: Otkrytaya Leva (Open Left), Avtonomna Spilka Trudyashchikh (Autonomous Workers Union) and *Links, International Journal of Socialist Renewal.* Translated by Dale Street.

Neo-liberal coup

By Dmitry Mrachnik (member of Ukrainian Autonomous Workers Union)

The Maidan resulted in a neo-liberal coup which has untied the hands of broad layers of the bourgeoisie.

The ultra-right which has penetrated into the corridors of power is not in any rush to start wearing a brown uniform and is trying to behave like any other politician.

Overall, the character of the new government is right-liberal [i.e. "liberal" in its economic policies]. People are unhappy that nothing has changed. But for the time being there is no sign of any radical protests against the government.

Members of Svoboda who are in the government present themselves as respectable politicians and try to demarcate themselves from aggressive fascism. But it is well-known that within the party and its paramilitary youth wing, "S14", fascist tendencies are as strong as before.

For the time being the other ultra-right bloc, Right Sector, has not been given its promised places in the government. With their fascist declarations and aggressive behaviour, they damage the image of the Maidan in the eyes of Europe.

In the east of Ukraine a section of the population is frightened due to the propaganda of Yanukovich (in the past) and of Putin (in the present). Many are afraid that armed fascists will come to their region and ban the Russian language, etc.

Those who are the most active there co-operate with pro-Putin forces. Others protest against such attitudes and support the (socially) liberal or (Ukrainian-)nationalist values of the Maidan in Kiev.

Thanks to support from the separatists in the south-east, pro-Putin forces freely carry out their coercive acts against the placemen of the new government and supporters of the Maidan.

The claim that fascists control Ukraine is propaganda by Putin. To those anarchists and left-wingers who believe Putin's propaganda about a fascist regime in Ukraine and who support Russia I say: take a deep breath, gormless half-wits. For many years Russia has already had something like the kind of fascism which Ukraine is accused of. Anyone who supports fascists who save a neighbouring country from fascists must be either pretty stupid or completely devoid of any conscience.

"Anarchists" who support a state and its war? You can't beat that!

15 March Moscow demonstration against Putin's policy in Ukraine

Key issues for Russian left

By Vladimir Plotnikov (Russian trade union and left activist):

The key issues are:

• Complete withdrawal of all Russian forces from the territory of Ukraine and from de facto non-Ukrainian Crimea (I balk at using the word "independent" to describe this strange political entity). It is obvious that the Kremlin needs Crimea as a means of putting pressure on Kiev, and the presence of Russian troops in Crimea will further escalate the conflict.

• An end to the pressure being exerted by the Kremlin on the Ukrainian authorities and the opening of a peaceful dialogue between Russia and Ukraine. This is the most important factor: Putin's government is conducting a media and diplomatic war against Kiev.

However low our opinion is of the new authorities in Kiev, this factor is encouraging a belligerent outlook and a strengthening of nationalism on both sides.

• And very importantly a complete cessation of the military blackmail and the provocations by the Russian authorities and secret services (in the south-east of Ukraine).

For us, Russian leftists, it would be very odd if we were to demand the unconditional overthrow of the "Kiev junta" and pose this demand as an ultimatum. What forces are capable of achieving this overthrow? Who can replace the "pro-Maidan" authorities from one day to the next?

The answer is obvious and we hear it everyday from television screens: a military intervention into Ukraine, and Yanukovich returning to Kiev under the (Russian) tricolor.

This means that we must appeal to the citizens of Ukraine: to turn their attention to the reactionary nature of the right-wing government and propose a distinct socio-political alternative which only the citizens of Ukraine themselves can achieve.

What we must not do is give any credit to Lavrov and Putin by waving a red flag, which is what many of our national-Stalinists are doing.

Putin in Crimea

By Elena Galkina (Ukrainian activist):

The actions of the Putin government in Crimea and in the south-east of Ukraine are dictated by its fear of the export of the revolution and by imperialist interests. They are a danger for Ukraine as a whole and for these regions in particular, as well as for the Russian Federation.

The need to mobilise in order to repulse the external enemy allows the oligarchic group which has replaced the Yanukovich clan to strengthen its grip on power, and cuts across the perspective of deepening the democratic revolution and implementing a social agenda.

In Crimea, instead of the emergence of grassroots self-organisation which formulated its own demands on the government in Kiev, a snap referendum has taken place — with many electoral breaches, and under the barrel of a gun.

In reality, Crimeans did not achieve liberation from "Banderists" but a double enslavement – by the nomenklatura-oligarchic Russian regime in Moscow, and by the local authorities and their criminal associates in Simferopol.

If we were to approve of the "reunification of Russia with Crimea" and the separatism in the south-east of Ukraine, then we would support the chauvinist hysteria of Russian propaganda and the propagation in Russia of a totalitarian ideology aimed at distracting its inhabitants from the unavoidable economic crisis and the final dismantling of the welfare state.

In the eyes of Ukrainians, including many on the left who took an active part in the Maidan, we would be part of the propaganda machine of the aggressor.

"Neither peace nor war"

By Boris Kagarlitsky (Russian socialist academic and writer):

When a certain number of leftists, repeating century-old slogans, speak of "a war unleashed in the interests of large-scale capital", they once again get things wrong. The truth is that large-scale capital, both private and bureaucratic, has no need at present for a war.

The Russian economy is highly dependent on the gas pipeline that passes through Ukraine. Of course, the investments made by "our" oligarchs in Ukrainian enterprises need defending, but military action would sooner exacerbate the problems here than solve them.

The cynicism and avarice of our present-day rulers are the best guarantee that there will not be a major war.

The authorities in Kiev are also satisfied. They are able to employ the "Russian threat" to consolidate the new regime, to explain away economic difficulties as the result of external pressure, and in retrospect, to justify their own steps that have brought Ukraine to collapse.

The present situation of "neither peace nor war" thus suits both governments perfectly, at least for the moment.

In Crimea, Russian forces have restricted themselves to "polite intervention". Of course, this was a violation of sovereignty, but let's be honest: in an analogous situation the French, Americans and British would have done the same.

