



For a
workers'
government

Solidarity

& WORKERS' LIBERTY

For social ownership of the banks and industry

No 345 26 November 2014 30p/80p

www.workersliberty.org

The Unequal States of America



**Protests flare across USA after
killer cop goes scot-free**

What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

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

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



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

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

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

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

We stand for:

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

Contact us:

- 020 7394 8923 ● solidarity@workersliberty.org

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

- Printed by Trinity Mirror

Get Solidarity every week!

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

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

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

Name

Address

I enclose £



NHS: we need more than Efford

By Jill Mountford

Labour MP Clive Efford's Bill on the NHS got through its second reading in Parliament on 21 November with 241 votes in favour and just 18 against.

It was a good though unexpected result, though nothing for the government to get worried about. There's not enough time for the Bill to go too far before the general election next May.

The Bill gives an opportunity to have discussion and debate about what changes are needed to restore the NHS; and maybe to get a sneak preview of what Labour has in mind for the NHS.

The Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign called a rally outside Parliament to welcome the limited changes of Efford's NHS Bill (the repeal of Section 75 regulations which cover procurement, "patient choice" and competition) and to raise our own independent demands to restore and rebuild the NHS.

We organised a meeting inside Parliament with Clive Efford and a line-up of NHS campaigners, including Dr Jackie Appleby from the

Save Our Surgeries Campaign; Peter Roderick (the lawyer who is working with Allyson Pollock and others on the NHS Reinstatement Bill); Joanne Lund, of the Darlo Mums 999 Call for the NHS; and Dr Jacky Davis, co-author of NHS SOS.

We expected Clive Efford to be confident and buoyant after the success of the second reading. Instead he was very defensive and brusque. When challenged by Peter Roderick as to whether the Bill restores the Secretary of State's legal duty to provide the NHS he said anyone who suggested otherwise was "stupid and annoying".

CONVERSATION

This was no way to start a constructive conversation with people who campaign relentlessly for the NHS, many of whom will be voting Labour at the next general election.

Efford appeared out of his depth, unused to explaining himself and his actions.

According to Peter Roderick, Efford's Bill will not reinstate the duty to provide or secure provision as it was in the NHS Act 2006. Rather it transforms the duty to provide into a duty to commission.

Efford's Bill seems to ac-

cept the confines of the 2012 Act. Describing the NHS as being a "service of general economic interest" in terms of EU competition law. Roderick says Member States have considerable discretion in determining what are SGEIs, and he asks, why make reference to it in this Bill when there is no legal requirement to do so?

Efford was impatient and gruff and failed to convince many of us. He was also taken to task about Clause 14 of his Bill and the Transatlantic Trade Investment Partnership (TTIP). Efford says he's in favour of Parliament deciding whether the NHS is exempt from TTIP. However, Clause 14 of his Bill does not say that!

The lawyers who put Efford's Bill together on behalf of the Labour leadership have set their stall out on some key issues, and it's lacking.

We should now campaign to get the government to allow the Bill to go to committee stage. We can then try to influence amendments to the Bill and have a bigger and more far reaching discussion on the detail.

Save Lewisham Hospital campaign is contacting NHS campaigners with Tory and



Lib-Dem MPs asking them to lobby their MPs to put pressure on the government to set up the committee stage for the Bill. We are asking 38 Degrees to launch a petition demanding the government set up the committee stage.

We want the discussion in preparation for a possible Labour government after next May. We want to use the Pollock/Roderick NHS Reinstatement Bill to amend the Efford NHS Bill.

We want a real debate over the next few months around fundamental issues for the NHS.

Critique of the Efford Bill by Allyson Pollock:
bit.ly/pollcrit

The Pollock/Roderick NHS reinstatement Bill:
bit.ly/pollbill

Dublin retreats on water fees

By Micheál MacEoin

On 19 November the Irish government granted some concessions on water charging, in an attempt to quell a wave of increasingly heated protests and demonstrations.

Tánaiste Joan Burton had her car surrounded by protesters in Dublin, and Taoiseach Enda Kenny faced a hostile reception at an event in Sligo.

Under the new proposals, announced by Environment Minister Alan Kelly, households will be liable for charges of €160 for single adult homes and €260 for all other homes, capped until January 2019. Water conservation grants of €100 a year will also be available, as an incentive to sign up to Irish Water.

However, the carrot comes with a stick. At the same time, it emerged that local authorities will be given increased powers to

hike rents or evict tenants if they do not pay.

The concessions in effect mean that the government will have to increase its subsidy to Irish Water to make up the shortfall — lending weight to the argument that the whole scheme should simply be scrapped.

Protests in some areas are continuing, with a major anti-water charges demonstration planned in Limerick. Ireland's largest union, SIPTU, remains opposed, with its National Executive Council saying that the charges regime "remains regressive in character".

The concessions show that the government is increasingly weak, and the Irish political class is rattled.

A recent poll, taken just before the latest charging announcement, showed both Fine Gael and Labour well below their levels of support at the general election, and independents reaching 30% support.



Two-thirds of new jobs under living wage

By Gemma Short

Two-thirds of people who found work in the past year have taken jobs for less than the living wage, according to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Overall 22% of workers earn less than the living wage. The foundation reports during the last decade only a fifth of low-paid workers managed to move to better paid jobs.

As many people from working families are now in poverty as from workless ones.

The Trussell Trust reports that record numbers are resorting to food

banks. Almost 500,000 adults and children were given three days' food in the first six months of the current financial year — it was 355,982 for the same period last year.

Most sought help because of delays or problems with benefit payments. But a growing number, over a fifth, did so just because of low family income.

Trussell Trust chief David McAuley says that families are "living on a financial knife-edge where one small change in circumstances or a life shock can force them into a crisis where they cannot afford to eat."



Daesh: a slow fightback

By Colin Foster

According to the Kurdish website Rudaw, the Syrian-Kurdish forces in Kobane, augmented by peshmerga troops from Iraqi Kurdistan, are now pushing back the ultra-Islamists of Daesh (ISIS, or "Islamic state").

Kurdish commanders in Kobane say that they now control half the city, which is in a Kurdish-majority part of Syria close to the Turkish border, and the other half is

"destroyed" by US air strikes against Daesh.

Regaining territory, however, is a slow process of street-by-street fighting.

In Iraq, on 23 November Daesh launched an attempt to take the city of Ramadi, but elsewhere they have been marginally pushed back.

The same day, Iraqi-Kurdish forces and Iraqi Shia militias retook the city of Saadiya, in Diyala province. That victory, however, has been followed by a dispute, with the Kurds demanding

that the Iraqi-Shia Badr Brigade, which now controls the city, hand it over to them.

The governor of Diyala has complained to the Iraqi government about Shia militias killing and kidnapping Sunnis in the province for "sectarian reasons, extortion, and to cause change in demographics".

There have been repeated reports of incipient resistance to Daesh's ultra-Islamist rule by Sunni Arabs in the areas which Daesh controls. To encourage that

resistance and help it develop requires that visibly non-sectarian and democratic forces take the field against Daesh.

While asserting solidarity with the fighters in Kobane, socialists in Britain can give no confidence to the US operation and its sectarian allies.

We should do all we can to help the socialist and working-class forces in the Kurdish areas, in Iraq, and in Turkey.

Union revolt in South Africa

By David Kirk

The largest South African trade union, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), has been expelled from South Africa's union confederation COSATU by that body's executive.

The reason for this expulsion is that NUMSA members voted in December 2013 at a special conference to refuse to support the ruling ANC in elections. NUMSA wants to move towards an independent workers' party.

The background to this goes back to the struggle against apartheid. In the 1970s and 80s black South African workers were in the forefront of the struggle against apartheid. But moves for a workers' party then failed. COSATU, formed in 1985, joined a "triple alliance" with the ANC and the South African Communist Party, focused on ending apartheid but keeping capitalism.

The end of apartheid in 1994 was a victory largely due to the militancy of South Africa's working

class. The ANC, in power since 1994, quickly made clear that economic inequality would remain untouched when political minority rule was abolished.

The ANC has followed a neo-liberal agenda supplemented only by adding non-whites to company boards. These black company directors are often leading officials from ANC, SACP, or COSATU, or members of their families.

A few people from the black middle class have joined the ruling class, but the vast majority in South Africa remain extremely poor and live in crowded and unsanitary conditions in townships.

The ANC's and the SACP's base amongst black workers has withered as disillusion has grown.

COSATU's relationship with these parties is mediated by bureaucrats who



NUMSA members on strike in March

often amass small fortunes through their own personal business links.

A new wave of working class struggle has developed in South Africa. Strikes of miners, agricultural labourers, and transport workers have won major wage rises despite the active hostility of COSATU leaders.

Non-COSATU unions like the AMCWU have sprung up, even despite threats of death being made against their leaders and activists, and some of these activists have been arrested.

NUMSA leader Irvin Jim has called for a new working class united front and vowed to fight the union's expulsion from COSATU.

Free Shahrokh Zamani and Reza Shahabi

Workers' Liberty is campaigning for the release of both Shahrokh and Reza, and for all charges against them to be dropped. We aim to collect 10000 signatures by February 11 2015.

This week we collected over 300 signatures on the

national demonstration for Free Education. We also did the first of our commuter petitioning sessions and collected 50 signatures. Campaigners have also collected signatures at Kurdish solidarity events, the Defend Julie Davies lobby

and in other campaign meetings.

Thank you also to rail workers in Nottingham who posted us some signatures this week.

We have now collected over 2,100 signatures. Lets keep going!

• bit.ly/aic-law

Iranian workers protest

By Iranian Workers' Solidarity Network

On Sunday, November 16, 1000 construction workers protested outside the Iranian regime's "parliament".

They were protesting against proposed changes to the social insurance law. Workers have written to the Iranian regime's "MPs" protesting against the change to the social insurance law approved by the Health Commission of "parliament". Under this plan there will effectively be no new building workers insured and 400,000 of those currently insured by the Social Security Organisation will also lose their insurance. The reduction of the

number of workers insured will help developers to boost their profits.

