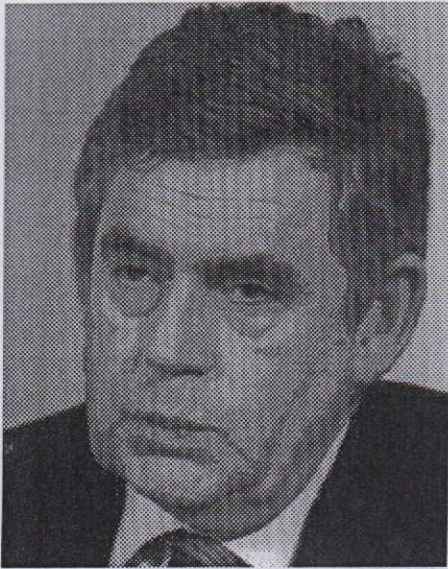


# workers power 5

March 2010 ★ Price £1 / €1.50 Issue 343

Monthly magazine of the British section of the League for the Fifth International

## Labour



## Tory



## Liberal



**They all backed the bankers  
Now they want *you* to pay!**

**Time for an  
ANTICAPITALIST  
alternative**

**INSIDE: VOTE ANTICAPITALIST IN THE GENERAL ELECTION**

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Haitians vent anger over corrupt officials

Thousands of Haitians demonstrated last month in the capital Port au Prince against the mayor who has been stealing food given after the earthquake that killed 250,000 people. The Mayor and other corrupt officials have been taking the food and selling it on the black market.

Haitians also protested against the visit of French Prime Minister Sarkozy, demanding the return of the \$21 billion Haiti has paid to France since 1825 as “reparations” for the abolition of slavery.

The demonstrators have also been calling for the return of President Aristide, who was deposed in 2004 by local gangsters bankrolled by the US Republican Party. The US now has 4,000 marines in Haiti and is planning to set up a commission to run the “post earthquake recovery” of the country. This is in effect an attempt to re-colonise Haiti.

Now go to page 13 and read how the Haitians carried out an anti-colonial revolution in 1791 against the slave owners.

### Labour says: ‘Grass up thy neighbour’

Labour is pitting people in the poorest communities against each other by offering a bounty of £500 to grass up their neighbours. Housing Minister John Healey has signed 147 councils up to the government’s £4 million national crack-down on housing fraud.

Labour is sowing suspicion into the fabric of communities ravaged by poverty and unemployment. Poor communities don’t need snitches; they need real investment in decent, affordable housing and a programme of public works to improve living conditions and increase employment.

Now Labour is talking about rolling out this programme to give snitches a share of the cash saved. The government already has benefit hotlines where suspected cheats can be shopped, but this is the first time a minister has suggested that anyone who reveals a benefit cheat might secure a proportion of the money recovered.

Where is the hotline for the billionaire tax cheats?

### MI5/MI6 complicit in murder and torture

Two recent cases expose the real nature of the UK’s security services.

A leading judge has published evidence that MI5 colluded in the torture of Binyam Mohamed, who was arrested in 2002 as part of the “war on terror”. Despite an attempted government cover-up, the information also shows that MI5 misled MPs and the courts and suppressed evidence.

The UK government has also denied that MI6 knew that Israeli assassination squads have been using fake British passports.

Dubai authorities said that murder of Mahmoud al-Mabhouh, a founding member of the military wing of Hamas, in January had all the hallmarks of an assassination by Mossad, the Israeli secret service. Photographs show 11 suspects, some of whom were travelling with British passports. This raises questions about whether MI6 knew of the murder in advance.

We say: the secret security forces exist to serve the bosses’ system and to suppress our resistance. Disband them now!

## DONATE

£4,000

£2,400

# Help us raise money for our election campaign

Workers Power is a revolutionary socialist organisation committed to building an anticapitalist party in the UK and a new Fifth International.

We are standing Jeremy Drinkall as a candidate in the Vauxhall constituency in the UK general election. Over the next weeks, our limited resources will be used to put the case against the bosses, bank bailouts and government cuts, and for socialism on the doorsteps of south London.

As part of the League for the Fifth International, we have made significant gains in recent years and won new recruits around the globe. We will be holding a World Congress this summer where we will prepare for the battles ahead. We also plan to intervene into the sixth European Social Forum in Istanbul in July.

Our comrades are active in several unions resisting the bosses attacks and public service cuts. Student comrades have been instrumental in setting up the National Campaign against Fees and Cuts. We are also involved in anti-fascist work against the English Defence League and British National Party.

All this costs money. We are a cash-poor (though ideas-rich) organisation with no wealthy backers. If you support our ideas and want us to succeed, then please donate. Any amount, however large or small, will help us fund our work to rid the world of poverty and exploitation and hasten the victory of socialism.

### All of this costs money.

If you want to help – and remember every penny counts – then please rush cheques and postal orders (made out to Workers Power) to Workers Power, BCM 7750, London, WC1N 3XX.

You can also donate online at [www.workerspower.com](http://www.workerspower.com) and [www.fifthinternational.org](http://www.fifthinternational.org).

## EDITORIAL

As bosses' parties plan cuts...time for an

# ANTICAPITALIST ALTERNATIVE

Britain may be officially out of recession but it doesn't feel like the 'good times' have returned for the 2.5 million unemployed and the millions more seeing their conditions attacked, pay slashed, and public services threatened by cuts.

With such widespread feelings of discontent, hardship and anger it's not surprising that the economy will be the main issue in the General Election.

The mainstream parties aren't arguing who should pay the cost of the crisis: they all agree that the bankers and financiers should be bailed out at the expense of working people with our services now threatened by historic cuts.

But they are arguing about how fast to carry out this attack, which of our services to hit hard, which to let off more lightly and what the scale of it should be.

The Tories plan to immediately start slashing public spending if elected – they don't care about the impact on our schools, universities and hospitals. Labour realise this is an opportunity for them – they want to present themselves as the party of the public sector, emphasise investment not cuts. Even though Labour are already carrying out cuts many ordinary people don't want to see a return of the Tories to power.

They don't want to see an offensive against working people like the one carried out by Thatcher in the 1980s on the

unions and our services.

That's why, as we go to press, Labour has started closing the gap in the opinion polls. From being 10 points behind the Tories in September, Labour has narrowed the gap to just two points according to the Sunday Times.

The Tories now plan to move further to the right in the hope of regaining the advantage over Labour – emphasising an "austerity budget", tax cuts, and playing the race-card by cranking up rhetoric against immigrants.

## Fightback

Whoever wins the election working class people will have a massive fight on our hands to defend our jobs, pay and services.

We are already seeing the first flames of resistance.

## "For the millions, not the millionaires"

Lecturers and students are fighting cuts in higher education, steel workers are balloting for their first strike in a generation, maintenance workers on the railways are also balloting for a national strike, civil servants have called two days of strike action in March, and BA workers have defied their bosses and the courts and voted to strike.

These workers are right to fight and strike now – the stronger we are in the streets

and workplaces the better prepared we are for the fights ahead.

The General Election is now only a matter of weeks away. We have to use it as a platform to spread anticapitalist ideas – to make clear to all working people that we don't need to accept the attacks of the bosses, we can unite, strike and fight for a socialist alternative.

That's what Workers Power will be doing in Vauxhall constituency where local trade unionist Jeremy Drinkall will be standing on an ANTICAPITALIST ticket for the millions, not the millionaires (see p10).

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition is also standing some candidates against Labour MPs.

A big vote for them will show the potential for a working class alternative – wherever they are standing we need to work hard to get the vote out.

We need that alternative if we are going to win the millions of working people who will turn out in this election to support Labour. In constituencies where there are no anticapitalist, socialist or trade unionist candidates, Workers Power is calling for a Labour vote: to keep out the Tories, and to keep the union-backed and union-funded Labour Party on the spot.

At the same time socialists should demand Labour dump Brown and his pro-boss policies and rally trade unionists and Labour supporters to an alternative: a new workers' party with an anticapitalist programme.

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## FIGHTBACK

# UK out of the Falklands!

By Richard Brenner

The decision of the British-ruled Falkland Islands to grant British oil companies the right to start drilling for oil off the South Atlantic colony has sparked fresh calls across South America for Britain to get out.

Workers Power has always been clear on this issue. Britain has no right to the Falkland Islands, which it seized by force in 1833 as part of its colonial expansion all over the world. We opposed Thatcher's bloody 1982 war. We will oppose any new military action by Britain and we say the islands should go to Argentina immediately.