Neither Maidan nor the demonstrations in the east have had the character of a spontaneous popular revolution. In both cases, outside forces have been involved. The only cause for optimism is the fact that from the beginning, the ideological vector of the protests in the east has been different from that in the west.

Left activists were driven from the Maidan in Kiev and beaten up (that is not to mention what happened to left-wing symbols and monuments).

In Kharkov and Odessa, by contrast, Soviet monuments were defended, and here and there people even raised red flags. But there should be no illusions here: what is involved for the present is cultural differences rather than class positions.

Members of the left need to work in the protest movement in the eastern regions, strengthening their influence and helping to shape a positive program. In this case, there is a real chance that the entire movement can be shifted to more progressive positions, and that the left can win hegemony within it.

This is no more than a potential opening, but with the Maidan movement no such chance existed.

Protests in Ukraine began in November 2013 after the government of Viktor Yanukovych abandoned plans for closer ties with EU

Maidan: revolution betrayed

By Maksim Osadchuk, (translated from the website of the Russian Socialist Movement)

The government of Prime Minister Yatseniuk and President Turchinov can repeat as often as it wants the mantra that Crimea is an inseparable part of Ukraine. But the annexation of the territory of the peninsula by the Kremlin is an accomplished fact.

In the south-east of the country radically pro-Russian attitudes are stronger than they have ever been.

What counts now is honestly recognizing that Maidan not only did not unite Ukraine but that it pushed to the limits long-standing contradictions which threaten the very existence of a unitary state.

I was born and have lived my whole life in Crimea. Not once during the whole period of office of President Yanukovich did I ever hear anyone here say a good word about his regime. Crimeans had no less reason to hate his government than did those who built the barricades in Kiev or those from the western regions who took part in the Maidan.

Was it really "Banderists" who allowed large-scale privatization of land and beaches on the peninsula?

Or, perhaps, the paramilitaries of the right sector who cut down forests on Cape Aya near Sevastopol in order to build the next dacha for a protector of the constitution?

And who, interestingly, controlled the Simferopol police, in whose dungeons people were tortured and maimed?

In the ARC (Autonomous Republic of Crimea) the Party of the Regions held complete sway during the last decade. And the population did not sit back and do nothing. In 2013 the level of protest activity was the highest in the whole of Ukraine.

Many people here spoke with enthusiasm about the revolution which would one day drive out the hated "Donets mob" [Yanukovich and his backers] and put an end to oligarchic rule. But when the revolution finally happened – it turned out that Crimeans did not regard it as "theirs".

In fact, they were prepared to allow foreign troops on their territory and to take up arms themselves in order not to have anything to do with that revolution. Why?

In early December of 2013 the situation in the Maidan seriously heated up. In the course of a single night it changed from being a relaxed carnival in support of association with the European Union into brutal street fighting with the authorities who had taken it upon themselves to use police violence against peaceful demonstrators on 30 November.

From the very beginning it was ordinary people who pushed forward the uprising, genuinely feeling for the first time their own strength. The masses had no confidence in the leaders of the opposition parties, or in politicians in general.

In the course of the events of January and February the current Prime Minister of Ukraine and his closest associates were dismissed as traitors by those in the Maidan more often than anyone could count.

To put it mildly, it is an odd situation when people who called the most self-sacrificing activists "provocateurs" and who did everything possible at every stage to "empty" the revolution now hold the key positions of responsibility in the government after the success of that revolution.

FACES

Most members of the new government are faces well-known to Ukrainians, and ones which always excelled in finding a common language with the "bandit regime" of Viktor Yanukovich. It is therefore completely natural that many people should see the Maidan as a case of Tweedledum replacing Tweedledee.

Having concentrated on combating dictatorship, the revolution turned out to be incapable of formulating a positive programme which could have consolidated Ukrainian society.

Signing an EU association agreement, which the movement had declared to be its goal, not only failed to resolve a single one of the existing problems confronting Ukraine. It also created a host of new ones.

Unemployment, the fall in the real standard of living, the decline in welfare provision and the commercialization of all and everything – themes which equally concerned inhabitants of Lvov, Odessa, Kharkhov and Simferopol – were completely ignored by the Maidan.

The main scene of the Kiev revolution was usurped by the likes of the confectionery capitalist Petr Poroshenko. Indisputably, no-one expects him to review the results of privatization.

The "oligarchisation" of the Maidan is in particularly sharp contrast to the uprising taking place at the same time in Bosnia. The latter, as is well-known, had an openly anti-capitalist character and was able to unite under its banner Muslims, Serbs and Croats who had enthusiastically been at each others' throats for decades.

In spite of its autonomous status within Ukraine, in the last twenty years Crimea was firmly in the sphere of the Russian Federation's cultural and media influence. They were accustomed here to watch Russian television, read Russian newspapers, and believed that salvation would come from the east.

Apart from the Crimean Tatars, who preserved their national separateness, and an insignificant number of ethnic Ukrainians, the inhabitants of the peninsula see themselves as part of the "Russian world".

Until recently it was usual to blame the wretched Ukrainian state apparatus for all misfortunes and to delight in the bold and powerful Kremlin.

For Crimeans, Putin's Russia is a beacon of stability and prosperity. As a result of many years of media manipulation, the local population is inclined to ignore the facts of the realities of Russian life.

In speaking with the average inhabitant of Simferopol or Sevastopol you learn without fail that pensions are higher everywhere in Russia, that wages are higher, and that if the opposition is driven off the streets – then only because there is good reason to do so.

The unprecedented jubilation with which many people greeted the proclamation by ARC Prime Minister Sergei Aksenovim of a "course in the direction of Russia" is beginning to dissipate only now.

Kiselev and co. [i.e. spin doctors for Putin] are also assisted by the identification of Russia with the Soviet Union, which is widespread on the peninsula and in the eastern regions of Ukraine, especially amongst the older population. Legions of politically active granddads and grandmas provide a solid basis of support for pro-Russian separatism.

These people sincerely believe that the Russian Federation has been able to preserve the welfare state, friendship between peoples and other attributes of happy Soviet life, and that the Cold War with the West did not end in 1991.

Together with the close cultural affinities and longstanding economic ties between Crimea and Russia, all this made the annexation so triumphal that it could be carried out without any need for a "small victorious war" [the expression used to describe Russia's invasion of Chechnya in 1994].