Sacked workers from Ilam Petrochemicals were also protesting against unfair dismissals and unpaid wages. Ilam's management are also not willing to pay the workers their back-pay. A sacked worker said that the boss is refusing to pay workers 50 million tomans (£11,841) in defiance of a ruling by the Justice Ministry.

This worker also pointed out that the Labour Office has ordered the boss to sign contracts directly with the dismissed workers. The workers are prepared to sign contracts with the sub-contractor only if their job security can be guaranteed.

He added: "Of course, we will sign contract with the sub-contractor if the duration of the contract is not less than a year and our job security is not endangered if the sub-contractor is changed. The boss says he will sign a one-month, or at most 45-day, contract with us."

Hossein-Ali Amiri, an Interior Ministry spokesman, said that peaceful protests by workers demanding the pay and rights are permissible unless they damage public security and order.

During the next few months workers throughout Iran need to test how genuine this statement really is.

• From: bit.ly/IranWorkers

Israel: "an anti-democratic bill"

By the Alternative Information Centre in Jerusalem

A bill defining Israel as "the nation state of the Jewish people" was passed on Sunday 23 November by the Israeli cabinet, despite protests that this bill undermines the "democratic" character of Israel and discriminates against Israel's Palestinian citizens, who comprise 20% of the population.

Fourteen ministers supported the bill while Justice Minister Livni and five ministers from the Yesh Atid party voted against.

The attorney general, Yehuda Weinstein, has also expressed concern. A number of Israeli basic laws use the term "Jewish and democratic", giving equal weight to both. The new law would enshrine only the Jewish character of the state.

"Yesh Atid and I are for a nation-state bill, just not

this nation-state bill," said Yesh Atid leader Yair Lapid. "The bill submitted today to the government puts a Jewish state before democracy... It is an anti-democratic bill. Neither I nor Yesh Atid will vote for the nation-state bill as it was submitted."

The National Democratic Assembly (NDA) party said "the law strengthens the discrimination against the Arab minority and facilitates racist legislation for nationalistic reasons ... the law includes gender discrimination, racist separation and exclusion on the one hand, while preserving the rights and national self-determination only for Jews on the other".

Taleb Abu Arar, a United Arab List member of the Knesset (Parliament) called the bill a racist law aimed at forcing Arabs out of Israel. The bill now has to go to parliament.

There must be room for doubt

In her article “Don’t ban the SWP!” (*Solidarity* 344) Cathy Nugent argues, rightly, I think, that we should “challenge and protest”, “try to discuss with” SWP members, not try to ban.

Along the way, though, she drops in the assertion: “There is no doubt whatsoever that the SWP has been guilty of rape apologetics, of denying the complaints of rape by women in their organisation”.

I still think what I wrote in *Solidarity* 281: “The SWP leadership’s approach, over two years and more, was to steer as near as it could to bureaucratic brush-off”. But: “Such wrong attitudes do not make them ‘rape apologists’.”

Bodies investigating rape charges should have a default, fallback assumption that there is a crime to be investigated. But there must still be room for due process, for “innocent until proven guilty”, for the possibility of finding that a particular charge does not have enough evidence.

Pat Stack, chair of the disputes committee which heard a rape charge against then SWP organiser Martin Smith, disassociated from the committee report and later quit the SWP with RS21. He said that there was inadequate evidence for the rape charge, but Smith was guilty of sexual harassment.

Is he right? I don’t know. We don’t know. But we haven’t heard Stack, or the SWP for that matter, saying, as rape apologists do, that there was sex without consent, but “what else could she expect?”, or “she was asking for it”, or “she had no bruises or cuts, so it couldn’t be rape”, or such.

The SWP leaders’ bureaucratic brush-off (which very many SWP members have protested about, to one degree or another) is quite bad enough to bring them condemnation. Verbally inflating that condemnation into a claim that the SWP, as such, is “rape-apologist”, feeds the culture on the left where every perceived mis-step becomes, not cause for debate, even angry, hot debate, but cause for banning (“racist”, “misogynist”, “pro-imperialist”, “Islamophobic”, etc.)

Worse, that verbal-inflation culture chooses “soft targets” (smaller groupings on the left). No-one tries to ban the Tory Party as being, as such, “rape-apologist”.

Martin Thomas, Islington

Hyping it up

Letters



Duncan Morrison’s irate letter (*Solidarity* 344) misses the point in Jon Lansman’s column in *Solidarity* 343 which really most calls for criticism.

Jon wrote that “no shortcoming of Ed Miliband is responsible for the rise of UKIP.” He probably meant that no other halfway-likely leader of the Labour Party in anything like its present shape could have stopped a rise of UKIP, either, which is true.

If so, that truth is only a half-truth. UKIP feeds on social despair. Social despair feeds on the perception that no large party offers social hope. That Labour offers so little social hope — no relief from cuts, from pay squeezes, from inequality — is partly down to “shortcomings of Ed Miliband”.

But Jon’s article was a guest column, and as *Solidarity* readers know, our guest columnists, like Eric Lee, do not necessarily at all reflect our “line”.

Duncan implies that Jon calls for us to move motions “extolling the virtues of the current [Labour] leadership”. But Jon doesn’t. Essentially he says no more than Duncan explicitly agrees with: that Miliband is “the least worst on offer” right now.

Duncan also censures the article for including its anti-cuts

Not my argument

Thank you for printing my letter in *Solidarity* 344, but I don’t think the headline “Nothing to be done about Miliband” expresses what I was arguing. Rather, I was suggesting that the Labour Party structures make it difficult to do anything about Miliband through them. Indeed if anyone was arguing “Nothing to be done about Miliband” it was Jon Lansman in the original article. In fact his argument seemed to be nothing should be done about Miliband.

Duncan Morrison, Deptford



Miliband: “least worst”?

call only in the headline. Maybe he thinks that the anti-cuts headline was added in the *Solidarity* editorial office to smarten the article up. But in fact it came from Jon’s original version of the article, on *Left Futures*.

We might make literary criticism of the fact that Jon, writing a short article for readers he assumes to be left-wing, felt he could put an anti-cuts call in the headline without arguing it through in the text; but surely not a political criticism.

That things are bad in the Labour Party at present is true. But Duncan’s efforts to hype up that fact don’t help.

There has been “another point in the past 25 years when we wouldn’t have welcomed the opportunity [of] a leadership election”.

When John Smith died in 1994, we had no joy at the prospect of a leadership poll which Tony Blair was certain to win, and where the left ended up shrugging and voting for John Prescott or Margaret Beckett, candidates which both had no chance of winning and were not even clearly anti-Blairite.

It’s not true that Miliband could be summarily replaced by the Labour MPs. At any time in Labour’s history, if a majority of MPs called on the leader to resign, then he’d find it hard to stay on.

But, unlike before the 1980s, the leadership contest would have to give votes to trade unionists and constituency party members, and might (as in 2010) return a candidate disfavoured by most MPs.

Colin Foster, London

From the Youth of All Nations

War Poems by Janine Booth



From the Youth of All Nations reads to me as a bitter complaint against the ruling classes on all sides of the First World War playing out their arguments with the sufferings and lives of soldiers.

Its title declares both a bitterness of the young against old leaders, and an internationalist outlook. Then its fifteen four-line (quatrain) stanzas spell out the manipulations of the call to war and promise rebellion rather than reverence. The strict iambic tetrameter rhythm creates an impression of an army marching to settle scores with its rulers.

Sadly, I can’t tell you much about the poet, H C Harwood. He was a student at Balliol College, Oxford, where many students held radical views in the early twentieth century. Harwood contributed some work to the “Oxford poetry” collections, with this particular poem appearing in an anthology published in 1915. Reviewing the book in the socialist newspaper *The Herald*, Gerald Gould described it as “one of the few vital things to be have been written about the war”.

Think not, my elders, to rejoice
When from the nations’ wreck we rise,
With a new thunder in our voice
And a new lightning in our eyes.

You called with patriotic sneers,
And drums and sentimental songs.
We came from out the vernal years
Thus bloodily to right your wrongs.

The sins of many centuries,
Sealed by your indolence and fright,
Have earned us these our agonies:
The thunderous appalling night

When from the lurid darkness came
The pains of poison and of shell,
The broken heart, the world’s ill-fame,
The lonely arrogance of hell.

Faintly, as from a game afar,
Your wrangles and your patronage
Come drifting to the work of war
Which you have made our heritage.

Oh, chide us not. Not ours the crime.
Oh, praise us not. It is not won,
The fight which we shall make sublime
Beneath an unaccustomed sun.

The simple world of childhood fades
Beyond the Styx that all have passed;
This is a novel land of shades,
Wherein no ancient glories last.

A land of desolation, blurred
By mists of penitence and woe,
Where every hope must be deferred
And every river backward flow.

Not on this grey and ruined plain
Shall we obedient recall
Your cities to rebuild again
For their inevitable fall.

**IF ENGLAND
FALLS
YOU FALL!**

Their call
to arms

We kneel at no ancestral shrine.
With admirable blasphemy
We desecrate the old divine
And dream a new eternity.

Destroy the history of men,
The weary cycle of decay.
We shall not pass that way again,
We tread a new untrodden way.

Though scattered wider yet our youth
On every sea and continent,
There shall come bitter with the truth
A fraction of the sons you sent.

When slowly with averted head,
Some darkly, some with halting feet,
And bowed with mourning for the dead
We walk the cheering, fluttering street,

A music terrible, austere
Shall rise from our returning ranks
To change your merriment to fear,
And slay upon your lips your thanks;

And on the brooding weary brows
Of stronger sons, close enemies,
Are writ the ruin of your house
And swift usurping dynasties.

Unequal States of America

Protests erupted across the USA after the Grand Jury investigation into the fatal shooting in St Louis, USA, of unarmed black teenager Michael Brown concluded on Monday 24 November.

Darren Wilson, the police officer who killed Michael Brown on 9 August, could have faced charges ranging from involuntary manslaughter to first-degree murder. However the jury (nine white and three black) decided that “no probable cause existed to indict Wilson.” An indictment required support from nine of the twelve jurors.