Argentine Left call for UK to get out

A look at a map makes it obvious. Britain has as much right to these islands as Argentina has to the Isle of Wight. The few hundred Falkland islanders are the

descendants of British colonists and cannot be allowed to obstruct the fact that by rights the territory and its oil and natural resources belong to Argentina.

The Argentines are now asking the United Nations to look again at the issue. As we go to press, even Britain's allies the US are refusing to back Britain's claim outright. Marches and protests of workers and youth across Latin America support Argentina's claim. Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said: "Queen of England, I'm talking to you... The time for empires is over, haven't you noticed? Return the Malvinas to the Argentine people."

He warned that if there is another war, this time Argentina would not stand alone. Brown has insisted that Britain will hold on to the islands - so that British bosses get the oil.

Working class people in Britain have no interest in support our "own" bosses' claim to exploit the wealth of territory thousands of miles away. We have every interest in uniting with workers around the world who are fighting against colonialism. Our enemy is not overseas but at home - the billionaires and bankers who want to plunge us into even deeper poverty to pay for their economic crisis.

## 1982: How Thatcher went to war

Margaret Thatcher was the most unpopular prime minister for decades when in 1982 she went to war over the Falklands. By stirring up nationalism she made herself popular, and the Labour Party played into her hands by backing her bloody war. Thatcher personally gave the order to sink the Argentine ship *Belgrano*, even though it was sailing back to port, killing hundreds of young sailors. At home millions fell for it and cheered her war victory. But it soon became clear that Thatcher's victory was the workers' defeat. She won the 1983 elections and started pushing three million onto the dole.

# Stop the EDL marching in Bolton

By Helen Halliwell, Bolton

The fascist English Defence League (EDL) has been marching across the UK, trying to spread their message of racial hate with violent demonstrations: its next target is Bolton.

The aim of the EDL is to stir up and exploit racial tension by scapegoating minorities for the capitalists' crisis, using violence and intimidation to take control of our streets.

Exploiting a nationalist drive by the media and government to justify the failed war in Afghanistan, the EDL aims to get hundreds of thousands of people that voted for the BNP in the European elections onto our streets in racist marches.

If the fascists are not successfully opposed, there is no doubt that we will see

## Bolton youth speaks out

Niamh, an unemployed 16 year-old from Great Lever, Bolton, told Workers Power: "I don't want fascists marching and spreading their racial hate on the streets of my town! Bolton is a multicultural town and always will be. They can't change that and they never will. We need to stop them by any means necessary, and if that means we have to chase them away from here, then I'm definitely up for it."

a repeat of the racism and violence that was unleashed in Leeds and Stoke. The EDL took advantage of the lack of antifascist demonstrators in Harrow and Stoke to smash up Asian-owned businesses and indiscriminately attack any "foreign-looking" people.

It is vital that all anti-fascists organise not just to protest against the EDL demonstrators, but to stand in the spirit of Birmingham and Harrow by smashing their demonstrations and driving them out of

our towns. We need to build an Antifascist Defence League uniting all the militant youth and workers of Bolton and across the UK to run the fascists out of OUR towns, off OUR streets.

**JOIN THE COUNTER-  
DEMONSTRATION**

**BOLTON, SATURDAY, 20 MARCH 2010**

## INEQUALITY IN THE UK

# Poverty Britain



## The filthy rich

Ever wondered how the super-rich live? Then why not take a trip to the Sheraton Park Tower bar in Knightsbridge where some of London's wealthiest order "diamond" cocktails – costing £2,300 each.

For Barclays Capital investment bankers, it's a great way to celebrate receipt of the average bonus payout – currently at £191,000.

Sound obscene? It is.

But then so is the price of the most expensive house on sale in London. The Belgravia property has gone on the market at £45 million.

## Inequality: the truth

Contrast this with the lowest paid 10% of full-time workers who on average earn less than six of those cocktails **every year**. It's easy to see why Britain has some of the worst income inequality rates in Europe. If you add up the value of everything owned by Britain's poorest 10% it only comes to £3,500. For the richest 10% it's more like £900,000.

And our children are suffering as a result.



## Child poverty

The proportion of children living in poverty in Britain is 41% – about four million young people.

Of these, 1.6 million live in overcrowded, temporary or run-down housing. This affects their education, their health and their lives.

It's sickening, but not surprising when we consider that 1 in 6 children grow up in households where nobody is employed.

## Families and benefits

The evidence shows that benefits are not lifting these families out of poverty.

It would take a single parent on benefits 57 years to accumulate the same amount of money as just one investment banker's bonus paid out by Barclays.

The top 20% of households have an income four times greater than the £14,300 taken in by the bottom 20%.

But the Tories, Labour and the Liberal Democrats are moving into to slash benefits, making the gap between rich and poor far, far greater.



## What can we do about it?

We should organise to smash inequality in Britain and redistribute the wealth by taxing the rich for higher services and greater pay for the rest of us. It means occupations and strikes in defence of jobs and pay. It means rent strikes against rent hikes.

In the general election it means voting for socialist candidates who openly state that they will tax the rich. We must fight for

- £9 an hour minimum wage
- Three million new jobs
- Cutting working hours, not jobs and doing this without cutting pay
- For a national programme to repair and improve our housing, building one million new homes and putting the unemployed to work
- Pensions and benefits to be linked to earnings

We must campaign and fight to build a **NEW ANTICAPITALIST WORKERS' PARTY** that looks out for the millions, not the millionaires. It shouldn't just stand in elections, but work all year round to organise working class people on the estates, at work and on the streets.

## INDUSTRIAL

## Local march backs Whittington hospital



There was a big turn out from the local community for the march to save Whittington Hospital from a vicious programme of cuts. At its height up to 3,000 people joined the demo from Highbury Fields to Archway in north London.

There was a real determination to fight to save the Accident and Emergency and Maternity Wards from closure. Local resident Dave, who depends on services at

Whittington, told Workers Power: "The anger at the first mass meeting was really something. I thought the representative from the hospital management would be lynched! People were furious as one after the other denounced the closures."

The next meeting for the campaign is 7pm Monday 22 March at the Whittington Community Centre, Yerbury Road, London N19. More info at [www.dwhc.org.uk](http://www.dwhc.org.uk)

## Vote Jerry Hicks

Unite, Britain's biggest trade union, is electing a new general secretary. Four candidates are standing to replace the joint leaders, Derek Simpson and Tony Woodley, in 2011.

Workers Power supporters in Unite are campaigning for Jerry Hicks. Jerry forced an election last year and won 39,000 votes (25 per cent), coming second to Simpson. A victimised shop steward from Bristol Rolls Royce factory, Hicks has already pledged he will only accept a worker's wage if elected.

He wants to break the union's link to the Labour Party and fight the anti-union laws as a priority. The other "left" candidate, assistant general secretary Len McCluskey, will simply bow before these undemocratic laws, as he did when he dropped the BA strike after an unelected judge ruled the ballot "illegal" on a technicality.

For more on Hicks' campaign: <http://jerryhicks.wordpress.com>

## Civil servants strike against cheap sackings

By Rebecca Allen,  
PCS shop steward

The largest civil service union, the PCS, is launching a two-day national strike on 8 and 9 March to stop the government ripping up its redundancy agreement, in preparation for jobs cuts and privatisation.

The millionaire press like to portray civil servants as bureaucrats with gold-plated salaries, pensions and redundancy packages, but the reality is that one in five civil servants earn less than £15,000 annually. The pay gap between the civil service and private sector is more than £5,000.

Two-thirds of PCS members voted to strike and four in five for action short of a strike, giving the union a huge mandate to lead us into whatever action is necessary to save our redundancy pay, jobs and public services. The national strike will be followed by a ban on overtime and rolling strikes if the government doesn't back down.

The PCS organises over a quarter of a million workers in job centres, tax offices, courts, driving examination centres and passport offices. Strike action will shut down the administration of the country and bring civil servants out onto the streets of every town and city on what we can expect will be vibrant and visible picket lines.

Proposed cuts the Civil Service Compensation Scheme would mean workers losing up to a third of their redundancy pay, potentially tens of thousands of pounds. This is about making it cheaper for

the government to sack workers.

It is also designed to speed up privatisation of departments like the Land Registry. Everyone knows profiteers make their money by cutting jobs. Now even the sacking of long-standing staff will cost them less.

### All workers should support PCS

Let's turn the two-day strike into a carnival of resistance. Big, colourful and noisy picket lines can get our message across to the public.