Every revolution always bears within itself at least a pretension to be universal. The demands of the revolutionaries, their methods, the future which they promise in the event of victory must be relevant to everyone.

If this is not the case, if the revolution cannot present a corresponding project to society, then why should anyone be surprised if certain social layers attempt to separate themselves from it?

The Maidan will be "their" revolution as well only if it manages to implement a programme which really expresses the interests of the majority of the Ukrainian people, irrespective of geography, language and cultural sympathies.

The only real possibility of "returning Crimea" and not allowing a breakaway by the eastern regions is to demonstrate to their inhabitants and, at the same time, to the whole world that the Maidan sees its goal not as replacing one group of capitalists at the helm of the state by another but as the destruction of the oligarchic order as a whole.

To demonstrate that the victory of the Maidan will not lead to the oppression of Russian and other national minorities by the "main ethnicity" but, on the contrary, that it will create for the first time the conditions needed for the cohabitation of all peoples in Ukraine on the basis of equal rights.

All this, in turn, necessarily and directly raises the question of the next stage of the Ukrainian revolution — the overthrow of the oligarchic government and guaranteeing genuine popular self-government throughout the country.

Making new ways to left unity

By Martin Thomas

The International Socialist Network, the Anti-Capitalist Initiative, Socialist Resistance, and Workers' Power have called a conference on revolutionary unity for 26 April (11am at the University of London Union, Malet St, WC1E 7HY).

This conference was initially billed as to form a new united organisation, but is now described more modestly by the ISN as a "forum".

The last ten years have seen at least nine distinct unity efforts on the British left, some much more elaborate and sustained than the 26 April conference, but none so far successful.

The trend will be reversed eventually, and perhaps soon; and it has not been all-smothering; but the last ten years have generally been a time of setbacks for the labour movement and the left.

In such times we don't get progress by sinking differences and relying on the onrush of events and enthusiasm to unify factions. Unifications may be possible; but work to construct them must be based on rigorous and patient application of basic rules: unity in action where we agree, honest debate and dialogue where we disagree.

As yet there is no real sign of the four groups in the 26 April meeting developing united actions, or having thorough debates. The 26 April groups all operate to some degree inside the Burgin-Hudson "Left Unity" group, but with different and clashing policies. It is hard to see how they can be brought together into something coherent, especially as ISNers want also to include the (revolutionary-syndicalist) IWW and the (semi-"autonomist-Marxist") Plan C.

The ACI magazine *The Exchange* has published a special issue on unity, jointly produced by ACI, SR, and ISN people. It has some interesting articles, but no real debate on disputed issues, no indication of a political platform adequate to cohere an organisation.

TRADE UNION

ISN writers say that a revolutionary socialist organisation can decide lines of action, but should not "compel" members to cooperate in practice. ACI writers say that practical cooperation should be "entirely voluntary" for the individual.

This would make the projected revolutionary socialist organisation looser than a militant trade union. A militant trade union (if not restricted by law, as in Britain now) does seek to "compel" members to join strikes decided by the union, and makes it *not* "entirely voluntary" whether members respect picket lines or not.

Workers' Liberty differs from groups like the SWP by writing into our constitution that members with minority views should not conceal their disagreements in public, and by operating in practice with extensive and democratic debate, including in public.

But a revolutionary socialist organisation cannot be effective unless it demands something more from its members than that they join activity when they feel like it. It gives democratic space for minorities, but also requires that they co-operate diligently in practical activity, and engage in debate with the majority rather than just dissociating themselves.

A revolutionary socialist organisation is useful to the working class only if it can be a force for political education and enlightenment, combative against the pressures from a great variety of bourgeois ideologies; only if it can offer sharp and clear ideas in struggle; only if it has sufficient coherence and commitment that it can act dynamically and effectively on those ideas.

At the same time as talking about broadness and openness, the ISN responded to a proposal for talks from AWL by writing: "We will not be holding talks with your organisation... we believe there to be far too many issues on which we differ" (bit.ly/isn-awl). So they're all for debate — except with people who disagree with them and would give them an argument!

Sadly, many activists have been put off the idea of coherent revolutionary socialist organisation by the caricatures offered by the SWP, and, on a smaller scale, Workers' Power.

The ISN was started by people quitting the SWP, and has itself split recently. The main constituents of the ACI were two groupings which quit Workers' Power at different times; the ACI itself has divided recently, some of its people joining the ISN, some continuing as ACI.

At Sussex University, some students have tipped over SWP stalls and burned copies of SW that SWPers were offering for sale

Whatever their other merits, these are not experts at unity.

A timeline may help.

2003: the SWP breaks up the Socialist Alliance — which was a unity project of more substance than anything since, and included AWL — in order to make a new alliance with George Galloway, called Respect. The SWP hopes that Respect will give it a short-cut to electoral success.

July 2006: most of Workers' Power's more experienced trade-unionists split from WP, and form a group called Permanent Revolution. PR will later join the ACI, and then in March 2013 formally dissolve into ACI.

Autumn 2007: Respect, having never had the hoped-for success, breaks up. Galloway splits with the SWP, and takes with him a group of leading SWPers.

January 2009: the SWP Central Committee, facing discontent among SWP members over the Respect fiasco, scapegoats former SWP leader John Rees and excludes him from the CC.

February 2010: Rees, Lindsey German, and others quit SWP to set up Counterfire, an under-the-radar group which is nevertheless the power behind the scenes in the Coalition of Resistance and then the People's Assembly.

January 2011: the SWP CC removes Martin Smith from his post as national secretary of the SWP. Simultaneously it says that sexual-harassment charges made against him by a woman SWPer have been resolved without need for formal proceedings, and organises a standing ovation for Smith at the SWP conference.

April 2011: Chris Bambery, who has been a semi-ally of Rees in SWP, quits and sets up ISG (Scotland).

April 2012: another split from WP, this time of younger ex-student activists: they become the main people in the Anti-Capitalist Initiative (bit.ly/anticap1).