St Louis Governor Jay Nixon has called in the National Guard and declared a state of emergency. Several school districts closed schools on Tuesday 25 November. Police have attacked protesters with tear gas, rubber bullets and “hornets’ nest sting grenades” which carry rubber bullets and a toxic chemical powder repeatedly throughout the night. A no-fly zone has been instigated around the area, and the media have been asked repeatedly to leave “for their own safety”.

In Oakland, California, dozens of people blocked traffic on Interstate 580. Rubber bullets have been fired on protesters in Los Angeles. Protests have also happened in New York, Chicago, Seattle, Washington and Philadelphia.

EXPLODE

As we go to press, police report 29 people have so far been arrested in St Louis, but the figure may be much higher. One local preacher stated “you cannot shake a soda can repeatedly and not expect it to explode.”

The background is inequality in the USA: growing inequality in power, wealth, and substantive rights between the rich and the poor, and between white Americans and African-Americans.

An African-American president has not stopped that inequality increasing. In 2007 inequality in net median wealth between (non-Hispanic) white and non-white families was 6:1; in 2013 it stood at 8:1. Inequality in median income between (non-Hispanic) white and non-white increased from 1.4:1 in 2007 to 1.7:1 in 2013.

The white 64% of the US population own 88% of its wealth. 11% of the workforce are African-American, but 14% of those



Protesters in Ferguson (left) and Darren Wilson's injuries (above).

Michael then started to run away, before turning and advancing on Wilson again. Wilson states that Michael kept advancing as he shot at him, until he was fatally shot in the head.

Several eye witnesses, while supporting a confrontation, dispute that Michael advanced on Wilson when he

was shooting. Many described how Michael understandably doubled up after a few shots. Some claim he stumbled a few steps forward as he fell. Michael was 35ft (10.7m) from Wilson's car when the fatal shot was fired.

Photographic evidence of Wilson's injuries presented to the jury [pictured] shows small red patches on the face and the back of the neck, no cuts or bigger bruises. Wilson was not carrying a taser (which can temporarily disable people without killing them). He reports that he doesn't like to carry one.

Police are given broad latitude as to what constitutes “reasonable” force.

KILLED

In 2012, 426 people were recorded as having been killed by police officers in the USA (records are patchy and there is no national legal requirement to report).

31% were black, though only 13% of the US population is black. 39% of black people killed were classified as “attacking” when shot, and 42% as “not attacking”.

Many young black men reasonably fear that any wrong move can lead to their death.

Popular culture propagates a fear of young black men. The 30% white population in Ferguson are buying guns to arm themselves against this imaginary threat, yet that 30% control the political structures and the police. Just 17% of city councillors are black, compared to 67% of the population.

The shooting of Michael, the failure to indict him, is the result of a deeply unequal society. The law applied by the Grand Jury reflects that unequal society.

When all police are armed, when they are allowed to use “reasonable” force when they see a threat, and where their thinking is shaped by a culture which sees young black men as routinely a threat, then they will shoot young black men like Michael.

on the minimum wage. Officially-defined “poverty” covers 28.1% of African-Americans and 11.1% of the general population. Unemployment is double that of white workers. In St Louis it is three times as high.

Black workers are disproportionately represented in low-paid and insecure service industry jobs. In St Louis campaigners for “Show me \$15” are fighting for a \$15 minimum wage, and have staged strikes in fast food outlets across the city, including in Ferguson.

Young African-American men are jailed at seven times the rate of young white males. There are about 840,000 black men in prison in the USA, fewer than the 1.4 million black men in universities or community colleges, but not that many fewer. Black Americans account for 40% of the USA's prison population.

Under Missouri law, police officers are entitled to use deadly force for two main reasons: if they believe that a threat of death or serious injury is posed to the officer or others, or they believe that a suspect is trying to escape and would then pose that same threat of death or serious injury.

St Louis County prosecuting attorney Bob McCulloch claims some witnesses changed their accounts or were unclear. However none other than Wilson himself came even close to describing a scene where Wilson was in fear for his life.

Evidence presented to the Grand Jury showed that when Michael died he was too far from Wilson's police car to offer Wilson immediate harm. At least seven bullets hit Michael, and Wilson's gun discharged 12 bullets in total in the encounter. Wilson testified that after he stopped Michael and his friend for “jay walking” [walking in the street illegally] Michael attacked him in his car, punching him twice to the face. Wilson repeatedly referred to Michael as “it” and “being like a demon”.

Wilson then says he fired two shots out of the car and that

Police kill 12 year old boy

On Sunday 23 November, 12 year old Tamir Rice died after being shot by police in Cleveland, Ohio.

A member of the public made a 911 call, saying that Tamir had something like a gun, but also (twice) that the gun was “probably a fake”. The 911 responder twice asked whether the boy was black or white before dispatching officers.

Witnesses say he made no verbal threats and did not point the replica gun towards police officers. Police officers shot Tamir twice in the upper body.

Tamir's father, Gregory Henderson, said that police should have used a stun gun to subdue his son rather than shoot him.

UKIP: symptom of decline

On 20 November UKIP won its second elected MP in the Rochester and Strood by-election.

In many ways this is a worse result for the Conservatives than the Clacton by-election that UKIP won on 9 October. There, the profile of the population was on UKIP's side, white, ageing, and poorly educated. Rochester is another matter.

In their book about UKIP, *Revolt on the Right*, Matthew Goodwin and Robert Ford suggested that Clacton had a demography where UKIP would prosper, but the population of Rochester is younger and more educated. It has more London-facing commuters who may have a more cosmopolitan outlook.

For the Conservatives to lose Rochester and Strood on a swing against them of 14 percentage points is bad news.

By polling day the Tories had lowered their expectations so

much they could claim that their 35 per cent of the vote, compared to UKIP's 42 per cent, was not that bad. But Conservatives had done everything they could to win the seat.

Some media commentators attempted to talk the result down on the grounds of the turnout being only 51%, but that's a very high turnout for a by-election.

The result is also bad news for the left. Rochester and Strood incorporates much of the old Medway constituency that Labour won in 1997 and held (marginally) in 2005. If Rochester and Strood had existed in 2005, it would have been a Conservative gain from Labour with a small majority.

In the by-election Labour won back none of the votes lost since 1997, and received no benefit from the near-complete collapse of the Liberal Democrat vote. Rather, the Labour leaders' slightly-less-austerity programme lost much of even Labour's rump of support from 2010. Voters disillusioned

with the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats are not looking to Labour or moving left, but moving right to UKIP.

Many in the Labour leadership and the press have reacted by calling for New Labour Mark 2 (thus the Alan Johnson plot-that-never-was).

But a Blairite retreat is no longer an option for the Labour leadership. In 1997 Blair's strategy was to appeal to “aspirational” voters who lacked class consciousness while relying on the core working-class vote who (he believed) had nowhere else to go. That core vote was fragmented by the experience of New Labour, and will not be rallied so easily again.

UKIP is not the cause, but a symptom, of the decline in working-class politics. The answer is to rebuild the confidence of the working class to assert itself in politics.

Marxism and imperialism

By Martin Thomas

By the end of the 60s, what had once been "the pride" of Marxism — the theory of imperialism — had become a "tower of Babel", in which not even Marxists knew any longer how to find their way. Giovanni Arrighi

There is not, nor can there be, such a thing as a "negative" Social-Democratic slogan that serves only to "sharpen proletarian consciousness against imperialism" without at the same time offering a positive answer to the question of how Social-Democracy will solve the problem when it assumes power. A "negative" slogan unconnected with a definite positive solution will not sharpen, but dull, consciousness, for such a slogan is a hollow phrase, meaningless declamation. V I Lenin

Maybe the first big classical-Marxist statement on imperialism was by Karl Kautsky, in 1899, replying to Eduard Bernstein's call for a "revision" of the perspective of Marx and Engels.

In the 1890s Engels had identified monopolies, cartels, credit and high finance as expressions that classic individual capitalism was decaying and becoming "socialistic", but in an upside-down way which sharpened plunder, swindling, and crises. Colonialism was a profit-making venture of the new financial aristocracy.

Bernstein argued, on the contrary, that the new trends made capitalism more open to peaceful and piecemeal progress. Credit gave the system more flexibility. Industrial cartels (associations of companies bound together by agreements on production levels, prices and sales) gave the capitalists more conscious control. They could avoid overproduction by mutual agreement. The growth of the world market, and improvements in communications and transport, also made the system more flexible. Capitalism could probably postpone "general commercial crises" for a long time.

Bernstein's scenario of peace and free trade was an illusion, replied Kautsky. "Protective tariffs are easier introduced than abolished, especially in a period of such raging competition on the world market... Free trade! For the capitalists that is an ideal of the past." Bernstein claimed that speculation was a disease of capitalism's infancy. But infant capitalism was being promoted across the world by the "overflowing capitals of the older countries... Argentinian and Transvaal speculation holds its 'wildest orgies' not only in Buenos Aires and Johannesburg, but equally in the venerable City of London."

And colonialism, Kautsky insisted, was inseparable from militarism and the despoiling of colonial peoples for the benefit of "the modern kings of finance [who] dominate nations directly through cartels and trusts and subject all production to their power".

"The financier," Kautsky went on to argue, "finds militarism and a strong active governmental policy, both external and internal, very agreeable. The kings of finance need not fear a strong governmental power, independent of people and Parliament, because they can rule such a power directly either as bondholders [i.e., as people who lend money to the government], or else through personal and social influences.

DISCUSSING MARXISM AND IMPERIALISM

Between 18 and 21 December Workers' Liberty is holding an educational event in London to discuss classic Marxist theories of imperialism, dependency theory and critiques, "globalisation" and the left's use and abuse of theories of imperialism.

Interested? Contact Cathy on 020 7394 8923 or awl@workersliberty.org. Registration is essential.

In militarism, war and public debts they have a direct interest, not only as creditors, but also as government contractors...

"It is wholly different with industrial capital. Militarism, war and public debts signify high taxes... War signifies besides this... a break in trade... A strong governmental power arouses anxiety in [the industrial manager] because he cannot directly control it... he inclines rather to liberalism... [But] The opposition between finance and industry continually decreases... finance ever more and more dominates industry."