Secondly, PCS leaders should make it clear that they will not settle for a two-tier compensation scheme with worse terms for newcomers. We should also try and recruit agency workers and other non-members.

Finally none of us takes strike action lightly. We do it to win.

PCS members are well known for our willingness to take action to defend pay and pensions. But usually we have been only called out on one or two-day strikes, which have brought little success.

The threat of rolling strikes is good, but it's a step down from a national strike at a time when we should be stepping up the fight. Instead of going back to work on 10 March and spending the next few weeks clearing the backlog, we should be preparing for further strikes – up to an all-out indefinite strike, if that's what it takes to win.

This is a strike that every working class person should support. If we win, we can set the scene for others to fight and win. With Labour, Tories and the Lib Dems threatening savage cuts in public services for years to come, this battle could not be more important.

## National rail strike ballot

The RMT and TSSA trade unions are balloting their members in Network Rail for a national strike to stop 1,500 job cuts. For the bosses, balancing the books is more important than maintaining a safe railway network. As Bob Crow, RMT general secretary said:

"We are balloting for a national strike because we know that the threat to axe jobs and compromise

safety standards makes another Hatfield, Potters Bar or Grayrigg disaster on the UK rail network inevitable."

Readers may remember that Network Rail was taken back into public ownership when the privatisers went bankrupt.

But this shows that it's not enough to renationalise public services – we need to place them under workers' control!

## Steel: union ballots for national strike

By Bernie McAdam

Corus Teesside Cast Products is mothballing its Redcar steel plant. Linda Smith from a local steelworkers' family put it more accurately: "They say mothballing, but really it's closure. It is catastrophic for the community."

Over 150 years of steelmaking in the region is about to end; 1,600 steelworkers will lose their jobs.

Speculation continues about a government backed rescue bid. But if the government was as serious about saving steel mills as it was about bailing out the banks, Labour would have nationalised Corus.

The unions have given notice of national ballots for industrial action. Steelworkers should vote for national strike action and demand:

- No to the closure of Teesside Cast Products
- No redundancies across the steel industry
- Nationalise Corus with no compensation to the owners and under workers' control.

Steelworkers at Redcar should occupy the plant and make it a rallying point for workers in the steel industry and the local community. This would also boost the campaign for a "Yes" vote.

## Unison: vote Holmes for General Secretary!



Mass meeting of Kirklees Unison: the branch is so big it has to meet at Huddersfield Town's football ground

By Jeremy Drinkall, Unison shop steward

Dave Prentis, current general secretary of Unison, Britain's largest public services union, has called a snap election. This gives Unison members a chance to get rid of one of the most vicious right wing leaders in the whole workers' movement.

Rather than use his position to champion low-paid workers and fight government attacks on the NHS, Prentis has time and again thrown in the towel.

Worse, he has a record of disciplining activists on trumped up charges and then banning them from standing for office.

Workers Power calls on all our readers and supporters to support Paul Holmes, branch secretary at

Kirklees Council in Yorkshire. Paul's branch is a model of good organisation, with over 80 per cent union membership.

Paul is also a fighter, having forced the Unison leadership to call a national strike to protect workers' pensions, and won better maternity leave and holiday entitlement locally.

While Paul is a Labour Party member, he does call for Unison to demand the Labour leadership fights for Unison policy and promises a conference debate on affiliation to Labour followed by a ballot.

While we have many issues of disagreement with Paul, not least on the need for a new anticapitalist party, he represents the best chance of defeating Dave Prentis and reinventing the union.

## FT: union breaks Chinese Wall

The National Union of Journalists has won a tremendous victory at the Financial Times. Four journalists, who developed a profitable Chinese website for the FT, already suffered worse conditions than the rest of the London office. Then the Chinese workers were told they had to take a 30-50 per cent pay cut and move to Beijing – where it is

illegal to work for a foreign news outfit!

A lively campaign – and the threat of industrial action – forced the FT to climb down. Four migrant workers' lives were saved. As NUJ branch leader Dave Crouch commented, there was "an imaginary Chinese wall" between the two sets of workers, but now it has been smashed down.

## Big vote for BA strike: but will it delay take off

By Jeremy Drinkall

British Airways knows how to put the boot in. First the company cuts a thousand jobs and freezes pay. Then BA gets a judge to ban a 12-day strike, despite a 92 per cent vote in favour of one. Now it has suspended 20 workers for criticising the airline on Facebook.

No wonder Unite's 12,000 cabin crew members have delivered a second massive vote for industrial action. In an online poll of 3,600 BA workers, more than two-thirds wanted a strike of "at least 10 days".

So why has Unite leader Len McCluskey still not called a strike, 10 days after the ballot?

BA has the money – it made £25 million profit in the last three months of 2009. It could easily maintain current staffing levels and afford a pay rise. If BA wants to make savings, it could cut the wages of £740,000-a-year chief executive Willie Walsh, instead of attacking cabin crew, whose starting salary is just £11,000.

For all McCluskey's attempts at diplomacy, there is nothing to be gained from holding back. On the contrary, BA has let it be known that it is training up 1,000 pilots and 2,500 "volunteers" to scab on any strike. An immediate 10-day strike would throw these plans to the four winds – and frighten the life out of the bosses.

## Tories and Lib Dems axe thousands of jobs

By Bernie McAdam, Birmingham

If you want to know what a national Tory-Lib Dem coalition would look like, look at the one that runs Birmingham City Council. It is set to slash 2,000 jobs in a £69 million cuts programme. There will also be a pay freeze and council tax will rise by 1.9 per cent.

Care homes for the elderly have been earmarked for closure as have neighbourhood offices and nurseries. Chief executive Stephen Hughes said: "The scale of cuts is likely to be of a magnitude that no one has seen."

It is vital that unions stop this attack.

Unison General Secretary Dave Prentis told a noisy protest last month: "If it means taking industrial action and members support it, then we will take action."

We need a strategy that will scupper the council's plans. Mass meetings need to be organised immediately with indicative votes for strike action and ballots thereafter. But this struggle will not be victorious through one-day actions alone. An all out indefinite strike should be organised if council won't back down.

- No job losses
- No cuts
- No closures
- All out strike to defend our services.

## STUDENT FIGHTBACK

Rachel Brooks and John Bowman round up the resistance against the education cuts

# Fight the education cuts

The economic crisis is set to turn into an education crisis if the government gets its way. Cuts of £400 million have been announced in higher education, with £600 million to be stolen from further education colleges.

This represents a serious attack on the future of Britain's

youth. This year up to 300,000 applications to universities could be turned down, potentially leaving thousands of young people without education, employment or training.

In the universities, the announced cuts are being used to excuse "restructuring" projects that will see many teachers

lose their jobs, while managers continue to receive their bloated £100,000-plus salaries. Across further and higher education, 7000 jobs are under threat.

But these attacks from education managers and government policy makers are not going unopposed. Serious anti-cuts

campaigns have been formed at universities across the country, drawing in students, teachers and support staff. Campaigns at Leeds University, King's College London, the University of Sussex and Westminster University are starting to see victories, showing that cuts are not inevitable – they can be fought.

### No Cuts at King's gets stronger

King's College London is being hit hard, staring at 10 per cent cuts across the board. Engineering is facing the axe altogether and humanities teachers have been made to reapply for their jobs.

But students involved in the No Cuts at King's campaign group have held a series of protest actions. They have managed to save their canteen, and are working hard to get more students involved.

Most successfully, activists at King's College, in collaboration with the UCU, played a leading role in setting up a new network to coordinate anti-cuts action across London.

The London Education Action Network has built large meetings of students and staff.

On Saturday 27 February the network held a "teach-in" of over 300 students and staff from all across Britain and has called for a national demonstration against education cuts on 20 March to take place in London.

### National campaign launched

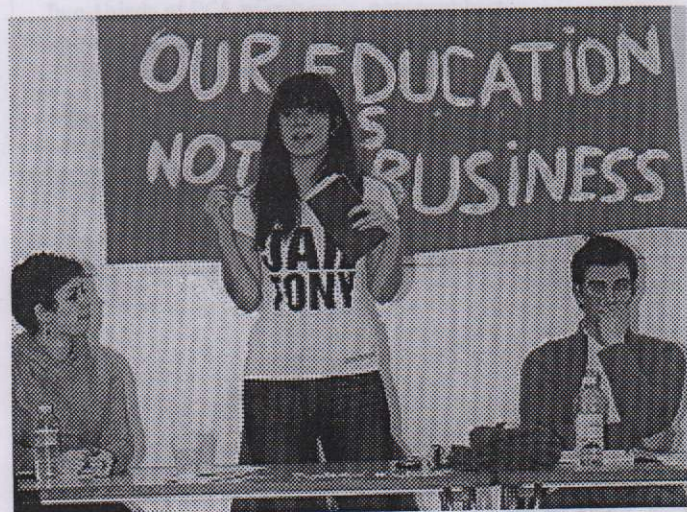
One hundred and fifty student activists from dozens of universities came together at the first meeting of the National Convention Against Fees and Cuts last month.