Late 2012: the rump of Respect, around Galloway, breaks up, as people quit in protest at Galloway's out-of-hand dismissal of rape allegations against Julian Assange. Two of those who quit, Kate Hudson and Andrew Burgin, initiate "Left Unity" as an attempt to build a British equivalent of Die Linke.

Also late 2012: the charges against Martin Smith inside the SWP resurface, and now include rape. The CC concedes an investigation, but expels the "Facebook Four" of SWP members found discussing their discontent on Facebook.

January 2013: SWP conference narrowly endorses a Disputes Committee report clearing Smith (though the CC, without stating a reason, removes Smith from the CC: he disappears from sight, and in July 2013 resigns from SWP).

March 2013: after a further SWP conference, some hundreds of members quit, including a lot of the SWP's students. Some of them set up ISN.

January 2014: after yet another SWP conference, another batch of members quits. This batch includes more students, some former leading SWP organisers, some long-standing SWP writers on theoretical issues, and some leading SWP trade unionists. They set up RS21.

January 2014: ISN splits, in a dispute about posts on Facebook.

A big part of this story is the unravelling and decay of the SWP. The SWP has been the biggest group on the activist left since the early 90s. Its literature, its initiatives, and its schemes have defined what is "left" for many outside the SWP's ranks. Not for AWL, of course, but certainly, to a large extent and despite their disputes on some issues with SWP, for Workers' Power and the SP, who lack theory of their own.

The roots of the SWP's versions of what it is to be "left" stretch many years into history (bit.ly/swp-7). The immediate ingredients of the current mix are:

- an "anti-imperialism" which defines forces in conflict with the USA (however reactionary: Hezbollah, the Iranian state, Taliban, Hamas, etc.) as ipso facto good and semi-revolutionary
- activity always focused on a dash for "the next big thing", justifying a closed and "commandist" regime from the wish to be able to mobilise for each new "big thing" without being delayed by much debate, and not to be distracted by debate over the last "big thing"
- a model of "the party" rather like the old Communist Party's, as an organisational machine mediated through a series of what the SWP calls "united fronts". (These started with the Committee for Peace in the Balkans in 1999, and have permuted through Stop The War, from 2001; Unite Against Fascism, from 2003; Organise for Fighting Unions, from November 2006; Right to Work, from January 2010; Unite the Resistance, from November 2011; and more).

FIASCO

The SWP's perspective for Respect combined all three ingredients. It proved a fiasco. The fiasco was followed by the SWP leadership scapegoating John Rees (and making unfulfilled promises of a more democratic and thoughtful regime), and by a steep decline in the political authority and credibility of the SWP leadership among SWP members.

That decline set the scene for the CC's manipulative mishandling of the Smith affair to shock many hundreds of already-weary activists into quitting. But to make a real new beginning, the activists need to work back through the ideas which shaped the last decade.

Recent weeks have produced two hopeful signs.

The ISN has published on their website a good article from 1977 on the Ukrainian national question (bit.ly/is-ukr), one which puts into question the whole SWP-inherited method of having one's politics defined negatively as the militant contrary of US policy. Some RS21 members have also been open to discussion about Ukraine.

Some people in the ISN have gone along with the widespread mood on the student left not to object when small minorities try to ban the SWP: bit.ly/vs-ban. Others have not, though. They have recognised that socialist politics requires debate, not a combination of loose consensus around taken-for-granted "left" assumptions coupled with bans on those who might disturb the assumptions.

Though RS21, the more recent and more cohesive splinter from the SWP, has yet to make a public statement against the bans, some of its leading members are clear and forthright against them, and willing to discuss joint action against the bans.

United action of that sort, and a real debate about Ukraine, would be first steps towards a positive reconstruction of a left in disarray.

Greek unions call another general strike

GSEE-called strike should be the beginning of a battle plan

By Theodora Polenta

Greece's unions have called another general strike on 9 April. The coalition government of Antonis Samaras and the EU/ ECB/ IMF Troika have fast-tracked another reactionary mini memorandum through parliament. The "polynomoschedio" satisfied basic objectives of capital at the expense of the interests of the working class and the popular strata.

Following seven months of government talks with the European Union (EU)-led troika, MPs voted through the package by a slim majority of 151 MPs (out of 300) on Sunday 30 March.

The Troika had demanded the bill as a precondition for Greece to receive further loans of around €9 billion, the final disbursement from the €172 billion second loan agreement agreed on previously. Greece has to make a debt payment of €9.3 billion in May.

The left-wing party Syriza attempted to delay the bill by putting a motion of no confidence in Finance Minister Yanni Stournaras. The motion was not accepted by parliament as valid.

The agreement with the Troika comprises six items.

One: "Authorities have confirmed their commitment to implementing the necessary policies to achieve the 2015 target for the primary surplus of 3% of GDP, including extension of tax measures as appropriate, such as the solidarity contribution".

The solidarity levy, calculated at the rate of 1% to 4% depending on income, was due to be withdrawn in 2016. Now it looks like being made permanent, which is what happened with the regressive property tax!

Two: the government commits "to implement a large part of product market reforms that were identified in the recent report of the OECD in the fields of food processing, tourism, building materials and retailing, to take concrete steps to liberalize transport markets and rent and open up closed professions". Most of the detailed measures here are the result of lobbying European multinationals.

Three: a reduction in social security contributions, 3.9% for employers and 1% for employees. This reduction, which primarily benefits the employers and reduces the income of the funds, will lead to the repeal of a series of benefits.

Four: changes in labour legislation. Restrictions on massive lay-offs and on lock-outs will be lifted. A series of measures will push towards a scheme of poverty wages and pensions, at 500 euros and 360 euros respectively. Redundancy payments for civil servants will be reduced; the hiring of subcontracted workers for the execution of major projects will be increased.

Five: moves for privatisation through the "separation of the Public Power Corporation into two bodies". This will lead to an increase in energy tariffs.

Six: the banks are to have their capital position further strengthened.

As a result of the huge cuts already in place, the government reported a budget surplus for last year of €2.9 billion. In what was presented as a pre-election "give-away," a paltry €500 million of this will go to "lower-income groups" as a one-off payment.

Some €1 billion of the surplus will go to cover overdue public-sector debts to private-sector firms and individuals in 2014, while another €1 billion will go towards paying off Greece's debts of more than €300 billion owed to the international banks.