Much of Kautsky's argument was a Marxist conversion of ideas which were to be summed up with great verve by the English radical liberal, J A Hobson, in a book motivated by the Boer War (*Imperialism*, 1902).

For Hobson, "the economic taproot of Imperialism" was overproduction and glut of capital. "Messrs Rockefeller, Pierpoint Morgan [etc.] need Imperialism because they desire to use the public resources of their country to find profitable employment for the capital which would otherwise be superfluous."

Kautsky saw a similar permanent glut. He differed from Hobson in arguing that this glut would be resolved by the collapse of capitalism and the socialist revolution, rather than by "social reform", and in contending that finance-capital dominated, rather than being only a "sectional interest" counterposed to "the business interests of the nation as a whole".

Many of the core ideas of the whole literature were already expressed by 1902: militarism, colony-grabbing, conflict and an authoritarian state as the political trends; high finance, economic decadence and glut, and export of capital, as the economic underpinnings.

But what exactly was finance capital? This question was never properly resolved. And the recurrent idea of metropolitan capitalism having become "glutted" would also cause confusion.

Effective demand depends not only on consumption but also on investment; and, in fact, fluctuations in demand for investment goods are generally the prime movers in crises. Demand for those investment goods can soar while final consumption stagnates — and, vice versa, the run-up to a crisis is generally a period of unusually high working-class consumption but sagging investment.

"Overproduction" is not a permanent condition; capitalism constantly sheds overproduction through crises and then builds it up again. The notion of an absolute level after which a capitalist economy will become permanently "glutted" is a recurrent theme in mainstream economics, from Adam Smith to Keynes. It has been attractive to socialists because it seems to show that capitalism must inevitably break down. It is misleading.

AFTER 1907

In Germany's election of January 1907 the ruling Conservative/National Liberal bloc made imperialism the central issue. They denounced the Social Democrats, who had been criticising the German state's brutality in its South West African colony, as unpatriotic — and reduced them from 81 parliamentary seats to 43.

For a party so convinced that the laws of social development guaranteed it steady growth, this result was a catastrophe. What had gone wrong? Too much radical agitation, said the right wing. Imperialism had attracted the middle classes, replied the left, and undercut liberalism; but it would lead capitalism into convulsions, and eventually alienate the middle classes. The socialists must prepare for revolutionary upheavals by militant anti-imperialism and by distancing themselves from liberal illusions.

Kautsky wrote a pamphlet on *Socialism and Colonial Policy* to defend the views of the left. This was the most comprehensive statement of classical Marxism on imperialism as it affected the colonies.

Colonialism, despite all the Revisionists' argument, wrote Kautsky, was inseparable from brutal force and heavy, pauperising taxation of the local people. And so India showed "continual increase in famine and misery, in spite of heavy flow of English capital to India with a consequent improvement of the Indian "productive forces in places".

The export of capital produced malign results even in for-

mally independent states, for example Turkey. "Oriental despotism becomes horrifyingly oppressive wherever it masters the instruments of power of European civilisation, but at the same time becomes the debtor of Europe... [The resulting regime] brings to a peak the oppressive and degrading effects of capitalism, without developing any of its progressive qualities... It pairs despotism and capitalism in an abominable union."

"If the ethic of capitalism says that it is in the interests of culture and society for lower classes and nations to be ruled, the ethic of the proletariat says that precisely in the interests of culture and society the oppressed and those under tutelage must throw off all dominion." This remains the bottom line for revolutionary Marxists to this day.

This analysis of capitalist development in the colonies was taken further by Rosa Luxemburg in her 1913 book, *The Accumulation of Capital*.

She too described how the development of capitalist relations in the underdeveloped countries, and the clawing-in of their pre-capitalist economies to the capitalist world market, led the big powers to use force, seizing colonies or using the local state as, "a political machinery for exploiting peasant economy for capitalist purposes — the real function, this, of all Oriental states in the period of capitalist imperialism." It created, "the most peculiar combinations between the modern wage system and primitive authority in the colonial countries."

Capitalism in the colonies and semi-colonies, however, occupied only the last quarter of Luxemburg's book. She gave pride of place to a new statement of the thesis that a permanent "glut" within the advanced capitalist economies was the motor force of imperialism.

HILFERDING

Rudolf Hilferding's Finance Capital was published in 1910 but mostly written in 1905.

The book starts with a long and intricate discussion on the theory of money, credit, interest and the stock exchange, aiming to show that, "there is a growing tendency... to concentrate all capital in the form of money capital, and to make it available to producers only through the banks... Even today, taking possession of six large Berlin banks would mean taking possession of the most important spheres of large-scale industry."

Hilferding defines finance capital as, "capital in money form which is... transformed... into industrial capital." He adds a qualification: "this does not mean that the magnates of industry also become dependent on banking magnates"; rather, bank capitalists and industrial capitalists, "unite in close association."

Cartels are generated because otherwise the rates of profit would be lower for giant enterprises. With modern credit it is easy to get into large-scale production; given the huge amounts of fixed capital involved it is difficult to get out. So the giant enterprises form cartels to keep their profits up. The banks help them.

Kautsky and Luxemburg, in polemic against Bernstein, had stressed the instability and fragility of cartels, but Hilferding shifts the emphasis: "there is a constant tendency for cartelisation to be extended." Cartels generate high profits, but they also restrict investment, both inside the cartel (because it restricts production) and outside (because profits are low). Cartelisation therefore gives an extra push to the export of capital.

Since they export capital, the big powers need to clear the way for capitalism in underdeveloped countries. They force peasants to become wage-workers. "these violent methods are the essence of colonial policy, without which it would lose its capitalist rationale." But "capitalism itself gradually provides the subjected people with the ways and means for their own liberation" through national independence movements.

The competitive drive for economic territory will lead to war between the big capitalist states. "The response of the proletariat to the economic policy of finance capital — imperialism — cannot be free trade, but only socialism."

The book was a formidable work, but not the definitive summing-up which Hilferding intended. Rather than devel-



The Marxist debate on imperialism developed through disputes about responses to the First World War

oping a whole new theory, it pulled together ideas from writings such as Kautsky's into a tidier structure — and often through very dubious logical deductions. The analysis moves too directly from abstract economic reasoning to current German realities and back again, so that we get a picture of finance capital in general, and of Germany in 1905-09, but not much of the general development of imperialism in a variety of countries.

About 1912 Kautsky shifted to views on militarism and inter-capitalist conflict (though not on colonialism) very similar to those of Bernstein which he had criticised 13 years earlier. In 1914 world war erupted. Kautsky said that socialists should press the capitalist governments to make peace — for that was a better policy in the long run even from a capitalist point of view — and in the meantime each group of socialists could only defend their “own” country. The next phase in the classical Marxist argument was a polemic against Kautsky from the revolutionary anti-war left, by the Russian Marxists Bukharin and Lenin.

BUKHARIN

Bukharin's book *Imperialism and World Economy* was written in 1915, and read by Lenin, who wrote a preface for it in December 1915. The manuscript was lost, and recovered for publication only late in 1917. Bukharin rewrote missing sections and added material from Lenin's pamphlet, *Imperialism*, written in January-June 1916, and published in April 1917. Each work was therefore influenced by the other.

Lenin drew on the same concepts as Kautsky in his radical days, but crafted a sharper and tighter argument, and with militant conclusions. He built on the identification of monopolised, cartelised, organised, gigantified capital as the core of imperialism first made, I think, by Hilferding, but honed the argument done to something much crisper and more politically pointed than Hilferding's sprawling volume. Like Hilferding, Lenin used the term “finance capital” a lot, but finance was far less central for Lenin than it had been Kautsky at the start of the whole classical-Marxist discussion.

The immediate cause that Lenin cited for “the conquest policy of modern capitalist states” was the competition between the great monopoly capitalists for raw material sources. He cited other factors, but as secondary: a struggle to seize potential sources of raw materials as well as actual ones, arenas for other monopoly business, ideological reasons, territory for emigration.

This argument obviously raises the question: could not the monopolies obtain their raw materials more cheaply through free trade? In replying, Lenin puts the competition for raw material sources into context as only an expression of what he considers fundamental to imperialism: the growth of mo-

nopoly capital and its inherent striving for “violence and reaction”.

“Economically, the main thing in this process [of imperialism emerging] is the displacement of capitalist free competition by capitalist monopoly.” “Domination, and the violence that is associated with it, such are the relationships that are typical of the ‘latest phase of capitalist development’; this is what inevitably had to result, and has resulted, from the formation of all-powerful economic monopolies.”

Where Lenin honed down the stock ideas of the pre-1914 left, Bukharin expanded them, taking up an idea hinted at by Rosa Luxemburg in 1899 when she wrote about “the contradiction between the international character of the capitalist world economy and the national character of the capitalist state...” Technical progress, improved communications, larger-scale industry, and the expansionist drive of capitalism, led capitalists to make more links across national borders. “The course of economic development creates, parallel to this process [of internationalisation of capitalist interests], a reverse tendency towards the nationalisation of capitalist interests.” So: “The process of the internationalisation of economic life can and does sharpen, to a high degree, the conflict of interests among the various ‘national’ groups of the bourgeoisie...”

It is true that “high imperialism” was based on, depended on, arose from, the development of large concentrations of highly mobile capital, ready for bold foreign ventures. In the world as it was in 1916 — where British industrial supremacy had broken down but no rival had been able to establish general supremacy, either, and where vigorous capitalist exploitation in the less-industrial countries generally required a capitalist state authority imposed from outside to establish its preconditions — those large concentrations of highly mobile capital were the vectors of imperialism. Recent research also indicates that Hobson and Kautsky were probably right about Empire bringing net gains only to some sections of the capitalist class — in Britain, lords, landowners, bankers and London merchants — while for the class as a whole the extra taxes cancelled any extra gain.

But large concentrations of highly mobile capital can operate under different regimes, as since the mid-1980s. The structure of the world economy, rather than just the growth of big capitalist money-fortunes in a few countries, was the fundamental basis of “high imperialism”.