The conference decided to form a new national campaign, uniting local initiatives against education fees and cuts into a UK-wide movement capable of challenging government attacks.

There was a mood of confidence from the beginning, particularly after Dan Edmonds from Leeds University spoke. "We had to beat our own student union over cuts, we will beat our university management over cuts and we can beat the government over cuts too!"

School and college students also met at the convention to decide how to challenge the triple whammy of high youth unemployment, a reduction of university places, and a gigantic increase in tuition fees.

Speakers from Austria who were involved in some of the biggest and most militant education protests in recent years also attended. Roman Birke from the Vienna university occupation said: "The attacks on education are global – to



Activist opens conference with inspiring speech

fight them we need international solidarity and coordination."

The final session of the conference passed a straight-talking statement that addressed the very heart of the problems facing education, with anticapitalist solutions. The convention pledged its support for students and lecturers taking action against cuts, for migrant and non-academic staff on campus and for anti-cuts campaigns internationally.

The convention represents a huge step forward in our efforts to unite the anti-cuts campaigns. With student unions at Leeds and Gloucester attacking their staff for threatening industrial

action, radical students win over the majority and prepare them to take the necessary measures to defend education.

Students and staff who are fighting for jobs and education should contact the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts and join their regional group to develop a genuinely national movement that can beat the capitalists' attempts to make workers and youth pay the cost of their crisis.

The National Campaign is launching action across the country to fight cuts and fees.

• Join the campaign at <http://conventionagainstfeesandcuts.wordpress.com>



## Leeds: students and staff scupper cuts



By Leeds university students

Students and staff have struck a blow against management plans for £35 million of cuts. Management were forced to back down after a successful strike ballot of teaching staff, backed up with student protests. Students and staff are fighting to protect as many as 700 jobs at the institution.

At first, the official students union at Leeds University disgracefully started an email harassment campaign against teaching staff.

The campaign, misnamed "Education First", invited students to send an email to all the teachers in their departments urging them not to strike. If this wasn't bad enough, the student union officers tried to justify management enforced cuts by

explaining on their website that there was no link between "student satisfaction" and staff:student teaching ratios.

But students disgusted with their own union set up a campaign group called "Leeds University Against Cuts" which forced the student union to back down after a series of demonstrations and other protest actions.

Buoyed by this success, UCU members delivered a 64% vote in favour of strike action. The union announced 3 days of strikes spread over a week.

Under this pressure, management lifted the threat of immediate job cuts. The UCU called off the strikes as a result. This was a mistake because the threat of 700 redundancies remain. Until these cuts are ruled out altogether, staff and students must continue the fight.

## Governors' meeting stormed at Westminster university

By Simon Hardy, Westminster

Students at Westminster University are occupying administrative buildings.

University managers – on an average salary of £193,000 – have proposed cuts of up to 285 jobs, angering students and staff.

Students went into occupation on 1 March after storming the Board of Governors.

Last month, 160 students and staff rallied at a packed meeting on the Regent Street campus. They decided that the

current management could no longer be trusted to run the university, and passed a vote for "no-confidence", stating that the management should resign.

Students from this anti-cuts meeting then marched onto the Annual General Meeting of the student union where they also won support.

More demonstrations and occupations have been planned against the cuts. The campaign at Westminster University looks set to present management with a real challenge.

## Leeds Council slammed over school closure

By Chris Close, Leeds

Leeds Council received a hammering from 500 students, teachers, parents and residents after holding a meeting threatening to close down the City of Leeds School.

The arrogance of the council at the meeting was shown as they gave reasons for the closure by sending four low-grade managers to read out the two-minute proposal from an A4 piece of paper.

Speaker after speaker stood up from the meeting floor in defence of the school, which has one of the poorest catchment areas in the city. It also provides important services for migrants. Seventy-four different languages are spoken in the school.

Each speaker from the com-

munity who stood up in defence of the school was given cheers and applause. Council management received only heckles and boos. They said that the school needed to be closed because it was not meeting the average grades for the city. But parents were quick to realise that investment, not closure, is the way forward for the school.

A Somalian student said that the community around the school was like "his family". A teacher questioned angrily why there was money for banks but not for schools.

The meeting made it clear that residents in the Woodhouse area, where the school is situated, are willing to fight for it. No tactic – demonstrations, strikes or even occupations – should be ruled out in defence of the school.

## Flash occupation at Sussex University

Students at Sussex University have taken direct action to defend their teachers and their education, by launching a "flash occupation".

This was a response to management plans to cut £3 million this academic year, and £5 million next year. The costs of these cuts will be passed onto schools through restructuring and course closures, and to staff and students in the shape of job losses, pensions cuts and fee increases. Childcare provision has been threatened too – for the management of this university, nothing is sacred.

But there is no lack of money at Sussex. The university administration is planning to spend £112 million on new buildings and refurbishments on campus, as well as raising the salaries

of the top 14 managers to a combined £2.1 million per year.

But Sussex University has one of the best organised local anti-cuts campaigns in the country. Last month, students occupied a management conference room to protest against the cuts at their university.

Management tried to restrict students from re-entering the occupied space, but their numbers were quickly bolstered when a demonstration of 200 students entered the space.

Students have promised more sustained action to come, to coincide with staff strike action which is like to take place soon.

For more on the fight against education cuts go to [www.worldrevolution.org.uk](http://www.worldrevolution.org.uk)

**GENERAL ELECTION 2010**

# DRINKALL FOR VAUXHALL VOTE ANTICAPITALIST

## For the millions, not the millionaires

THE GOVERNMENT gave £1 trillion of our money to the millionaire bankers.

Yet more than half of the children in Vauxhall are officially living in poverty, and one in every three council homes is officially not decent.

Labour, Tory and Lib Dems all backed this \$1 trillion robbery. That's why a new force – the Anticapitalists – are standing in this election.

We want to take over the banks and take back the trillion. We want to spend this huge wealth on jobs, homes, hospitals and schools.

Labour has let ordinary people down, spending all our money on bankers and unpopular wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Now Labour wants to make us pay the price with cuts to jobs, pay and services.

The Tories will do the same – but faster and worse. They are the party of the super-rich and want deeper cuts, sooner.

The Lib Dems' leader Nick Clegg has called for "savage cuts". He says of bankers: "I've got no problem at all paying them a lot of money – give them a big chauffeur-driven car."

All the main parties back the rich capitalists and want to make working class people pay for a crisis we didn't cause.

But in Vauxhall there is now an alternative.

**JEREMY DRINKALL** is standing for the **ANTICAPITALISTS**. He wants to take over the banks, tax the rich and bring the troops home. We'd get our billions back and spend them making life better for millions of ordinary people.

## What the ANTICAPITALISTS stand for

### IT'S OUR MONEY, TAKE IT BACK!

The Government gave £1 trillion to the banks. We want it back! Anticapitalists say take over the banks, who are making giant profits again, and raise taxes on the rich.

### A NEW VAUXHALL

51 per cent of children in Vauxhall live in poverty and 36 per cent of all homes are not fit to live in. It's time to stop this right now with a **war on poverty**, raising benefits, freezing rents, making childcare free and putting people back to work.

### A WORKING CLASS MP ON A WORKING CLASS WAGE

**JEREMY** will take only the **pay of an average worker**. He will fight to jail the expenses thieves, to scrap their privileges, and abolish the House of Lords and the monarchy.

### JOBS AND DECENT HOMES

Spend the money on a massive programme of public works – creating **three million jobs**, a million new affordable homes and a national **repair and improve** programme for council flats and houses.

**FOR MORE GO TO DRINKALL4VAUXHALL.BLOGSPOT.COM**

“ Half of all children living in Vauxhall are in poverty. But the government gave £1 trillion to the rich bankers.