Greece's two big union confederations, GSEE and ADEDY, are calling a 24 hour general strike on 9 April.

In March the government passed law 4250/2014, which creates a further pool of public sector workers as candidates for redundancy.

4250 also requires a review of the documents and the processes by which 35,000 temporary contracted public sector and council workers became "permanent" in 2004. The aim of this provision is to find irregularities to justify more redundancies in the public and municipal services.

But GSEE did not call a general strike against the enactment of 4250.

On 22 March, hundreds of public servants became redundant (teachers of technical high schools, school guards, etc.), at the end of a process of being suspended pending possible redeployment. These were the first lay-offs of public service workers since 1911, when the permanence of public sector jobs was constitutionally enshrined.

But GSEE did not call a general strike.

On 30 March parliament passed the mini Memorandum. But GSEE did not call a general strike.

APRIL

GSEE called for a general strike on 9 April. What's special about this date? It has enough distance from the lay-offs and the passing of the mini-Memorandum.

The GSEE leaders can say they have fulfilled their duty by calling the strike, and can blame any shortfall in participation on workers who "do not want a confrontation", "do not want to strike", and so on.

However, this general strike should not only be treated as a ceremonial strike. It came from the great pressure exerted to the union leaderships by the mobilisations of workers in the public sector, and from the rage of working-class people at the everyday squalor of life and at the new measures the government is taking.

The strike call also showed a weakening of the bureaucratic grip in the unions of PASKE (the trade-union wing of Pasok, the social-democratic party which used to dominate Greek politics and is now in coalition with Samaras).

The decision for the general strike passed despite PASKE objections in GSEE and despite PASKE trying to immobilize the General Council of ADEDY with the help of others.

What is needed now is bold initiatives to be taken to organise the strike. The left forces which have set up META (the trade union front of Syriza) need to be in the forefront of struggle, with tours and open assemblies and meetings in workplaces and practical solidarity to workers that are threatened with being made redundant.

In the neighbourhoods, Syriza, in cooperation with the neighbourhood and residents' committees, should take over the organisation of the strike, with dynamic demonstrations such as occupations of public spaces, buildings and roads.

We should not give the government and to those who say that the working class "does not want to strike" a chance to gloat.

The 24-hour general strike should be the beginning of a real battle plan, with rolling strikes which would put as a clear target the overthrow of the government and its austerity policies and the establishment of a pro-worker government of the left. Participation will grow and the majority of workers will be willing to lose pay if there is a clear plan and a prospect of winning.

Unfortunately a real militant battle plan is not supported by the trade union forces in Syriza (waiting to become the government), nor by the Communist Party, which fears that a rise in militancy and struggles would speed up the formation of a Syriza government.

The trade union movement must rise from its base; from its rank and file. The left must rebuild radical militant factions in trade unions and coordinate those who want to fight around a plan based upon all militant rank and file forces to overthrow this government of magnates, bankers, and ship owners.

The radical left and the vanguard of the labour movement should certainly be there on 9 April, regardless of criticisms, seeking maximum participation of workers.

The leaders of Syriza and KKE, who claim that they sincerely want to help in stopping the attack on workers, should radically change their own attitudes. They should immediately create a united front of both parties and forces in the unions and youth.

Under the present conditions, the first stop is the elections in May — local elections in two rounds on 18 and 25 May, and the Euro-election on 25 May.

A massive vote for the left and for a socialist solution of workers' power and control will create new openings. If the bourgeois political camp is shattered and Syriza and the KKE prevail in the municipalities, the regions and the European Parliament, then the government will lose all legitimacy to remain in power, and the labour movement and the youth will gain momentum and confidence in their struggle.

The leadership of Syriza, instead of sending a clear call of the Communist Party, has chosen to search for allies in the "middle ground", while the leadership of the Communist Party reaffirmed its sectarian tactics equating Syriza with the parties of the ruling class.

The rank and file of both parties should press firmly for unity. Every activist should be mobilised in a struggle for a great victory of the left in both electoral battles of May.

It is time — and perhaps the last chance for a while — for a life-saving-turn to radicalism and social rupture. Which is not the problem, but the solution! Such a shift towards left radicalism, trade union militancy and socialist perspectives should be expressed in all critical choices up to May.

Students, support the marking boycott!

By a UCU member

Members of the University and College Union (UCU) will begin a boycott of marking on 28 April unless Higher Education bosses make concessions on pay.

Higher Education workers have already struck six times against a 1% pay offer for 2013-2014.

The boycott will be of all formal assessments.

Talks between the unions representing workers in higher education and the employers association were held on 26 March; those talks were over the 2014-15 pay claim (which is being presented by the union as a continuation of the current dispute). No offer was made. Further talks will be held on 15 April.

The unions want pay to increase to cover current rates of inflation, the loss of real terms pay over the last five years, low pay rates among certain groups of workers, and increases in London Weighting.

If the boycott does go ahead, the crunch time will be June and July, when marks for most formal assessments will be due.

In some institutions the boycott will be strong, in others less so.

To win this dispute the union needs strong student solidarity.

Student activists have a key role to play in winning over students on the arguments, getting protests, organising writing to individual vice chancellors, calling for a increased pay offer for staff.

The UCU argues that universities, with a collective surplus of more than £1 billion, can pay staff more. Vice-chancellors have had an average 6% pay rise.

• Students support the boycott: bit.ly/ncafc-boycott

Teachers need a clear set of demands

By an NUT member

Delegates to the conference of the National Union of teachers will meet in Brighton from 18-22 April just weeks after our national strike.

Top of the agenda will be the national dispute with Michael Gove and, specifically, the next steps in the campaign of industrial action and public agitation. As at previous conferences the debate on the dispute will be shaped by a priority motion from the National Executive and amendments from delegates.

There are at least three major issues to resolve.

First what is the action plan for the months ahead? The Executive motion recommends a further one day strike in late in June and a commitment to develop a programme of further action for the Autumn term and beyond if there continues to be no change in stance from the Secretary of State.

But is that outline plan enough to turn the NUT's episodic action campaign into something that can force significant concessions?