Moreover, the early 21st and late 20th centuries prove that “monopoly capitalism” — a capitalism dominated by huge corporations — divides the world into territories policed and tariff-walled by rival states only under certain conditions. Kautsky's and Luxemburg's stress on the fragility and instability of cartels has turned out more accurate, in the long run, than Hilferding's scenario of ever-more-cartelised, ever-more-“organised”, capitalism.

Monopoly is not necessarily the direct opposite of competition. Global corporations may operate fiercer competition than the smaller local-market-focused capitalists of “competitive capitalism”.

An “imperialism of free trade” in which huge global corporations are central has become the dominant pattern. States play a big role, but are structured by a drive of each to make its territory a congenial site for mobile global capital, and by the drive of the hegemonic US state, in particular, to make the whole world congenial for mobile capital.

The wartime political struggle gave Bukharin's and Lenin's pamphlets greater vividness and focus than the pre-1914 literature. As polemics they were devastating; as sharpened summaries of the Marxist literature, they stand up very well to later bourgeois-academic criticisms. Their adequacy as textbooks for the study of imperialism across the whole of the twentieth century — which is not the purpose for which they were written — is another matter. Their summary statements on finance capital and monopoly capital, if cited as laws for the broad sweep of history, are wrong.

Bukharin's schematism led him to present a world of militarised state-capitalist monoliths as an irreversibly established fact, rather than a one tendency among others in a complex whole, and to argue that national self-determination had thus been made “economically impossible”.

Lenin — despite summary statements implying otherwise — did allow for much more complexity in the relation between economics and politics than the other classical Marxists. “At the same time,” he emphasised, “capitalism engenders democratic aspirations in the masses, creates democratic institutions, aggravates the antagonism between imperialism's denial of democracy and the mass striving for democracy.” He ridiculed Bukharin's crude argument that, “imperialist annexation is only a case of the general capitalist tendency towards centralisation of capital.” “Everyone would laugh... if, parallel with the law that small-scale production is ousted by large-scale production, there were presented another ‘law’... of small states being ousted by big ones.”

THE STATE

There was a problem, however, I think, with the grid within which even Lenin saw the question of bourgeois state forms.

At one pole was a parliamentary republic based on small proprietors, with a minimal permanent state machine, no standing army, wide civil rights, etc. At the other pole was Prussian absolutism — a big military machine and state bureaucracy, topped by a monarchy, with restricted civil rights and the most limited forms of parliamentarism. All other state forms (so the implicit assumption ran) were to be found somewhere on the scale between those two poles.

Monopoly capitalism required a sizeable state machine, and the big capitalist interests would often bypass parliament to deal with state officials directly. It meant a move away from Jacksonian democracy — and therefore necessarily towards Prussian absolutism.

The modern bourgeois democratic state machine makes the Prussian state of Lenin's time look a very skimpy amateur outfit. Yet it has parliamentary democracy (hollowed-out but still not meaningless) and relatively wide civil rights. It is not somewhere on a spectrum between Jacksonian democracy and Prussian absolutism; it represents movement in a different direction.

After Lenin's death, the Stalinists constructed a chopped-up orthodoxy of “Leninism”, which, by sheer weight of literature and resources, shaped left wing thinking way outside the Stalinist parties.

Lenin's pamphlet did not cover what became the hottest question about imperialism, its relation to economic development in the Third World. To fill the gap in “Leninist” theory, phrases from the pamphlet which looked as if they might be about that were taken as the “Leninist” line! And the theory got distorted “honestly” by statements about tendencies being taken as a comprehensive account, without regard to counter-tendencies. And some real weaknesses in Lenin's account provided fertile ground for confusion.

Imperialism, wrote Lenin, was “parasitic”, “decaying”, and “moribund” capitalism. He was restating Kautsky's ideas of 1899-1909. In so far as he was just doing that, he was trapped by the mechanical alternatives of pre-1914 “Marxist orthodoxy” — either capitalism was progressing, and its new developments, like imperialism, should therefore be supported, or it was plunging to collapse — and within those false alternatives he was plainly wrong. A hundred years later, capital-

From centre pages

ism has grown, not collapsed.

As Lenin himself noted: "History does not stand still even in times of counter-revolution."

To recognise this is not to slacken our fight against capitalism. As Lenin put it: "Can anyone in his senses deny that Bismarckian Germany and her social laws are 'better' than Germany before 1848?... Did the German Social-Democrats... vote for Bismarck's reforms on these grounds?"

To discard mechanical notions of the "epoch of decay" is, however, essential if we are to understand realistically the adversities and the prospects of the socialist movement. There have been several "epochs of imperialism", not one.

We should also discard Lenin's confused link, following Kautsky, between "decay" and "finance capital". In his analysis, Lenin has two completely different concepts of finance capital, incoherently combined. He writes of "the several hundred kings of finance who reign over modern capitalist society". Elsewhere, however, it is a matter of "the extraordinary growth of a class, or rather, of a stratum of rentiers, i.e., people who live by "clipping coupons", who take no part in any enterprise whatever, whose profession is idleness."

So which is it? Are the finance capitalists the masters of large-scale industry, the directors of the economy — or people like the rentier who "if he speaks of work at all means the 'work' of picking flowers or calling for a ticket at the box office of the opera."

Weaknesses in Lenin's pamphlet enabled later writers to stamp "Leninist" authority on arguments about the permanent "glut of capital" and about the capitalist development of poorer countries being impossible under imperialism.

BARAN

In 1957 Paul Baran, an unorthodox Stalinist, initiated a new strand: "dependency theory".

Third World countries were underdeveloped, argued Baran, mainly because of parasitism within the Third World countries and a drain of surplus to the advanced countries. The answer was for those forces seeking development in Third World countries to follow the model provided by the USSR — expropriate the parasitic old property-owning classes, centralise resources in the hands of the state, cut down economic relations with the rest of the world to a minimum.

Andre Gunder Frank, Samir Amin, Immanuel Wallerstein and others built on Baran's analysis, developing the idea that imperialism created distorted, stunted, dependent structures in Third World countries. Though heavily discredited by recent facts, such as the capitalist development of Asia's Pacific Rim, this "dependency theory" remains very influential on the left, especially in pseudo-Trotskyist restatements.

This doctrine ("import of revenue", so to speak) had obvious differences even from the conventional interpretation of Lenin ("export of capital"), but was assimilated to it via Lenin's speculations about metropolitan capital "growing rich by usury" or "tribute from Asia and Africa".

Crucial to the "dependency" framework is the notion that the essence of world capitalism is the relation between two relatively homogeneous blocs, centre and periphery. The focus of study is on factors keeping the hierarchy of capitalist economies fixed, keeping centres central and peripheries peripheral. The classical Marxists, on the contrary, focussed on the fluidity and changeability of the hierarchical relations between capitalist economies.

Robert Brenner commented: "So long as incorporation into the world market/world division of labour is seen automatically to breed underdevelopment, the logical antidote to capitalist underdevelopment is not socialism, but autarky. So long as capitalism develops merely through squeezing dry the 'third world', the primary opponents must be core versus periphery, the cities versus the countryside — not the international proletariat, in alliance with the oppressed people of all countries, versus the bourgeoisie. In fact, the danger here is double-edged: on the one hand, a new opening to the 'national bourgeoisie'; on the other hand, a false strategy for anti-capitalist revolution... of semi-autarkic socialist development".

And Anthony Brewer points out, Frank ends up arguing for socialism in a spirit very different from Lenin — not by identifying a revolutionary class generated by capitalist development, but by indicting capitalism for its *lack* of capitalist development.

"The classical Marxists assumed that each country must go through successive stages of development; the capitalist stage performed the historic task of creating a proletariat and



Indian capitalism: sub-imperialist

laying the material basis for the succeeding stage of socialism. Lenin and Trotsky argued that the bourgeoisie in Russia (then a relatively backward country) was too weak to carry through the political tasks of the bourgeois revolution, so that the proletariat had to take the lead and could then carry straight on to the socialist revolution. The evolution of a relatively backward country differed from that of the more advanced centres.

"This argument, however still presupposes the existence of a proletariat adequate to the task, and thus a certain degree of capitalist development. However, in the first half of the 20th century, there were few signs of capitalist development in underdeveloped countries, and many Marxists came to argue a position almost diametrically opposed to that of the classics.

"Where it had been argued [by Marxists] that capitalist development had to create first the possibility of a socialist revolution, it was now argued that the absence of capitalist development made socialist revolution necessary... This shift of perspective entails a shift to a more voluntaristic concept of politics and to treating the peasantry or lumpen-proletariat, rather than the industrial proletariat, as the revolutionary class." In some circles, the idea of the "glut of capital" led to the conclusion that decolonisation would mean metropolitan capitalism choking to death on its uninvestible riches. Thus the Second World Congress of the Fourth International in 1948 argued that the loss of colonies for Europe removed all chance of regaining "even the pre-war [i.e., 1930s!] economic equilibrium".

KIDRON

Michael Kidron of the International Socialists (now SWP), on the other hand, used the same assumptions to argue that the post-1950 metropolitan capitalist prosperity meant the end of imperialism.

Imperialism had been the "highest stage but one" of capitalism. The SWP has since flipped over from that view to something much more like standard Stalinised-Leninism, but at the time Kidron's argument was an organic part of a world-picture also involving state capitalism in the USSR and the "permanent arms economy" in the West.

Arms spending was draining away the glut of capital, so the basic economic mechanism of imperialism no longer operated. Export of capital was no longer needed to provide a "drain" for excess capital from the advanced countries.

"The societies maimed and shattered by the imperialist explosion of the last century are again being maimed and shattered — by the growing economic isolationism of the west (an imperialist implosion as it were)..."

So drastic was the factual falsity of Kidron's argument that another "end of imperialism" argument soon developed which was its exact contrary. For Kidron, imperialism had ended because of "not enough" capital in the Third World; for Bill Warren, because of "too much" capital there.