ANTICAPITALISTS say take over the banks, take back our billions and create three million jobs, a million new council houses and a national repair and improve programme to get our children and communities out of poverty. ”



## Vote ANTICAPITALIST in Vauxhall - Vote Jeremy Drinkall

### ROOTING OUT RACISM

Too often, the media and government try to blame migrants for the economic crisis. JEREMY wants to launch a campaign to defend the rights of migrant workers. He says sack racist police officers, defend equal pay for equal work, stand up to racists like the BNP and grant citizenship to all who live here.

### EDUCATION COSTS MONEY

As a teaching assistant, Anticapitalist candidate JEREMY DRINKALL sees every day how vital education is for our children's future. He wants to **reverse the cuts** that are taking place in schools, colleges and universities, making them **free for all** and to give students **grants** at 16. He wants to improve our schools, place them under the control of parents, teachers and pupils, and **stop cutting pay** for staff.

### A SOCIALIST FUTURE

The economic crisis proves the millionaires' system of **capitalism has failed**. We want a **revolution** to take the money and the power out of the hands of the super-rich and into the hands of the working class. Then we could build a **socialist planned economy** where everyone works to meet people's needs, and not private profit.

• For the millions, not the millionaires, vote Anticapitalist and vote JEREMY DRINKALL for Vauxhall!



## GENERAL ELECTION

# Never forget how the Tories wrecked lives

During their last period in government (1979-1997), the Tories stripped away workers' rights, sold off nationalised industries to their rich friends, slashed benefits and pensions, attacked gay rights, gave tax cuts to the wealthy, and made the poor poorer through the poll tax, writes **Joy Maccready**

## Destruction of industry

Under the Tories, whole industries like steel, shipbuilding and mining – along with the communities that thrived around them – were savaged.

These policies culminated with a deliberate attack on coal mining. Despite a heroic, year-long strike (1984-5), the government closed most pits, destroying tens of thousands of jobs, gutting the NUM (which had brought down the Heath government in 1974), forcing Britain to become a coal importer, and increasing our dependence on nuclear power.

## Union bashing

The Tories hated our unions because they had the power to stand up for working people. Between 1980 and 1993 they increasingly restricted trade unions' ability to undertake lawful industrial action. Ever more complicated ballot rules gave courts the right to block action even when it had support.

Unions were banned from taking action in solidarity with one another. Flying pickets were banned so workers could not demonstrate support for each other. Strikebreakers won a whole raft of new rights while striking miners in 1984 were harassed by police, beaten up and had benefits suspended.

## Victimising gays

Espousing "family values", while fuelling the tide of homo-



**Cameron and his role model**

phobia that swelled with the rise of AIDS, the Tories introduced Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988, stating that councils "shall not intentionally promote homosexuality", including published material and teaching.

This section gave state sanction to homophobia. Councils closed a number of lesbian, gay, transgender, and bisexual student support groups in schools and colleges due to fears by council legal staff that they could breach the Act.

## Welfare

Youth were forced onto slave labour work-for-your-dole schemes - this a time when unemployment had reached its highest level since the 1930s, peaking at over three million. The real value of unemployment benefits and pensions declined, leading to greater poverty.

## Wages

During the Tory years, salaries for the rich increased massively. In 1986, a quarter of top executives of large companies received salaries 23% higher than the previous year – one in 10 received rises of 42%!

In contrast, for many working class people wages fell. The deregulation, including abolition of the wages councils, led to an increase in low paid, part time and casual jobs. With no minimum wage, there was increasing poverty and growing inequality in pay with no rise in employment. As a result, the gap between the highest and lowest paid was greater than at any time since the 1880s!

## Tax cuts for the rich

In Thatcher's first budget the top rate on income was reduced from 83% to 60%. In 1988 this was further cut to 40%.

Changes in taxation meant

that the poor paid relatively much more than the rich. Indirect tax, like VAT, was increased. By 1995 the poorest 10% lost nearly 20% of their income to indirect taxes, while the richest 10% paid only 2% (Institute for Fiscal Studies). From the £31 billion in tax cuts made between 1979 and 1992, the richest 1% received 93 times as much per head as the poorest 50%.

## The Poll Tax Robbery

The Community Charge, or poll tax, replaced the local housing rates in Scotland in 1989 and in England and Wales in 1990. The poll tax set a single flat rate tax on every adult. This meant that one person living in a mansion would pay the same tax as a person sharing a flat with six other people - shifting the tax burden on to the poor.

The All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation, including many local Anti-Poll Tax Unions called mass protests. First in Scotland, then in Britain, they successfully organised mass non-payment, with 14 million refusing to pay.

Enforcement became increasingly harsh – people were sent to prison. Unrest mounted, ending in riots. The most serious was in London on 31 March 1990, during a 200,000-strong protest in Trafalgar Square.

In 1993, John Major was forced to scrap the Poll Tax and bring in council tax instead – which is still unfair and still benefits the rich at the poor's expense.

## HISTORY

# Haiti's great slave revolution

By Dave Stockton

As Haiti struggles with the devastating earthquake, and faces instead of massive aid a sudden US occupation of its country, some right wing commentators in America have dared to claim that Haiti's suffering is God's punishment.

TV preacher Pat Robertson said Haiti "swore a pact to the devil." He went on say that "something happened a long time ago in Haiti people might not want to talk about."

In fact in Haiti in 1791 slaves made a great revolution – the first successful slave revolt in history. It had a huge impact on America and Europe, and proved that revolution from below can win.

Even today, racists like Robertson hate the slaves and their revolt. All the more reason for working class people to learn from it. There's still no better place to start than the classic book by black Marxist CLR James: *The Black Jacobins*. In 1938, James wrote: "The transformation of slaves trembling in hundreds before a single white man, into a people able to organise themselves and defeat the most powerful European nations of their day, is one of the great epics of revolutionary struggle."

## Slavery plantations

The Spanish, later joined by the French, turned Haiti into a colony where coffee and sugar plantations and mines were worked by huge numbers of black slaves, seized from west Africa. By 1789, there were half a million in St Domingue, the French half of the island. Haitian exports made up two-thirds of France's economy.

The slaves faced a regime of terror. Anyone resisting slavery was given horrific punishments. Groups of slaves revolted, fleeing into the mountains, but the



**Toussaint L'Ouverture: leader of the first black republic**

system remained intact.

In 1789, however, news reached Haiti of the French Revolution. Spread through newspapers and pamphlets, the ideals of this revolution – human rights, citizenship, liberation – reached the huge colony where so many were enslaved.

News also reached Toussaint L'Ouverture (1743-1803). Freed when about 30, he had learned medical and military skills. Toussaint adopted the name L'Ouverture after the "opening" of the struggle for liberty.

Meanwhile in France, the National Assembly granted limited voting rights to free "coloureds" in May 1791. This was too much for the white planters who refused. Beginning on 22 August 1791, slaves rose in arms, against the racist slavers.

Toussaint joined the rebels as a medical officer. He became aide-de-camp to the foremost black general, Jean-Francois Biassou, and then a general of his own troops.

In September 1792, a fleet arrived from France with orders to restore order. But faced with a threat from British and Spanish forces, French leader Leger Sonthonax offered freedom to all slaves

joining the side of the French Republic. So on 29 August 1793, slavery on Saint-Domingue was abolished. Then on 3 February 1794, the French National Assembly, now dominated by revolutionary Jacobins, abolished slavery everywhere. Toussaint found his first genuine allies in the revolutionary poor of Paris. He never wavered in his loyalty to the French Revolution, even when it started to abandon its ideals.

In 1793, the British and Spanish entered the fray. Toussaint L'Ouverture now really came to the fore as a general, defeating first the Spanish (1794), and then the British (1795). Britain lost 80,000 soldiers to disease and the rebels, a small remnant holding on until 1798. By 1799 Toussaint controlled much of the island

But in France, the radical Jacobins had been driven from power. The conservative Thermidor regime, then the semi-dictatorships of the Directory and the Consulate began to roll back the political gains of the revolution, including the abolition of slavery. The French capitalists demanded their property back, and above all Haiti with its vast wealth. Napoleon Bonaparte launched

an invasion, sending 60,000 soldiers to restore slavery.

Toussaint stumbled at this critical stage. He hesitated over a final confrontation with France because he still identified it with revolution. He refused to take the plantations out of the hands of the slave owners, and provoked a black labourers' revolt which he ruthlessly suppressed. He lost the confidence of much of his army.

## Seizure of Toussaint

Toussaint's misplaced trust in France led to his downfall. In 1802, entrusting himself to the French commander Leclerc, he was seized and transported to France, where he died in prison.

