

workers power 5

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

LIB DEMS AND TORIES FORM CUTS COALITION



FIGHT THEM

LABOUR, UNIONS, YOUTH – UNITE IN ACTION AGAINST CUTS

NEWS IN BRIEF

BP is to blame for US oil slick disaster

A BP oil well is leaking in the Gulf of Mexico threatening the environment on the US coastline with irreparable damage.

The well exploded on 20 April killing 11 people and spilling 210,000 gallons a day since then.

BP's response has been to blame the sub-contractor Transocean, which in turn has tried to shift the blame onto another BP-owned sub-contractor.

Under pressure, President Obama now says the oil regulator is too close to the oil companies and should be broken up.

This oil crisis mirrors that of other major disasters where multinationals blame each other and the regulators are in the pocket of the big companies.

So Obama's call does not go far enough. The oil companies should be nationalised without compensation and put under workers' control. Also we need a huge investment in non-fossil fuel energy sources to provide a safe and clean alternative.

Abdul Omer - sacked for trade unionism!

Unite convenor Abdul Omer Moshin was sacked by Sovereign Buses in London on 31 March - for being an effective trade union convenor.

In the space of less than three years Abdul led a successful struggle to win £4,000 worth of wage increases a year for drivers at Sovereign Buses in Harrow and Edgware, the lowest paid bus drivers in London.

He also mobilised 18 other drivers to oppose the fascist English Defence League's attempt to march against a local mosque in Harrow in September.

Abdul was eventually sacked on a trumped up charge of "intimidating witnesses" while defending a black engineer who sought union representation against institutional racism. No complaints were lodged by any of these witnesses.

After a hard struggle within the Unite union, drivers at Sovereign should be balloted for strike action in defence of their convenor this month.

Staff cuts caused UK polling station chaos

Thousands of people were denied the right to vote on election day.

In Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield, Birmingham and London many were unable to cast their vote as polling stations closed at 10pm. In Chester the electoral register had not been updated while in Liverpool polling stations ran out of ballot papers.

As we said last month, unions have had strike ballots ruled illegal for far lesser infringements under the anti-union laws.

Yet the turnout was 64 per cent, less than in 1997 - so why the problem now? People at affected polling stations said that there were too few staff and even not enough polling stations. The Guardian says there were only 150,000 staff in 50,000 polling booths.

Council cuts are now reducing electoral services, especially in inner city areas where voters are mainly poor workers, migrants and students. The cuts are an attack on jobs, pensions and services; now they are eroding our democratic rights.

GO TO OUR WEBSITES

For more revolutionary international and UK news, analysis, history and theory go to...

The screenshot shows the homepage of workerspower.com. The main header features the site's name in a stylized font. Below the header, there are several news articles with headlines such as 'Analysis General Election 2010: Workers vote Labour to stop Tories - Lib Dems rush into Tory talks', 'Greek debt crisis convulses Europe', and 'Labour and the trade unions must challenge the immigration myths'. A sidebar on the left contains a 'REVOLUTION' section with a list of links. The layout is clean and text-heavy, typical of a news website.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the League for the Fifth International. The header includes the organization's name and its mission statement: 'Fighting for the formation of a new world party of socialist revolution'. The main content area features news articles with headlines like 'British General Election 2010: Workers vote Labour to stop Tories - Lib Dems rush into Tory talks', 'Greek debt crisis convulses Europe', and 'Indefinite strike begins in Nepal'. A sidebar on the right contains a 'FROM PROTEST TO POWER' section with a list of links. The layout is similar to the workerspower.com site but with a more distinct branding.

• Latest on the general election and aftermath, BA workers, fighting racism, student and lecturers fighting back against cuts and fees, lots more plus our monthly paper online at:

www.workerspower.com

• Latest on Greece, Nepal, Turkey, UK elections, Latin America, and much more. Plus material in Chinese, Spanish, German., French and many more languages.

Go to

www.fifthinternational.org

EDITORIAL

Labour, unions, youth: unite in action against the cuts

Fight the Con-Dem cuts coalition

The new Tory-Lib Dem Coalition is a government for the bankers, the bosses and the rich.

Cameron and Clegg have made this as clear as could be. In the election they both campaigned against Labour's planned rise in National Insurance, calling it "a tax on jobs". But as soon as they got into power, Cameron and Clegg announced they were scrapping it: but *only for bosses*. Workers will still have to pay it.

The Con-Dem Coalition want workers to pay the costs of the banking crisis, and the huge state debt Labour ran up bailing the bankers out. The millions of voters who backed Clegg because they liked his progressive policies and fairness are about to get a rude awakening.