Warren's first article was useful in forcing Marxists to rethink their "conventional wisdom" of the time about the supposed impossibility of serious capitalist development in the ex-colonies. But Warren's later writing became a simple inversion of "dependency", or "centre-periphery", theory.

"Centre-periphery" theorists said that colonialism hindered the development of the colonies, also that the removal

of formal colonial rule had not removed those hindrances. Warren replied that colonialism helped the development of the colonies — and that the end of colonialism helped even more!

He played up everything that pointed to capitalist progress in the Third World, and played down everything else.

By Stalinised "Leninism", meanwhile, the theory of imperialism was converted into a set of axiomatic equations: advanced capitalism equals domination of monopolies and finance-capital, equals imperialism, equals a push for colony-grabbing, equals "moribund and decaying capitalism" in the metropolis and blight in the periphery, equals the dead-end of capitalist progress.

STALINISED "ANTI-IMPERIALISM"

This turned "anti-imperialism" into a garbled global version of the 1950s-1960s European Communist Party line of "the anti-monopoly alliance", which defined the biggest, most advanced, capitalist interests as ipso facto the worst.

Advanced capitalism was bad not so much because it was capitalist as because it was *advanced*. Stalinism, or Islamic fundamentalism, should be supported because, despite their crimes, they could not fail to represent progress as against the absolute dead-end denoted by imperialism.

The Stalinised "Leninists" claim great strictness in their definitions. Because the strictness is not true theoretical rigour, developed by constant checking and revision of theory against reality, but rather a matter of esoteric codes and buzzwords, they invariably end up slipping and sliding between their "high science" and looser usages imported from current radical politics (such as "dependency theory", as above). Politics becomes wordplay.

The USSR was not dominated by finance capital, hence its conquests could not really be imperialist, hence they could not represent domination, oppression and plunder of the weak by the strong. Or at any rate they were less grievous examples of such evils than "proper" imperialism.

The only way to break through this word-play is to recognise flatly that we must use a broader definition of imperialism, and within that to distinguish between forms of imperialism. Advanced capitalism continues to be imperialist, but less-advanced capitalism, or Stalinist state-capitalism, is not necessarily less imperialist.

The evil in advanced capitalism is capitalism, not advance. Capitalism develops unevenly on a world scale, and with a tendency for the unevenness to increase and compound itself. Some countries become sites for modern infrastructure, advanced industries and services, major finance capital, the headquarters of multinational companies, and heavy investment, while others remain with few industries (often primary-product or low-technology), operated by low-wage labour, with low investment and widespread pauperism.

Capitalism is in its very essence a system of ruthless competition, where the rich and the strong do down the poor and the weak, and the richer capitalist states, and the banks and multinationals based in them, dominate over poorer countries. This is imperialism.

Against political domination we fight for the right to self-determination of all nations and for consistent democracy. Against the impositions of the IMF on poorer countries, we support the struggles of workers and peasants in those countries. Against the deprivations of international capital, we fight for social ownership and for the planned use of the world's resources and technology to get rid of poverty.

This fight against imperialism is a part of our fight against capitalism, not something superseding and overriding it. The capitalist classes even of the poorest countries are oppressor, not oppressed, classes: we reject any alliance with them beyond possible joint actions for political independence.

World capitalism, and the hierarchies of power within it, are fluid and ever-changing. Alongside world capitalism's tendencies to accentuate unevenness, and interacting with those tendencies, are tendencies to "level out" development through the decay of the richest states and the emergence of new industrial centres. Imperialism is not a matter of a fixed imperialist "camp" confronting another "camp", nor is it a system which cannot change except to decay. In the last fifty years the big colonial empires have been broken up; most of the ex-colonies have won political independence; a number of them have developed substantial industry and big working classes.

Countries as India, South Africa, Nigeria, Mexico, and Brazil, have developed into "sub-imperialist" centres.

• Abridged and slightly edited from *Workers' Liberty* 28 (1996).

“If we burn, you burn with us!”

Daisy Thomas reviews ‘The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 1’

“If we burn, you burn with us” — those were the fighting words that rallied support behind the symbol of the rebellion: The Mockingjay.

Katniss Everdeen (Jennifer Lawrence), when pushed to her limit, became the symbol of hope and change that Panem’s Districts were so dearly in need of. ‘The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 1’ was 123 minutes of being on the edge of your seat, almost holding your breath to see what would unfold next. Even though I had read the books, I found that the cinematography, acting, and screenwriting were compelling enough for me to lose myself in the narrative.

This third film from the incredibly successful trilogy by Suzanne Collins does not disappoint. Those who interested in the politics behind the narrative will find this instalment much more thought-provoking.

While there has been an enduring theme of fighting against injustice and the cruelty of the elite and privileged, there is more civil unrest in this film. The presumed destroyed District 13 is arming its fighters for the battle of a lifetime. All they needed was a rallying symbol.

The ‘Mockingjay’ is the final piece in the puzzle in undoing the tyrannical oppression of President Snow (Donald Sutherland) and the Capitol. As President Snow remarked previously, “hope is the only thing stronger than fear”.

To combat the fear and punishment raining down from the Capitol through the “Peacekeepers” is to convince the residents of Panem that they have something stronger to fight for: a new, fair Panem.

The perspective shifts between the state of matters in the Districts and in the Capitol. While Katniss is exposing the Capitol’s tyranny and destruction, Peeta (Josh Hutcherson) is appearing to be the Capitol’s puppet. We see the chilling progression of the Capitol’s treatment of Peeta as the rebellion gains momentum in the Districts. Disorganised chaos and



anger develop into planned and strategic attacks designed to hit the Capitol where it hurts.

Instead of the chaos of separate District civil wars, the members of the Districts work to cut off the supplies from the Districts. President Snow compares the working of the Districts to serve the Capitol as blood providing life to a beating heart. Snow warns that nothing can exist without a heart, but we also know that a heart cannot exist in isolation. And inaction would come at a greater future cost than the immediate cost of a rebellion.

However, many, almost too many, find themselves paying the “ultimate price” for fighting for what they believe in.

While no-one is seeking bloodshed, the members in charge of organising the rebellion see the loss of a few good people in service of bringing down the oppressors as a price they are

willing to pay. Katniss, when stricken by guilt over what Peeta must be going through, tearfully beseeches Snow and declares, “I never wanted any of this, I never wanted to be in the Games, I just wanted to save my sister and keep Peeta alive.”

For Katniss, this fight will always come down to the personal. She is ready to sacrifice herself if that would ensure the safety of her family and her friends.

And initially that noble but narrow goal is what almost stops the rebellion before it can properly get started. I think Katniss’ disagreement with authority over the best course of action is down to her personality as well as her relative youth and inexperience with the ways of the world. While she has experienced more trauma, horror, death, and pain than anyone, let alone a teenager, should ever experience, she is, at her core, still thinking only as a sister and friend rather than like a more detached strategist like President Coin (Julianne Moore).

Before seeing the state of District 12, Katniss’ focus was rage against Plutarch Heavensbee (Philip Seymour Hoffman) and Haymitch Abernathy (Woody Harrelson) not saving Peeta, but the sheer mercilessness and destruction by the Capitol’s forces on the ground at District 12 becomes one of Katniss’ defining and mobilising moments for action. From the original 10,000 residents, a mere 915 survived the (off-screen) attack after the last Hunger Games.

Overall, ‘The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 1’ was a really well-made, thought-provoking, emotional (I teared up more than once), and inspiring film. I remember leaving ‘Catching Fire’ and being furious at the Capitol. I left Mockingjay feeling like I wanted to join Katniss and the rebellion.

I definitely recommend seeing the film regardless of whether or not you’ve read the books. And while it might be considered “young adult fiction”, a wide variety of ages can enjoy this story.

And remember that “the courage of one will change the world”.

William Morris in a political context

By Michéal MacEoin

The William Morris exhibition ‘Anarchy & Beauty’ at the National Portrait Gallery is well worth a visit for anyone interested in Morris, his art, and the late nineteenth-century socialist movement.

The opening section, a rounded appreciation of Morris, is a marked contrast to the common view of him as a largely apolitical purveyor of Victorian handicrafts. As well as some of Morris’ early wallpaper designs and an armchair produced by his collaborator and friend Philip Webb, we find the 1893 paperback edition of *News from Nowhere*. The justly famous imagining of a less alienated and more communistic future society first appeared in 1890 in *The Commonweal*, the newspaper of the Socialist League, of which Morris was a founder member.

Of particular interest is a diary Morris kept from January to April 1887, at the height of his socialist activism. The diary, which recounts a talk Morris gave to the workers’ Hackney Club, was intended, he wrote to his daughter Jenny, “as a kind of view of the Socialist movement seen from the inside, Jonah’s view of the whale, you know.”

But the highlight of the exhibition is the part which elaborates on Morris’ friendship circle from his time at the house living at the Red House in Bexleyheath, (designed by Morris’ friend, the architect Philip Webb), and his deepening commitment to socialist activism.

One series of contrasting caricatures of Morris drawn by his friend Edward Byrne-Jones and fellow pre-Raphaelite Dante Gabriel Rossetti shows some of the tensions in the close-knit circle of creative companions. While Byrne-Jones’ rendering of Morris is playful, Rossetti’s ‘The Bard and the Petty Tradesman’, first sketched in a letter to Morris’s wife Jane in 1868, appears more like a barbed caricature of an increasingly rotund Morris.

Peter Kropotkin, Eleanor Marx, Sylvia Pankhurst, Annie Besant, Edward Carpenter, George Bernard Shaw — all make an appearance in the exhibition, showing the ferment in the

radical movement at this time.



‘William Morris making a wood block for the Earthly Paradise’ sketched by Byrne-Jones

Though derided sourly as “anecdotes...about long-forgotten Marxists and anarchists” in *The Guardian’s* review, items such as Edward Carpenter’s sandals, a print of Kropotkin working at his desk in front of Morris wallpaper and a pencil sketch of Eleanor Marx, are necessary for placing Morris in context, and are a welcome correction to portrayals which separate him from the political movements of the day.