Before boarding the ship to France, Toussaint declared "in overthrowing me, you have cut down in San Domingo the tree of Liberty. It will spring up again by the roots for they are numerous and deep."

After Toussaint's capture, his generals, Moise and Jean-Jacques Dessalines, completed the revolution, defeating the Napoleon's French troops. In November 1803, Haiti was declared an independent republic, the world's oldest black republic and the second-oldest republic in the Western Hemisphere, after the United States.

The great Haitian revolution changed the face of history, not just in the Caribbean but in the rest of America and Europe too. Today it shows us how even the most downtrodden people can rise up and defeat oppression.

When Haiti defeated the French colonists' forces, the new Haitian government agreed to pay huge debts – and Haiti is still paying huge debts to the rich world today. As the people of Haiti struggle to rebuild their lives after the earthquake, all around the world the cry must go up: cancel all Haiti's debts, let Haiti be free at last.

## EUROPE IN REVOLT

# Greek workers

Workers in Greece have taken to the streets to defend their jobs and services. **Dave Stockton and Chris Newcombe** report on an inspirational struggle

**B**anners filled the streets of Athens during the one-day general strike on 24 February, and their message was crystal clear: “Enough is Enough!”, “Where Has All the Money Gone?”, “Keep Your Hands Off Our Benefits!”, “Billions for Capitalism but Nothing for the Workers!” and simply “Rise Up!”

We are going to see more like that in the weeks ahead.

This was the second major national strike in less than a month, and more than two million of Greece’s five million workers backed it. In an explosion of anger they took to the streets in 70 cities and major towns.

In Athens protesters tried to storm the stock exchange with a banner that said “The rich must pay for the crisis”. Eighty thousand workers and youth joined marches in Athens and 7,000 in Thessalonica.

Of all the countries using the Euro, Greece is suffering the most severe effects of the world recession. Its national debt now exceeds its annual gross domestic product (GDP), with many commentators expecting the figure to reach 125 per cent this year.

The Government’s budget deficit has hit 12.7 per cent, four times the limit allowed for in the Stability Pact, an EU agreement intended to make the Euro secure.

European Bank officials admit privately that Greece will find it difficult if not impossible to meet the repayments due in April and May, which total 25 billion (£22 billion).

The big German private banks are now refusing to buy any more Greek bonds. If Greece defaults on its debt payments, currency traders will sell the Euro and speculators will bet on it falling further, pushing it down. **der** the capitalists are worried. Head



Workers' banners opposing cuts – Greek general strike, 24 February (pic Guy Smallman)

of the European Central Bank Jean-Claude Trichet threatened Greece: “All Greeks must recognise that they must correct a course which has gone out of control”. He means working class Greeks should pay for the crisis: something they are determined not to do!

### Bosses demand cuts

One regional German paper, the Nürnberger Nachrichten, demanded of the German government: “Use massive pressure to force the euro-partner onto the path of virtue. In addition to cuts in the social and pension systems, it is necessary to slash the army of state officials, make real wage cuts, increase taxes and reduce expenditure.”

German deputy finance minister Jörg Asmussen, said the Greeks will “have to measure up” to steps taken by Ireland, which slashed public sector wages and Austrian finance minister Josef Pröll added “We certainly won’t let them off the hook.”

These demands to put the Greek workers on rations are outrageous hypocrisy, especially coming from the banking élite who have just

paid themselves a fortune in bonuses yet again, despite the downturn they caused.

It wasn’t the ordinary people of Greece who caused the crisis. Average wages in public service are 1,200 (£1,052) a month. Sixty per cent of pensioners survive on less than 600 (£526) per month. Greece’s official unemployment rate is 18 per cent, while 20 per cent of its people are living under the poverty line and in 2009 youth unemployment was over 27 per cent.

Yet since Greece joined the Euro, food prices and rents have soared to with no rise in wages. So whoever needs to tighten their belts it is not the Greek workers, small farmers, young people or pensioners.

In November Greek voters elected the PASOK party because its leader George Papandreu promised to protect the poorest from the effects of the crisis.

He broke his promises in record time. He announced a freeze on civil servants’ wages, along with a 10 per cent cut in allowances, and pledged to cut the budget deficit from 13 per cent to 9 per cent in 2010, and

# rise up

to 2.8 per cent by 2012. This cannot be done without demolishing Greece's already inadequate health and education service and sacking huge numbers of public sector workers.

Papandreou's promises have so far done little to calm financial markets. These parasites fear that Greek workers will not roll over – they are right!

## Resistance and challenges

Workers are not prepared to let the EU slash their already meagre wages. As one banner said: No more illusions, it is either capital or the workers!

On the 24 February strike, the turnout across industry as a whole was 70 per cent, with a total shut down of shipbuilding, ports and refineries, and 90 per cent of banking, utilities, education and public transport. There was a lower turnout from medium sized and small private enterprises, where poorly organised workers fear sackings and victimisation if they strike.

The strike showed workers and youth are ready to fight – but also that there are major obstacles in their path.

Initially, the mobilisations were not united – unfortunately, this is normal in Greece due to longstanding divisions in the workers' movement. The Stalinist Greek Communist Party (KKE) and its PAME union federation (All-Workers Militant Front) led 30,000 in one demonstration, while the reformist GSEE-ADEDY (General Confederation of Greek Workers and Civil Servants Confederation) led 50,000 in another.

Second, the union leaders' demands were very timid – from the outset they say only that they want to register their protest against the austerity programme, rather than defeating it by militant means.

Yiannis Panagopoulos, head of GSSE, lamely told the press, "We demand a fair distribution of the burden". So instead of saying the rich should pay for the crisis they caused,

and not the workers, he accepted that workers should pay some of the price.

Another day of strikes and demos is planned for 8 March, but this on its own will not be enough to defeat the combined forces of the PASOK government, the EU authorities and the financial markets. The movement needs to escalate the strike action – it needs to go from protest to a real challenge to the government and that means winning the argument for longer strikes.

Greek workers must demand unity from their leaders – a united movement can mount a greater challenge to the government, while it also allows the left wing of the movement to put greater pressure on the trade union leaders who will look to sell the struggle short. Should the leaders refuse to unite at the top then rank and file members should do so from the bottom up. The formation of local and regional councils of action can achieve this – drawing in all the unions, the students' organisations, and the organisations of the small farmers too. But unity without a clear plan of action will not be enough to meet the bosses' attacks.

## For an all out strike

In pride of place should be the demand for no cuts or reduction in the pension age, no job losses in either the public or the private sector. Action councils should organise for an all out indefinite strike. The aim should be to stay out until the government totally abandons its plan of cuts and austerity.

Action councils could attempt to draw in private sector workers by fighting for wage increases and helping recruit them to unions. They could fight for the poor small farmers – demanding their debts and mortgages be cancelled. In this way the whole working population could be rallied around the strikers. At the same time the unemployed and youth



Workers' march, 24 February (pic Guy Smallman)

can be won by calling for work or full pay: jobs or decent benefits for all.

This could all be paid for easily: by taking over the banks and big companies, without compensation to the former owners, and running them under workers' control. Thousands of rank and file members of the main parties of the Greek working class – the KKE and SYRIZA (the Coalition of the Radical Left) – are at the forefront of the resistance; now pressure need to be put on the official leaders of these parties to form a united front of resistance.

In the midst of a historical capitalist crisis, in a country where there are tens of thousands of revolutionary workers and youth, the far left groups and movements should issue a call for the formation of the one thing desperately needed to win: a new revolutionary party. This can be achieved by unity of the revolutionaries around a new action programme, linking today's resistance to a fight for revolution and a workers and small farmers' government based on action councils. A revolutionary unity conference should convene to draw up, debate and adopt such a programme.

Internationally the call must go out for solidarity action with the Greek resistance. And the best way to do so is to imitate it – to take to the streets with their slogans. Enough is Enough! Workers - Rise Up!

## EUROPE IN REVOLT

## Workers take battle

Greece has been racked by one-day general strikes, as European Union leaders demand savage cuts in pay, jobs and pensions. The European TUC said: "The Labour movement in Europe stands in full solidarity with Greek workers in their struggle against job cuts, wage freezes, wage and pension cuts."

But we need to go further, and spread the Greek workers' revolt against rapacious bankers and their governments across Europe.

It's time to unite our struggles under the slogan "WE WON'T PAY FOR YOUR CRISIS - WE ARE GOING TO MAKE YOU PAY" by taking control of the banks and factories and offices. A socialist Europe is possible – if we fight for workers' power.