Once he got a sniff of power Clegg dropped his opposition to the super-expensive Trident weapons of mass destruction and dumped his call for an amnesty for migrant workers living in the UK. He dropped his opposition to university tuition fees, which had won him support from many students across the UK.

Most tellingly, Clegg backed the cuts. Before election day he denounced Cameron for bringing forward a fast-track Tory cuts programme of £6 billion this year – but on 7 May he'd told Cameron he'd help him carry it out.

And what a programme it is going to be. New health secretary Andrew Lansley says the time has come for much sharper cuts in the NHS – the same NHS that Cameron promised not to cut in his famous election poster.

Right wing Tory Iain Duncan Smith has been put in charge of work and pensions, to axe benefits and make severe cuts to the pensions of public sector workers.

The choice of Lib Dems to join the Cabinet reveals the government's priorities. David Laws – a former investment banker – is at the Treasury. Vince Clegg – a former oil company economist – is business secretary.

The Tories are determined that the Lib Dems will do lots of the dirty work of forcing through unpopular cuts in jobs, pay, services and pensions.

Millions of working class people voted Labour on 6 May as protection against the Tories' savage cuts programme. Labour did better than it had feared, with a big rise in votes for the most left-wing and militant MPs like John McDonnell and Jeremy Corbyn, who call for resistance against the cuts. And in the council election Labour surged forward taking many large councils like Birmingham, Camden and Southwark – and wiping out the BNP on Barking Council.

Polls show Labour won a lot of support from young people – and since the election more than 10,000 people have joined Labour, doubtless looking to take part in a fightback against the Con-Dem Cuts Coalition.

An election for the new Labour leader should open a big debate about Labour's policies and record in power, about what the party is for. The pro-market clique at the top should not be allowed to pass power to a Blairite like David Miliband without a contest, before the party's

September conference.

John McDonnell should stand for leader, against the way Brown ruled for the banks: he should use the election to call for nationwide action against the cuts, for mass resistance outside parliament.

The task is clear. The working class should not recognise any mandate for the Coalition to demolish our jobs and services. We should fight back – through strikes in the workplaces, and marches on the streets.

Every job cut and every pay cut should be met with strike action – and as the Coalition attacks hundreds of thousands of workers, we should aim for a national public sector strike.

Every time a service is closed, a hospital or school butchered, we should occupy it, drawing in the people who use the service and the workers who want to carry on working there.

The unemployed – two and half million and rising – need to come onto the streets in a great repeat of the Jarrow Crusade of the 1930s or the People's March for Jobs of the 1980s.

Above all, this means a united front: bringing together joint committees of Labour, the trade unions, students, unemployed, tenants, pensioners and campaigns to organise mass action, right across the UK. We can combine the industrial power of the Great Miners' Strike with the mass marches and civil disobedience of the Great Poll Tax Revolt.

That way we can stop the cuts – and bring down the Coalition.

More on the election and the fight against the Con-Dem coalition

Turn to pages 4, 5, 6, 10, 11 and 20

**GREECE DEBT CRISIS
THREAT TO EU
AND WORKERS
RESISTANCE
PAGES 12, 13,
14, 16 AND 17**



- 1 British Army torture p7
- 1 Support the BA strike and other industrial news p8, 9
- 1 Turkey May Day p15
- 1 General strike in Nepal p18
- 1 Revolutionary women p19

ELECTION ANALYSIS

After the election:

The Conservative and Lib Dem coalition threatens historic cuts to our public services. The whole labour and trade union movement needs to unite in a wave of action outside Parliament to stop the cuts and bring down the Con-Dem coalition, says **Luke Cooper**

Millions of workers turned out to support the Labour Party in the election in a bid to stop the Tories.

Labour received 8.6 million votes as people looked to them as the party to protect them from Tory cuts. While this number of votes was the party's lowest in a general election since 1983, it was far higher than was predicted last year when opinion polls predicted a Labour wipeout and a Tory landslide.

But when election day came the Tories proved unable to win an outright majority – winning just 36.1 per cent of the vote.

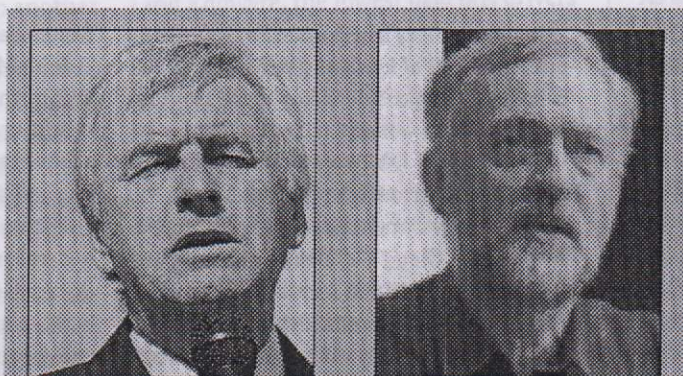
The Lib Dem surge came to nothing with the party gaining just 1 per cent more votes than they did in the 2005 election and losing 5 MPs.