Particularly good to see were the imposing red Hamersmith Socialist Society banner, and Morris’s copy of an 1883 French translation of *Capital* which needed to be rebound within a year because it “had been worn to loose sections by his own constant study of it.”

When it comes to Morris’s artistic legacy, however, much of the politics are obscured here. The early Arts and Crafts Movement is covered reasonably well, with its emphasis on breaking down false distinctions between work and leisure and countering the alienated forms of labour in capitalist society. Particularly good were the tapestries of May Morris, the works of Walter Crane and the exquisite Kelmscott Press edition of Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales*.

The point of Morris’s politics from about 1883, however, after he crossed the “river of fire” and joined the Democratic Federation in 1883 — soon renamed the Social Democratic Federation under the influence of Marxists — was that his prefigurations of a more communistic and less alienated society required the overthrow of capitalism. Highlighting the contrast between how we live and how we could live gained meaning in so far as it give impetus to revolutionary consciousness.

This is seen in Morris’s critique of utopian socialists, such as Robert Owen. He wrote in *Commonweal* in 1885 that it was impossible “to establish a real Socialistic community in the midst of Capitalistic Society, a social island amidst an individual sea; because all its external dealings would have to be arranged on a basis of capitalistic exchange and would so far support the system of profits and unpaid labour.”

A large part of the second half of the exhibition deals with the garden city movement. A look at Welwyn Garden City and Hampstead Garden Suburb today, in the context of Britain’s extreme housing crisis, largely makes the point about that!

Problematic too is the holding up of figures of Clement Attlee and Herbert Morrison as continuations of Morris’s legacy, particularly the 1951 Festival of Britain public art show at the Southbank Centre.

Morris warned in *News from Nowhere* “that individual men cannot shuffle off the business of life on to the shoulders of an abstraction called the state, but must deal with it in conscious association with each other” and elsewhere that “some socialists are apt to confuse the cooperative machinery towards which modern life is tending with the essence of socialism itself.” It is difficult to imagine the author of these words as an enthusiast of the Fabian technocracy of Attlee and Morrison.

There is much of interest here, and if it encourages more people to engage with the ideas and work of William Morris then it has done good.

Unity: real steps, or “rebranding”?

The Left
By Colin Foster



The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) has made another call for left unity (21 November). Sadly, it seems that the SWP aims more to “brand” itself as pro-unity than to get any actual unity.

Exits from the SWP in the last couple of years have taken maybe half its previous active membership and made it seem more of an expert on how to get splits than on unity. However, the new call makes no offer to recent splinters from the SWP — Counterfire, ISG, RS21, ISN — of terms on which they could reunite.

Rather, the SWP wants to ease the isolation it has faced since its recent splits and scandals. An article in *Socialist Worker* signalled that the SWP looks to “left reformists” to unite with, rather than the scattered revolutionary left.

“The struggle in Greece has made it clear to many workers that Syriza doesn’t have the answers. Anti-capitalists [i.e. the SWP’s Greek sister group, SEK] relate to this audience partly by standing against Syriza in elections. In Britain the balance of forces is very different. So the Socialist Workers Party wants to unite with left reformists and others to form a left alternative” (*Socialist Worker*, 18 November).

Leave aside the stuff about Greece. Which “left reformists” in Britain does the SWP want to unite with? How?

The 21 November statement takes the Ukip victory in the Rochester and Strood by-election of 20 November as its jumping-off point. But its focus is more on Scotland.

“Some 3,000 activists meet [on 22 November] at the Radical Independence conference [in Glasgow]. Out of that, and

other initiatives such as Hope Over Fear [a vehicle for former Scottish Socialist Party leader Tommy Sheridan], activists must develop a united left...”

There were left reformists at the Glasgow conference. Trouble is, they are sucked into the slipstream of the cock-a-hoop SNP. So are some of the revolutionaries, or at least not-quite-reformists.

Tommy Sheridan has called for an SNP vote in May 2015 (bit.ly./shersnp). Colin Fox, leader of the post-Sheridan Scottish Socialist Party, has called on the SNP to agree a common “independence alliance” slate (bit.ly/sspsnp).

The SNP has said it’s for a “yes alliance” slate which would include some non-SNP members (bit.ly/snpyes). On that level the open issues are whether the SNP allows the SSP or Sheridan a place on their slate, and whether the Greens (also in the Radical Independence campaign) come in with the SNP. Guaranteed, however, is left self-submergence into the slipstream of the bourgeois SNP.

The Radical Independence alliance has had slogans like “Britain is for the rich, Scotland can be ours”, as if there is no working class in Britain, and the Scottish bourgeoisie is so flimsy that just a bit more loud “yes” campaigning will dissolve it and make Scotland socialist. It is like the idea of second-rank countries being “proletarian nations”, whose struggle with higher-rank countries trumps the class struggle within countries, first coined (for Italy) by Enrico Corradini in 1910.

The ISG, a 2011 splinter from the SWP in Scotland connected to Counterfire in England, has proposed “a Scottish Podemos” instead of backing the SNP. The SWP’s call for Scotland is similar to the ISG’s, and seems to be motivated by a wish not to be outdone by the ISG. However, there is no talk of reunification between the SWP and the ISG.

After the Scottish referendum, the SWP argued, rightly, that socialists should move on and seek to unite Yes and No voters on class-struggle issues. The ISG’s line is more “Britain is our main enemy”, “The Yes movement was as progressive as the No camp reactionary”, etc. Now the SWP is deferring to that line: when they write of “activists developing a united left” in Scotland, it is “out of... the Radical Independence conference... and other initiatives such as [Sheridan’s]”, i.e. exclusively from the strident Yes camp.

The SWP’s unity call for England reads as a perfunctory add-on: it is for “an electoral coalition for the May elections”, including TUSC (the anti-cuts group led by the Socialist Party and RMT union leaders in which SWP quarter-participates) and the small Left Unity group. They seem not to have a constituency of “left reformists” in mind here as they do in Scotland.

The platform (apparently for England only) in the SWP’s unity call is also perfunctory. It includes general “support for socialism”, but otherwise is just opposition to austerity, racism, sexism, imperialism, with no positive policies, even reformist ones, let alone bold calls like “Tax the Rich” or “Expropriate the Banks”.

Its most specific clause is one “against the expansion of NATO and the West’s new war in the Middle East”, code for hinting that Russian imperialism in Ukraine is ok and ISIS conquests and slaughter of the Kurds are nothing to worry about compared with the bad side-effects of the US bombing ISIS.

The left should unite much more. The best way to start would be practical cooperation in supporting strikes and fighting cuts, and practical agreement to run joint socialist forums which will both popularise broad socialist ideas and allow real debate.

A tale of two meetings

By Mark Osborn

On 18 November I stood outside a meeting of the Student Assembly at Goldsmiths College in south London, leafleting on behalf of Workers’ Liberty. A motion was to be discussed which would disband the SWP’s student society on campus.

Our leaflet said, in brief: the SWP are a degenerate sect, who have been responsible for covering up rape allegations inside their organisation, but don’t ban them, argue with them. A few dozen people took my leaflet, politely, and went in. No fuss.

In the meeting, the very little opposition there was to the banning included the AWL. One non-student SWPer turned up briefly to hand out a leaflet. The motion went through with a big majority (although that majority was only a tiny minority of students at the college). The previous week AWL women members had attended a meeting which discussed the issues; again the SWP had failed to show up and defend themselves.

As we said in the Student Assembly, we are sympathetic to the motion-movers’ anger against the SWP. The problem is, however, that the ban has wider implications for politics and political functioning.

The people that voted to ban the SWP must surely know this too. After we had left some burned the SWP and AWL leaflets and posted a picture of it on the internet. The AWL were being warned. We may be next.

A serious precedent was made here. This was the first time the SWP had been banned on a British campus. A week later Edinburgh University also banned them. These bannings may well have further implications for them, for us, for the rest of the far left and for just for having well-functioning democratic student unions.

As far as I can work out there are 2.5 SWP members at Goldsmiths; I went to a recent meeting (on Palestine, with the spluttering, deranged John Rose) and it seems to me their group is no physical threat to anyone. Even if they were big-

ger and carnivorous, can’t those on the left who want to argue with them, win the arguments?

That time, with John Rose speaking, no one had protested outside their meeting, no one had attempted to expose them for what they are (except me, inside the meeting, and afterwards in the corridor outside).

That the 2.5 SWP youth at Goldsmiths feel they can’t win an argument in a hostile meeting, and with a lousy case, is no surprise. The fact that the SWP leaders allowed a motion to ban them to go through the meeting without any opposition (except from the AWL, people they regard as their bitter enemies), is contemptible.

There was no political campaign to defend their party, no protest outside the Student Assembly, no speeches. How rubbish are the SWP? People who run away from a political fight when their party’s honour and rights are being contested.

And if a group runs away from a fight on a posh University of London campus, how effective are they likely to be if the police come for them? Or if the state bans them?

DEBATE

Two nights later at Goldsmiths there was a debate between Marxists and anarchists hosted by the Platypus group.

Platypus should be congratulated — it was an interesting meeting where real debate took place. Next to me on the platform were a couple of anarchists and speakers from Socialist Appeal and the SWP.

None of the leftist supporters of banning the SWP appeared to expose them, or have them driven from campus.

Which left the AWL to take on the SWP. (Socialist Appeal were not at the Student Assembly, and they did not mention the SWP in their contributions, obsessed as they are with making desiccated propaganda for a bureaucratic Marxism, plodding away like plodders).

Of course the job was made easier because the SWP’s speaker started his contribution with: “I joined the SWP in 1996 because I fancied one of their members.” Honestly, you

couldn’t make it up. He went downhill from then on, dismissing the rape allegations as “sniping”.

So to sum up: at the student meeting the AWL was left to make the case for free debate because the SWP are too spineless to turn up and defend themselves; at the anarchist-socialist debate the AWL was left to take on the SWP because those that hate them enough to support banning them (and might feel able to argue with them) were unwilling.

There is an unpleasant symmetry.

GRAMSCI IN CONTEXT

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

£6, or £7.60

including

postage from

www.workersliberty.org/payment



Health strike gains momentum

By Todd Hamer

Health workers struck for a second 4-hour block on Monday 24 November.