DAVE STOCKTON surveys the scene and concludes that the unevenness of struggle is due to a failure of working class leadership.

## SPAIN

Like Greece, Spain faces a major budget crisis, with a deficit of almost 12 per cent of GDP. Its economy has not yet emerged from recession and there is a 20 per cent unemployment rate, the highest in the Eurozone.

In January Socialist Party prime minister Zapatero announced cuts of 50 billion euros (£43.8bn) plus a recruitment freeze in public services. He plans to slash pensions and raise the retirement age

from 65 to 67.

Faced with complaints from his European partners that Spain's labour markets are "too inflexible", Zapatero is planning to erode workers' job protection rights.

On 22 February, there were protest rallies against these austerity measures in Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia. These were the first major protests called by the CCOO and UGT union federations over the six years of Zapatero's government. The previous day, some tens of thousands of workers took strike action.

The anger against the aus-

terity measures is considerable. A recent poll in El Pais newspaper found 84 per cent opposed to the labour law "reforms". Another in Publico showed 49 per cent would support a general strike against pension cuts.

But what is lacking is leadership. The initiative will have to come from below – from rank and file trade unionists but drawing in the huge numbers of unemployed youth. As in Britain, a new anticapitalist party is needed to break the paralysing effects of the Socialist government and their loyal union bureaucrats.

## PORTUGAL

In Portugal, "socialist" prime minister José Sócrates is instituting savage cuts – the biggest in Europe after Greece. He wants to cut state spending to from 8.3 per cent of GDP to 3 per cent by 2013. Unemployment already stands at 10.1 per cent and would be driven way above

this by such measures.

The Portuguese workers have forced their union leaders to oppose the government's plans. The 300,000 strong Common Front public sector union has called a one-day strike on 4 March against the government's pay freeze. The UGT, Portugal's second-largest union and traditionally closer to the Socialists, has come out in support of the strike.

Manuel Carvalho da Silva, leader of the CGTP union federation, told Reuters: "I say a scenario like the strike in Greece is necessary." That would be a great step forward, but da Silva made no explicit call for a general strike and failed to mention a date.

A general strike of workers from both public and private sectors would be the first in Portugal in over a decade.

## ITALY

Industrial output in Italy fell 17.4 per cent in 2009. As a result, the official unemployment rate has reached 8.3 per cent in January. But that was before Italy's car giant Fiat laid off 30,000 people for two weeks. Further closures are forecast.

Italy's public debt is the third highest in the world, behind the USA and Japan. This will trigger more attacks on public services and their workforces.

One-day protest strikes took

place in Sicily and in Milan. But resistance is patchy, as is revealed by this extract from a letter to Turkey's Tekel workers by Pierro Bernocchi, leader of the COBAS trade union.

"COBAS is participating in the preparations of the First March of Migrants, a day of struggle, strikes and protest, and in a general strike in the schools and education system on the 12 March.

All around Europe, and especially in Italy, workers, retired persons and young people are paying for the crisis caused by the economic and political

power of the capitalists. At the beginning of the economic and social crisis, the Italian anti-cuts movement invented the slogan "We will not pay for your crisis". But in the last year the opposite happened. We have seen the same story: capitalist owners of the world have paid nothing; workers, unemployed and poor people have paid more than ever before.

In Italy, there are three million unemployed workers. Hundreds and hundreds of factories are closing or moving production abroad. In the school system the government has cut

140,000 jobs. Meanwhile temporary employees (5 millions, all in all) risk being made jobless at any moment.

Also a large number of migrants (who also number around 5 million) work in conditions approaching slavery.

But Silvio Berlusconi's government goes on cutting jobs, wages and public services (above all in education and health). And he carries out all of these destructive policies without any real opposition on the part of centre-left parties and trade unions allied to them, either in parliament or in society."



# to the bosses

## Turkey's Tekel workers fight on

By Marcus Halaby

The struggle has reached fever pitch in Turkey, with a million workers across 82 provinces joining a one-day general strike in defence of 12,000 former Tekel workers. An indefinite general strike has now been called for 26 May.

Tekel was a state owned tobacco monopoly, until it was sold off to British American Tobacco (BAT) in 2008. Workers made redundant from privatised firms are allowed to transfer elsewhere in the state sector.

But there's a cruel catch; they are put on short time, lower wages and are not entitled to benefits.

This is a disguised form of unemployment, with workers having to work for their dole. And it is against this that the now-dispersed Tekel workers have been on strike since last year.

Meanwhile, to rub salt into their wounds, BAT has reported a 10 per cent hike in prof-



its to £2.7 billion, aided by "emerging markets" acquisitions like Tekel.

The government is also inflaming the situation, with prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan claiming: "After privatization they are just taking their salaries, and this is the public's money. I am sorry, but I will not let anyone take away the rights of this country's orphans."

But in Turkey, as in other countries, the problems stem not from the millions of workers, but from their leaders. There is a serious danger that the movement could lose momentum.

The fact that workers had to storm the headquarters of their union federation to force its leaders to call a one-day general strike should be a warning.

## Ireland: the cost of inaction

By Darren Cogavin

Austerity has become the battle-cry of Ireland's ruling class. The ruling Fianna Fail-Green Party coalition slashed 4 billion euros from wages, social benefits and welfare spending in December. This will be used to bail out failing financial institutions, which are demanding another 10 billion euros. The government intends to cut a further 9 per cent from spending in four years, and impose water charges on domestic users, leaving householders paying about 680 euros more a year.

As Sunday Independent columnist Gene Kerrigan put it: "The reckless gobshites and the International Idiot Gamblers are to be bailed out, while the low paid and the disabled get stiffed."

But the government would never have been able to get away with this without the trade union misleaders.

At least 300,000 public sector workers struck on 24 November. But rather than escalate the action to defeat the government, the officials offered concessions, in the belief they could restore "social partnership". Instead the government took advantage of the bureaucrats' offer and implemented the harshest budget since the state's foundation.

Resistance to the government's plans is crucial. Alongside building local campaigns, for example against the water charges, workers must develop rank and file organisations in the unions, so they can force their leaders to mount sustained strikes – or take the necessary action without them.

We need to form action committees that can organise a class-wide response – a general strike – to the assault on workers and public services. Above all, we need a new anti-capitalist party, to get rid of the present system and replace it with a socialist system controlled of the working class.

## EUROPEAN SOCIAL FORUM

Sean O'Grady of The Independent, has written that the strikes in Greece and Spain may "promise to be just the start of the greatest demonstration of public unrest seen on the continent since the revolutionary fervour of 1968". But to fulfill this promise, we need to develop cross-border co-operation and to construct a new, fighting leadership of the working class movement – in the unions and in the form of new, anticapitalist parties linked to a Fifth International.

Let's make the EUROPEAN SOCIAL FORUM, which meets in Istanbul 1-4 July, a place where representatives of the resistance from workers youth and migrants thrash out a coordinated campaign action, so the EU governments can't pick us off one by one, as they are trying to do with Greece.

The global economic crisis has opened up a new period of struggle as workers, youth and national minorities refuse to pay for the crisis. We in Workers Power have set ourselves the task of helping to resolve the current crisis of leadership and direct these struggles towards the overthrow of the capitalist system itself. JOIN US.

## REVOLUTIONARY WOMEN IN HISTORY

# HELEN KELLER

***“Strike against war, for without you no battles can be fought!”***



Many people have heard of Helen Keller, the blind and deaf woman who learned to talk when her friends wrote sign language on her hands.

Films have been made about her and Christian charities all over the world claim her as their own.

But no-one mentions a key fact about Helen Keller: she was a communist who fought for workers' revolution.

Well-known for her extraordinary strength in the face of her dual disability, Helen Keller began to attract criticism when her socialist views became known.

In her 1912 essay *How I became a socialist*, she told how she first came across anticapitalist ideas by reading books, socialist newspapers and the programme of the mass socialist party in Germany. Aware of this, the millionaire newspaper Brooklyn eagle launched a patronising attack on her, claiming her “mistakes spring out of the manifest limitations of her development.”

She replied with cold fury: “Oh, ridiculous Brooklyn Eagle! What an ungallant bird it is! Socially blind and deaf, it defends an intolerable system... The Eagle and I are at war.”

In 1913, campaigning for votes for women, Helen Keller was quick to point out that passive pleading would get nowhere and that the fight for women's suffrage is a class battle, and added: “Nearly all the opportunities, educational and political, that woman has acquired have been gained by a march of conquest with a skirmish at every post.”