A sizeable number of delegates, particularly those from branches supporting the rank and file network LANAC, will want to strengthen that proposal and flesh out "a programme of further action".

Second what are the possibilities for co-ordination with other unions? The Executive will again seek to co-ordinate that action with the NASUWT, but not only with them.

The debates that have taken place in the union have never been about whether action is more effective when the two big teacher unions collaborate. It clearly is. Rather they have been about the extent to which action is delayed and momentum lost by the extreme reluctance of the NASUWT to act with any sense of urgency.

There is some possibility that school support staff in Unison and GMB will be in dispute with the government over local government pay between now and the summer. If members of those unions vote yes in their ballots for action, the impact on schools will be great and that could deliver a real boost.

DEMANDS

Finally, it has not been easy for the average member to keep a consistent picture of what this dispute is actually about.

The first strikes in 2011 (June and November) were very clearly in defence of teachers' pensions.

Until a few weeks ago there was no further national strike action. In the meantime the pension age increased to 65, final salary pensions were abolished and teachers saw their pay packets hit by two huge pension contribution increases.

When the campaign was finally revived in 2013 it involved working with the second biggest union, the NASUWT, and the issues in dispute expanded to cover pay and workload.

Rebranding no substitute for clear demands

By agreement between the two unions it was rebranded as "Protecting Teachers, Defending Education". In the run-up to the 26 March strike the branding changed again to "Stand Up for Education" in recognition that the NASUWT were not taking action.

While all the issues could be found in union material, there was a tendency to rely on a general wave of anti-Gove sentiment to maintain momentum. Hostility to Gove and the proud advocacy of a broader and more liberating education system are both good things, but they are not a substitute for clear understandable demands.

In 2011 teachers knew what they were striking for. In 2014 they need to know what is being demanded from the government apart from that they talk to us.

A return to national pay scales, a more realistic pension age and real limits to working conditions and hours could be encapsulated in a national contract to be fought for in alliance with parents and other unions.

The argument that exhausted, demoralised teachers are bad for children and schools is an important one, but we need to turn that into a concrete programme which can mobilise members and be understood by parents.

Why I am asking for your support

Patrick Murphy is standing for Deputy General Secretary of the NUT

We need to combine the public campaigning, street stalls and political pressure with a plan for ongoing and escalating industrial action which can win serious improvements. We need precise demands instead of bland calls for Gove to "consider compromise".

I have proposed, argued and voted for such an approach at every stage in this campaign

The NUT has been right to turn outwards to parents and the public in the campaign to stand up for education. But, industrially, we built up momentum in 2011 only to allow it to dissipate.

Three one day national strikes spread over three years, and one set of regional strikes, is not enough to beat Gove, or to put real pressure for improvements on a possible Labour government after 2015.

Reducing Workload

It is good that the STRB rejected Michael Gove's plans to lengthen school terms and the working day. But we need changes which enable us to come fresh to our classrooms, which free us from bureaucracy to focus on teaching, and which make teaching a tolerable job.

The NUT-NASUWT joint workload action achieved gains, but only in a small number of schools.

The DfE workload survey shows that teachers' average weekly hours have increased to 59 for primary and 56 for secondary.

Patrick Murphy

The union should relaunch and step up the workload action, and focus it more tightly on a few key pressure points such as appraisal targets, data entry, requirements to submit lesson plans, meetings, and observations. Victories on those issues will rebuild union power to help us win on pay, pensions, etc.

We should fight, in alliance with parents and the wider public, for a national contract for decent conditions which cover all teachers in state-funded schools.

Organising from the bottom: maintain local divisions and associations but build workplace groups and academy chain committees.

I want to see local associations and divisions remain as the local democratic focus for members. It makes sense for members to link up each other in the areas where they live and work. But they are no longer enough on their own. With the growth of academies and the weakening of local authorities it is more important than ever that the workplace group is strengthened and empowered within union structures. School groups should be at the heart of the Union.

The union should build committees to link school groups across Academy chains. Negotiations with academy chains should wherever possible be led and controlled by members working in those chains.

Union decision-making should be more transparent, with the Executive discussing proposals from the rank and file and publishing its minutes.

One school workers' union

With all teachers — and all support staff — in one union we can defend education and protect all our conditions more effectively.

Picking up on our message of "Fair Pensions For All", the union should also be politically active, working with the rest of the labour movement to advance social equality, social provision, workers' rights, and education which inspires and liberates.

A teachers' leader on a teachers' salary.

Union leaders should be much closer to their members and to the conditions they experience. If elected I would remain on my current teachers' salary point.

• Patrick is the Division Secretary for Leeds NUT and National Executive member for district 4 (Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield). He is an active socialist, a supporter of the Local Associations National Action Campaign, and a member of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty.

NUT conference fringe meetings

Friday 18 April 7.45: LANAC meeting: How we can fight to win. Speakers include Martin Powell Davies (candidate for General Secretary), Janine Booth, RMT
Venue: Old Ship Inn, Brighton

Sunday 20 April 1pm: Workers' Liberty Fringe Meeting Speakers Patrick Murphy (candidate for DGS), the 3Cosas Campaign. Venue: Premier Inn, Brighton

Tube workers gear up for further strikes

By Ira Berkovic

The negotiations forced on London Underground bosses by Tube workers' strike of 4-6 February will conclude on 14 April.

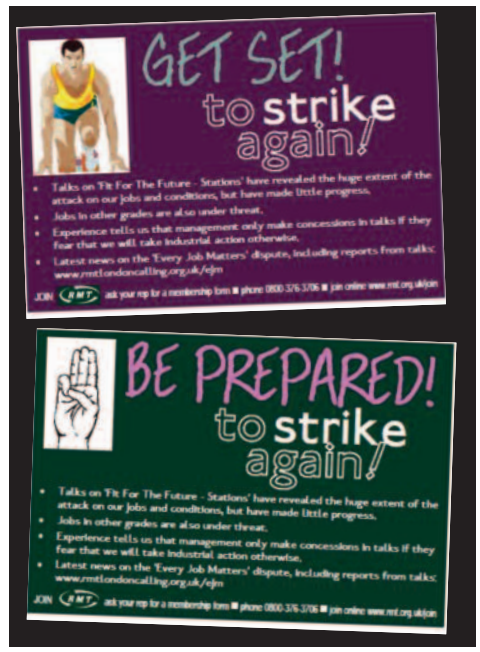
Activists in the RMT union say the talks have been useful for learning more about the scale of bosses' cuts plans, but that little progress has been made, management remain intransigent and workers must be prepared to strike again.