Although the strike may not be the most militant on record, there is some evidence that the NHS pay dispute is gaining momentum and the unions are turning up new activists.

Despite painfully timid leadership, the dispute has become a rallying point for health workers concerned about NHS cuts and privatisation.

If it is going to grow and be successful then those new activists need to turn outwards and convince the large numbers of strike-breakers to join us and create a renewed union movement.

Many healthworkers

crossed picket lines on Monday with a kind grin on their faces and the words "Thank you for fighting for us". We can't blame them. They were acting as consumers of trade unionism.

The unions have also fallen into this trap. All too often the unions recruit members by selling themselves as an insurance policy — "essential cover for public sector workers".

But the union isn't an insurance policy. It is a coordination of workers, organised by its most active members, standing ready to collectively withdraw their labour in disputes with the boss. The entire purpose and power of the union lies in its ability to organise strikes.

Others who crossed picket lines had an embarrassed grimace on their face. "My patient needs me" or "I can't

afford it". We have become so used to fire-fighting in the NHS that many health workers cannot see beyond the next crisis.

However, if we do not win this dispute and build a strong union movement in the NHS then we not only face a long future of pay freezes, but also a slow destruction of the NHS. This will harm our patients and it will harm us when we need the NHS in the future.

Finally, some crossed picket lines with their eyes to the floor saying "I'm not allowed to strike".

By unthinkingly following management orders, we are contributing to the steady demise of our health service and acting against the long term interests of our patients. Health workers need to find a bit of courage and stand up for our own inde-

pendent point of view. We need to find the confidence to challenge the orders that come down from on high, to think critically about what is happening in our workplaces and where necessary defy management — especially on strike days!

Over the last thirty years selling the service model, the unions have become hollowed out husks, run by full-time officials on comfortable salaries who don't understand the difficulties we face in our jobs or our lives. They have hobbled with management and have middle-class lifestyles and politics. They



Health workers on the picket outside Guys Hospital, London

are a disruptive and obstructive force in the unions.

However, we will not get a bolder leadership or a more democratic union until health workers become active participants in shaping

their unions and struggles.

The new activists thrown up by this struggle will need to learn the lessons quickly and turn out to convince others. Solidarity gets results!

ISS cleaners strike



By Sacha Ismail

Over two hundred outsourced workers who are members of the GMB at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Woolwich (South London) struck for 48 hours on 24-26 November.

On the 24th the workers, who are employed by Dutch multinational ISS as cleaners, security, ward hostesses, caterers, on the switchboard and as porters, struck alongside directly employed NHS staff striking for their national pay dispute.

The outsourced GMB members are looking to level up to the same terms and conditions as directly employed NHS workers — on basic pay rates, unsocial, weekend and bank holiday hours rates, sick pay and other issues.

The first strike day in their campaign was 8 October.

Last week, ISS took the workers and their union to the High Court to try to stop the strike. The GMB refused to back down and in the event the company lost, costing itself tens of thousands of pounds. (The judge's ruling about workers' right to strike may also provide helpful case law in the future.)

It says something that this giant multinational company is so determined to deny its low-paid workers a rise.

They are obviously scared of the QEH workers' example inspiring others and spreading.

• Messages of solidarity: nadine.houghton@gmb.org.uk
Interview with one of the strikers' reps: bit.ly/QEHstrike

Employers discuss plans to undermine unions

By a PCS member

In leaked documents from HMRC (the tax and customs part of the civil service) we see in the open how bosses try to "handle" unions.

In the document a senior manager writes: "...If we are unable to persuade the new GEC (the union body that runs the PCS union in HMRC) and full time officials to change their stance this suggests that the usual rules for engagement with a trade union will not work."

The paper recommends "aiming to marginalise PCS

by maintaining dialogue only to meet statutory minimum requirements."

The paper outlines "advantages: creates pressure on PCS to re-engage with the employer as this is the only means by which they can be fully involved as the business reshapes ... enables the change agenda to be progressed without the need for time-consuming discussion ... sends a clear signal to union members that their union is no best positioned to serve their needs."

The paper ends ominously with "the position regarding further proactive measures targeted at key

union activists is regularly reviewed in light of achievements flowing from the recommendations above".

Beyond calling for an ACAS meeting between the union and HMRC, no concrete action is being proposed. The union has not said explicitly it will defend activists, despite the threats made above. Nor said it will take industrial action.

This relatively muted response could be because the union fears that HMRC will end check-off [paying union dues through wage packets] if the union protests too much. HMRC and DWP are key to the union, with the

bulk of the members working in these two departments. If check-off was ended then the union would be in a very serious situation. No doubt finances are a factor in the union's thinking.

The union should be calling upon Labour, and indeed the Lib Dems, to condemn any moves to "marginalise PCS".

It should be demanding that a future Labour government will positively make the case for unions in the civil service, and elsewhere, and positively engage with unions.

Sell-out in UCU dispute?

By Lucy Clement

After only two weeks of action, the marking boycott in pre-92 universities has been put on hold until mid-January.

The decision to abandon the action for talks just as it was beginning to bite has prompted furious criticism by branches, unhappy at the enormous compromises the leadership seems prepared to accept to cut a deal. There is already evidence that universities are taking advantage of the suspension to bring forward exam-setting deadlines. This will make it much harder to make action effective in January.

Although the UCU com-

promise plan is better than the employers' proposals, it will still leave many members facing a six-figure loss across their retirement when compared with what they would have received under the final salary scheme! With an 87% vote for action on the biggest turn-out since UCU was formed in 2006, the boycott clearly had the support of members. Its suspension now for no concessions beyond a promise of no pay deductions for action taken to date is bizarre. The negotiators urgently need to be called to account.

Branches should support UCU Left's call for a special conference to debate the tactics to date.

Defend Julie Davies!

By Gemma Short

Strikes to defend victimised Haringey NUT (National Union of Teachers) secretary Julie Davies have been suspended as headteachers in the borough agree to pay into facility time agreements regardless of who is elected secretary.

Disciplinary charges relating to Julie still stand. On Monday 24 November over 100 activists gathered outside Haringey Civic Centre to lobby the council meeting. The council meeting received a deputation led by Niall O'Connor of Haringey NUT who attacked Labour council leader Clare Kober in his speech.



NUT members at the lobby

Protesters outside the council held placards saying: time for Labour values from a Labour council.

Activists in the public gallery heckled council speakers who claimed the attack on Julie is not political.

As Solidarity goes to press we hear that Care UK workers have voted to accept their pay deal. More details next week.



10,000 students march in London for free education



On Wednesday 19 November, ten thousand students marched through central London to demand free education.

The political waves from this demonstration are having a positive impact on the student movement. We hope they will have a positive impact on the wider class struggle.

In the last six months, free education has been put back on the student movement's agenda. The people who made this happen were the organisers of the demonstration – above all the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts.

At NUS conference in April 2014 the Ncafc and others on the left defeated the (broadly right-wing Labour) leadership to pass policy in

support of free education. This was the first time NUS conference had backed free education since 2004. Ncafc quickly issued the call for a national demonstration and in September Ncafcers on NUS national executive pushed through a motion to support it.

After the motion passed, NUS did virtually nothing to help build the demonstration. Formal support from NUS did help the organisers work effectively with a large number of student unions, but that's all.

Two weeks before the demo, NUS withdrew its support on the most spurious of pretexts. And yet 19 November was maybe the biggest student demo in Britain since the upheaval of 2010.

Free education: demand, don't plead!

By Micheál MacEoin

As 10,000 students marched for free education in London on 19 November on a vibrant demonstration largely organised by the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts (Ncafc), the National Union of Students (NUS) meekly published a "Roadmap for Free Education".

The NUS full-time officers (FTOs) did all they could to scupper the 19 November free education demonstration – flouting the decision of the union's National Executive as a whole. They have released the "roadmap" report in order to do the bare minimum on their mandate from the last NUS conference.

Since left-wing activists won the debate on free education at the NUS Conference 2014, the full-time officers (FTOs) have had to shift their position away from the Blairite policy of a "graduate tax".

The document's executive

summary notes: "higher education could be funded by collective public investment through progressive taxation, with an increase on tax of the richest in society."

This is good, and is what the Ncafc has been arguing. Moreover, some of the figures and arguments in the Roadmap could be useful for activists.

However, the Roadmap is explicitly not about mobilising students on campuses to demand free education. As the introduction makes clear, the NUS has "put together a roadmap to help our politicians and our vice-chancellors to make the right decisions on higher education reform."

These are the same politicians and vice-chancellors who have created and prevailed over the "market experiment" which the Roadmap rightly argues has failed to deliver an improved higher education system.

The document usefully shows how the consequences

of the new system have deviated wildly from its stated purpose — but makes the mistake of assuming that the government was other than wholly dishonest in its stated reasons for deepening the marketisation of higher education. Increased marketisation was never about reducing the deficit, providing better value for tax payers or "putting students in the driving seat", so simply pointing out that these things have not happened is not going to change the government's mind.

All those arguments were designed to cover for the government's real intentions. The homogenisation and quantification of education and the market-driven course closures are not "failures" of the government's policy — they were the point.

The government will not be swayed by polite argument, but only by force and pressure from a re-energised student movement. On this, the Roadmap has nothing to

say — which is no surprise given the NUS's recent attempts to wreck the growing free education movement on campuses.

No doubt the NUS is hoping that Labour will be elected in May 2015, and that the movement for free education can be won on the terrain of water-cooler chats with higher education ministers. That too is an illusion.

Liam Byrne, the shadow minister for universities, science and skills, has so far remained wedded to the idea of a graduate tax, and even the modest talk of a move to £6,000 fees has reportedly been scuppered by Ed Balls.

As well as simply making the arguments, the student movement needs to step up its pressure on the Labour Party to adopt free education, using the run-up to the General Election to organise demonstrations and demand guarantees from Labour candidates.



To continue the fight for free education, join the NCAFC at anticuts.com/membership, and come to the national conference in Manchester on 13 December: anticuts.com