Within two years class war had transformed into imperialist war as Europe descended into fratricidal slaughter. Helen Keller was appalled at the shameful support the leaders of the official socialist parties gave to the war. Alongside the left wing of the movement, she called for active opposition from workers, to turn the war of brother against brother into a war of the whole working class against capitalism:

“Strike against all ordinances and laws and institutions that continue the slaughter of peace and the butcheries of war. Strike against war, for without you no battles



can be fought. Strike against manufacturing shrapnel and gas bombs and all other tools of murder. Strike against preparedness that means death and misery to millions of human being. Be not dumb, obedient slaves in an army of destruction. Be heroes in an army of construction.”

When the First World war came to an end and the workers took power in Russia, Keller backed the revolution enthusiastically, and fought to rally opposition to the imperialist powers' blockade of the Soviet Republic. On the death of Lenin, she pointed out that the lessons of the Russian Revolution are key to humanity's future:

“I see the furrow Lenin left sown with the unshatterable seed of a new life for mankind, and cast deep below the rolling tides of storm and lightning, mighty crops for the ages to reap.”

## Blame the rapist, not the victim

By Alex Kirby

A recent survey by the Havens, a service for rape victims, revealed the harrowing fact that more than half of the respondents think that the victim should shoulder some of the responsibility for rape.

Yet the survey also showed that 40 percent of women have been in a situation where they could have been made to have sex when they did not want to,

and 23 percent of women surveyed have been raped. So it is even more shocking that more women than men place some of the blame on the victim.

This attitude stems from the idea that if women follow certain “rules” then they won't get raped. We shouldn't dress provocatively or drink too much, and we can only go home by well-lit routes. This myth allows women to believe that if only they obey these rules, then they won't be raped.

But the reality is that most

women are raped by someone they know, whether a friend or partner. Ninety-seven percent of callers to Rape Crisis Lines knew their assailant before the assault.

Women who have been raped need support after the attack - and they need justice. Yet in the UK this is not the case - it has the lowest rate of rape convictions in Europe (6.5 per cent). Therefore, many rape victims think reporting an attack to the police is futile and degrading. The survey also found more than one in 10 people were

unsure whether they would report being raped to the police, and 2 percent said they would definitely not do so. Besides having their sexual past scrutinised in open court, many women are unwilling to relive the attack in the same room as the attacker.

Rape is not the fault of the victim. Women are not raped because of the way they act or dress. The blame for sexual assault needs to be placed on the attacker - and of a society in which sexual violence is endemic.

# WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

- Abolish capitalism and create a world without exploitation, class divisions and oppression
  - Break the resistance of the exploiters by the force of millions acting together in a social revolution smashing the repressive capitalist state
  - Place power in the hands of councils of delegates from the working class, the peasantry, the poor - elected and recallable by the masses
  - Transform large-scale production and distribution, at present in the hands of a tiny elite, into a socially owned economy, democratically planned
  - Plan the use of humanity's labour, materials and technology to eradicate social inequality and poverty. This is communism - a society without classes and without state repression. To achieve this, the working class must take power from the capitalists.
- We fight imperialism: the handful of great capitalist powers and their corporations, who exploit billions and crush all states and peoples, who resist them. We support resistance to their blockades, sanctions, invasions and occupations by countries like Venezuela, Iraq or Iran. We demand an end to the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the Zionist occupation of Palestine. We support unconditionally the armed resistance.

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

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

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

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

We fight reformism: the policy of Labour, Socialist, Social-Democratic and the misnamed Communist parties. Capitalism cannot be reformed through peaceful parliamentary

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

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

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

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

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

## CONTACT

Workers Power is the British Section of the League for the Fifth International

Workers Power  
BCM 7750  
London  
WC1N 3XX

**020 7708 4331**  
**workerspower@**  
**btopenworld.com**

### ON THE WEB

[www.workerspower.com](http://www.workerspower.com)



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# INTERNATIONAL WOMENS' DAY



## Celebrating revolutionary women

### Monday 8 March 2010, London and Leeds

Born at a time of great social turbulence and crisis, when the imperialist nations were gearing up for world war, International Women's Day comes from a tradition of radicalism and revolutionary spirit. Workers Power celebrates the heroic women who played key roles in revolutionary struggles across the decades, from the Russian Revolution to the Miners' Strike.

**London: 7.30pm The Ship, 68 Borough High St SE1 1DX**  
**Leeds: 7pm The Fenton (upstairs), Woodhouse Lane, LS2**

## Elections and revolution

By Richard Brenner

**W**e only have the right to vote in this country because working class people fought for it.

Every right we have – the right to assemble, the right to free speech, the right to form unions and the right to vote – was not granted freely to the people, but was forced out of the ruling class through campaigns of mass action.

In 1832 the ruling class extended the vote – but only to people with property and money. So in the 1840s the first mass political movement of workers was formed – the Chartists – to fight for the right to vote. It gathered millions of names on a great petition, held giant marches and rallies, launched an armed uprising in Wales in 1839 and called a general strike in 1842: the first in British history.

The heroic struggles of the Suffragettes led to women being given the vote in 1918 – but only at the age of 30! Under the impact of the Russian Revolution the same law in 1918 for the first time allowed all workers to vote. But it was not until 1928 that women were allowed to vote at the same age as men.

### Election restrictions

Today elections are still not completely free and fair in Britain. At 16 we are old enough to marry, old enough to work and be exploited, but still not allowed to vote.

Not all our votes count. The undemocratic first-past-the-post system means that all the votes for unsuccessful constituency candidates are discounted. A system of proportional representation would ensure that all parties were represented according to their share of the vote – but the main parties resist it.

The elected House – the Commons – still doesn't have full power. The unelected House of Lords can obstruct and delay laws. And Britain is still not a republic. The Queen is not just a tourist attraction but has the power to declare war, the power to dissolve a parliament,

and the power to appoint and dismiss prime ministers. If there is a hung parliament after this election, the power of this unelected hereditary monarch will come into play.

One government after another strips away the rights of the people. MI5 and MI6 use torture against British citizens to force them into confessions. The High Court ruled it illegal for a group of Muslims to chant slogans accusing Britain's

### A communist candidate agrees in advance to take only the average wage of a skilled worker

army of occupation in Iraq of 'murder' – despite the fact that there are documented cases of soldiers murdering civilians in this illegal and unpopular war. Perfectly legal demonstrations against the banks in the City of London last year were herded into police pens and one bystander was even killed by police thugs.

The fight for democratic rights goes on, and it is resisted by the rich minority of capitalists who rule Britain. All the more reason to step up the fight to extend our rights, and to use what rights we have to fight for a government of the working class.

In the coming election, communists should stand candidates where we can, on a clear revolutionary programme. That is what Workers Power supporter Jeremy Drinkall is doing in Vauxhall, South London, where he is standing on the ANTICAPITALIST ticket.

When revolutionaries stand in elections, they do so to raise support for workers' struggles outside parliament, in the workplace and on the streets. They put forward policies that address the immediate needs of working class people, like investment in jobs and housing, and link

it to the need to dispossess the rich capitalists – for example by taking over the banks, taxing the rich, and taking the big companies into state hands under workers' control, without compensation. Communist candidates oppose our rulers' wars, call for the withdrawal of troops from overseas, and support strikes and occupations against job losses.

A communist candidate is not like a normal candidate of one of the capitalist parties. Because they are part of a disciplined communist organisation, which holds all its members accountable to its democratic decisions, a communist candidate cannot just pursue their own whims, is obliged to uphold a fighting working class policy, and agrees in advance to take only the average wage of a skilled worker, donating the rest of their large salary to the working class movement. No expenses scandals, duck islands and second homes for us!

### Socialist society

Communists believe that even if 600 communist MPs were elected to the House of Commons, the real power in society – the unelected police and army chiefs, the faceless civil servants who rule behind the scenes – would quickly move to overthrow us, rather than sit by peacefully as we took away their wealth and shared it among the people.

That is why, election or no election, communists always say clearly: to get rid of the rule of the capitalists, to remove their control of society's wealth and the riches we create, to establish a fair, socialist system based on a democratic plan of production in place of inequality and market madness – it will be necessary to smash the capitalists' state forces in a revolution. That will take the action of millions of people, organised and led by a revolutionary anti-capitalist party.

It is to build that party – winning new recruits across the country – that communists devote their efforts in the coming election campaign.