The talks have revealed that LU bosses want to increase managerial staff by 370%, while reducing front-line staff by 753 posts. While they propose to close every ticket office on the network, they have admitted that they only plan to install 150 new ticket machines. And while they promised a "station-by-station review" of ticket office closures, they have conducted only a superficial review, with handpicked stations standing in as "examples" for others of similar sizes and types. In the "Equality Impact Assessment" conducted into the impact of the proposed cuts on various groups who face specific oppression or discrimination in society, LU admitted that its cuts will impact negatively on disabled people and older people.

RMT activists are mobilising for further action, and although no specific dates have been named, the union's Regional Council has produced "Get Ready To Strike Again" publicity (pictured) for distribution around workplaces and union branches. The law requires unions to give bosses seven days' notice of any strike, so the earliest a strike could take place following the conclusion of talks would be Tuesday 22 April. The union has said it will call a mass members' meeting following the conclusion of talks.

RMT is also committed not to resolve the dispute while disciplinary procedures remain outstanding against any union member. Currently, three activists — Mark Harding, John Reid and Ian Stewart — face disciplinary sanctions of various kinds (and in Mark's case, legal sanction). The union is mounting a strong defence of all three.

The fact that management agreed to pause their cuts plan for further talks following the February strike



shows that solid action can force concessions. But their intransigence in the talks since then — a position it was easier for them to take without any further strikes on the horizon — shows how committed LUL bosses are to their cuts project. 48 hours of action is unlikely to be enough to shift them again, so RMT and TSSA will have to consider sustained and escalating action, with creatively designed forms of "action short of strike" in between all-out strikes, to win their demands of no job losses, no ticket office closures, and no victimisations.

It would further strengthen the fight if Unite were to ballot its members (some managers and engineering workers). Drivers-only union ASLEF joining the fight would make it stronger still — and with LUL having formally begun the process of tendering for driverless trains, the cuts are showing a more direct impact on drivers.

Joint meetings of members of all unions which are part of the fight, convened as soon as possible, would enable activists to discuss the dispute face-to-face.

•For regular updates, see the blog of the rank-and-file bulletin *Tubeworker* — workersliberty.org/twblog

Vote John Leach for RMT General Secretary!

By Ollie Moore

The election for a new General Secretary of the Rail, Maritime, and Transport workers' union (RMT) has begun, following the tragic death of former incumbent Bob Crow.

Five people have so far declared their candidacies — Mick Cash (the current Senior Assistant General Secretary), John Leach (former National President and current London Transport Regional Organiser), Steve Hedley (currently the other Assistant General Secretary alongside Mick Cash), Alan Pottage (current head of the

union's Organising Department) and Alex Gordon (former National President).

Nominations formally open on 10 April, and other candidates may also emerge before nominations close on 2 July.

Workers' Liberty members in the RMT are supporting John Leach. John's platform includes a commitment to deepening and extending rank-and-file democracy in the RMT, pursuing a creative and militant industrial strategy, and improving the union's work on equalities. John has also committed not to take the pay increase that would come with the post.

For the next few months, branches will be deciding which candidate to nominate. Members will then vote in a postal ballot between 21 July and 22 September.

• For more information on John's campaign, see Facebook.com/johnforgs; Twitter @johnforgs; email j.leach@rmt.org.uk

Local government pay fight

By Stewart Ward

Unite, Unison, and GMB have initiated a ballot for Local Government workers with the recommendation to reject the derisory 1% pay increase offered by the Local Government Employers.

The offer is in contrast to the current RPI rate of inflation of 2.8%. The cost of living for many of the lowest paid makes the offer unacceptable and pushes more workers further into poverty.

All three unions have called for rejection of the offer and indicated this will be the beginning of strike action. A serious campaign must be fought to ensure a strong turnout to reject the offer is coupled with willingness from the leadership to back effective action that wins the dispute.

Unison members have been told that the "one-day" culture that has become the stock trade of public sector unions, with the full backing of the bureaucracy, will have to come to an end. This can only be effective if the union has a serious strategy and engages branches and stewards in building well supported, solid and escalating strikes. Coordinating action with teaching support staff and being creative in the action taken can be part of the offensive against poverty pay. However without a serious push in branches that such action can win, combativeness will remain low.

The confidence of those members willing to take action, particularly in large cities where the effect of the ever increasing loss in pay is felt at is sharpest, must be backed by a commitment for strike pay and rank and file control of the dispute. The very real fear of job losses from the cuts will make some workers wary of any action.

A successful strike over pay can build momentum and confidence amongst these workers in the fight against further cuts and redundancies.

Cinema workers strike

By Clarke Benitez

Cinema workers at the Ritzy cinema in Brixton have announced 11 April as the date for the first strike in their dispute over pay.

Members of BECTU at the cinema have conducted a long-running campaign to win the London Living Wage of £8.80 an hour. The typical hourly rate at the Ritzy is currently £7.24.

Workers voted to strike by an 85% majority.

Sparks win contract fight

By Ira Berkovic

Electricians working at a Network Rail construction site in Three Bridges, Sussex, won new contracts following a wildcat strike on 4 April.

Following attempts by the agency through with they were employed to worsen their terms and conditions, 30 sparks walked off the job, demanding direct employment. NG Bailey, the construction company running the site for Network Rail, agreed to hire the workers directly on three-month rolling contracts.

The dispute shows the extent of subcontracting in the construction industry, which can sometimes involve three or four different companies — a client for whom construction is being carried out, a construction firm or consortium overseeing the work, and smaller companies to whom particular areas of work are contracted, who themselves may use employment agencies to find workers.

But the dispute also shows the power of workers' action. If workers refuse to work without guaranteed contracts and industry-standard terms and conditions, work gets backed up.

Sparks at an NG Bailey site in Tottenham Court Road, Central London, followed the Three Bridges example with a strike on Monday 7 April, demanding full employment.

Other construction workers facing worsening terms and conditions should be encouraged and inspired by the Three Bridges sparks' win.

• For more, see the rank-and-file *Siteworker* bulletin's blog at siteworker.blogspot.co.uk

Doncaster care workers to strike again

By Darren Bedford

Workers employed by Care UK in Doncaster struck again from 6 April to 8 April.

The strike was the latest action in a dispute which saw the workers strike for seven days from 27 February.

They are fighting to stop the introduction of new contracts which will abolish unsocial hours payments, causing some workers to lose up to £7,000 a year in pay (nearly 50% of the salary for some staff).

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East Ukraine: it's mostly Russian imperialism, not democratic protest

By Martin Thomas

On the weekend of 5-6 April pro-Russian crowds staged demonstrations in some cities of eastern Ukraine, and seized public buildings.

In Donetsk the demonstrators echoed events in Crimea by saying that they were constituting a new regional government and would organise a referendum on transferring Donetsk to Russia.

Are these justified protests by Ukraine's Russian minority, strongest in the east, against Ukrainian chauvinist policies from the new government in Kiev?

Or are they operations fomented by the Russian government, using Russians who cross the border to join the protests and the east-Ukrainian Russian minority? Operations whose core aim and function is to serve Russian foreign policy, for example by setting up clashes which will give Russian troops an excuse to invade?

The balance of evidence suggests they are mostly the second. The demonstrations do not emerge from a background of growing protest against specific policies and actions by the Kiev government disadvantaging Russian people in eastern Ukraine. Instead, they start immediately by seizing public buildings.

Demonstration in Donetsk

RUSSIAN MINORITY

Without question there is a large Russian minority in eastern Ukraine (over 30% in some districts), and many Russians look to Russia.

Without doubt many in that Russian minority dislike the new government in Kiev. In that sense, an element of the depiction of the demonstrations as protests by an aggrieved minority is correct.

However, the broad historical facts which we know for sure are that Ukraine has been an oppressed nation, and mostly oppressed by Russia (Tsarist or Stalinist) for centuries; that for centuries also, Russians have come to Ukraine as imperial colonisers, Russian has been the language of the better-off and culturally-advantaged in Ukraine, and Ukrainian has been disdained as the "peasant language"; and that Putin's government, keen to sustain Russia as a great power, has been striving to regain some of the reach of Tsarist and Stalinist imperialism (Chechnya, Georgia).

As contemporary evidence we have a large opinion poll conducted across Ukraine and Crimea on 14-26 March, with its results published on 5 April. The fieldwork was conducted by a Kiev-based agency (the "Rating Group") and funded by the US Agency for International Development, so some bias can be suspected. However, it's the evidence we have.

In the poll, only 12% of people in Ukraine and Crimea said "yes" or "to some degree" when asked whether Russian-speaking citizens were under threat. Only 29% of people who considered themselves ethnic Russians reckoned that Russian-speaking citizens were under threat, and only 17% of the population in eastern Ukraine had that view.

17% is a big enough minority to provide a base for spectacular demonstrations when the demonstrators know they have support from a neighbouring great power. It is not a democratic mandate for deciding the future of the area.

Only 13% (in Ukraine and Crimea combined) supported the "decision of the Russian Federation to send its army to protest Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine". Only 14%, and only 26% in the east, were for the federal set-up in Ukraine which Putin demands.

When asked what should the new Kiev government's priorities be, the big majority in the east as in the west said it should be tackling economic corruption. Only much smaller percentages mentioned minority rights or decentralisation.

27% of people across Ukraine emphatically did not support the Independence Square protests in Kiev which brought down Yanukovych. However, that 27% was a lower disapproval rating than the 33% recorded in February 2014, before the fall of Yanukovych.

In other words, it is not that people supported the movement against Yanukovych, but have recoiled on seeing the new government. On the contrary, some of those who supported or semi-supported Yanukovych to the end have switched sides after seeing Yanukovych flee to Russia and hearing more revelations about his corruption.

The theory that the overthrow of Yanukovych was produced by a surge of the far-right in Ukraine looks doubtful. The far-right Ukrainian chauvinist party Svoboda scores only 5% in the poll, as against 10% in the last elections; the vicious "Right Sector" group scores 1%.

The Kiev government is certainly dominated by oligarchs, and the poll shows low levels of confidence in it everywhere, especially in the east. 50% expressed disapproval of the job the Parliament is doing, and 73% in the east.

That percentage, however, should be compared with 80% across the whole of Ukraine and Crimea who expressed disapproval of the job that Parliament was doing under Yanukovych, in September 2013.

It was not that Ukraine was jogging along fine under Russian hegemony until a far-right pro-EU conspiracy spoiled things. Rather, that the majority of Ukrainians resent both Russian aspirations to dominate, and the rule of Ukrainian oligarchs whether pro-Russian or Ukrainian-nationalist, and rightly doubt that the fall of Yanukovych has changed much about the oligarchic corruption.

PRINCIPLES

The three principles on which *Solidarity* bases our attitude about Ukraine are:

- Ukraine is a nation historically oppressed by Russia which has the right to national self-determination. Russians living in Ukraine should enjoy democratic minority rights, but their rights cannot cancel the right to self-determination of the whole Ukrainian nation.
- We do not endorse the trade deal which the EU has got Ukraine to sign. We demand that the Western governments give Ukraine real aid by cancelling its crippling debt to Western banks. The immediate threat to Ukrainian *political* self-determination comes from Russia, invading Crimea, massing troops on Ukraine's border, fomenting small coups in east-Ukrainian cities, and demanding Ukraine fit its constitution to Russian wishes. Russian troops out!
- The oligarchs offer Ukraine a bleak, unequal future even if Ukraine manages to conserve its independence. Socialists internationally should back the Ukrainian left and labour movement in its efforts to create a force which can win real victories for the social demands which fuelled the Independence Square protests.

Such a force would provide a solid basis for uniting all workers in Ukraine, Ukrainian-speaking and Russian-speaking, "ethnic"-Ukrainian and "ethnic"-Russian, west and east, for socialist aims.

• Voices from the Russian and Ukrainian left, pages 6-7.