Now the Liberal Democrats have formed a cuts coalition with the Tories, dumping many of their more progressive policies – the ones that appealed to working class Labour voters and to young people – just to gain power.

The message has to now go out to the entire labour movement: the election is over, now we must defeat these attacks on the streets and the workplaces. Let's in an almighty anti-cuts movement of the working class.

Labour vote holds up

In Scotland, Labour swept the board winning 42 per cent of the popular vote and regaining two by-election losses they had



Left Labour MPs such as John McDonnell (left) and Jeremy Corbyn (right) won more votes in the election than in 2005

suffered in the previous parliament.

In inner London and the urban heartlands of the Midlands and the North, Labour also performed well, boosting their vote in core seats and holding on to key marginals.

The Labour left Socialist Campaign Group of 20 MPs exceeded the performance of the party as a whole, winning big swings to them from other parties. John McDonnell increased his vote by over 4,000 votes in Hayes and Harlington, winning an astounding 54.8 per cent of the vote, and Jeremy Corbyn too increased his vote by over 8,000 (swing of 3 per cent) in Islington North.

In the local elections this turn was even clearer.

Labour made a major advance in the councils regaining control of 15, including Coventry and Liverpool, and gaining 414 extra seats nationally, reversing some of the serious defeats they have suffered

in local government since 1999.

Lib Dem/Tories cuts coalition

The programme of the new coalition is a package of vicious attacks on the working class. Many voters who backed the Liberal Democrats mistakenly thinking they were a left alternative to Labour and the Tories will feel betrayed by this deal.

The new government is promising an emergency budget in 50 days to drive through £6 billion of extra cuts in public spending this year. That's going to amount to a massive programme of cuts to our schools, hospitals and social security.

You only need to look at the tax policies of the new government to see how they want to make workers, not the bosses, pay for the crisis.

The Tories had attacked Labour's rise in National Insurance as an attack on 'jobs and working people' – now they have cancelled it but only for the

bosses not for the workers.

They are pushing through cuts to child tax credits and child trust funds. And on the very first day of the new government Health Secretary said the "time has come" for NHS cuts, as he unveiled a package of "efficiency savings".

Despite Conservative denials throughout the campaign, the new government also looks set to raise VAT – an indiscriminate tax on goods which is not linked to income – to 20 per cent in the upcoming financial year.

Lib Dems reveal true colours

Unlike Labour, the Lib Dems have no relationship to the working class – they are a fusion of the old Liberal Party and a right wing split from Labour in the 1980s.

Labour, the Tories and Liberal Democrats all in the final analysis serve capitalist interests, but they do so with different class bases. The Tories and Labour are rooted in the two fundamental social classes of modern capitalism – the bosses and working class – while the Liberal Democrats are very much a party of the middle class.

Their policy vacillations between the right and left partly reflect this class position. In power in local government they sometimes rule with the Tories.

In Leeds last year for example the Lib-Dem and Tory run council fought a vicious battle against striking bin workers.

Now we will see this bourgeois "class instinct" of the Lib-

fight the coalition

eral Democrat party leadership really come to the fore as they force through historic attacks on working people. They will join with the Tories in making vicious, attacks on trade unionists and working class communities who dare to defy their pro-boss agenda.

Already many of their progressive voters – who want to defend public services and saw a vote for the Lib Dems as a way to stop Tory cuts – will feel outraged at their new coalition with the Tories.

In return for their five cabinet positions the Liberal Democrats have agreed to £6 billion in public sector cuts this year, to the renewal of trident

nuclear weapons, a cap on non-EU immigration into Britain, increase in state pension age to 66, the further privatisation of schools under Tory “free schools” plans, and have dropped the scrapping of university tuition fees.

In the budget in 50 days time they will back Tory plans to attacks public sector pay and pensions and join in a witch-hunt against trade unionists that dare to fight.

United by their hostility to the working class and their wish to make us pay for the crisis in the system, this nonetheless will be very unstable government.

On key areas, particularly the European Union and foreign

policy, the Lib Dems and Tories are papering over substantial differences on the strategic goals of British capitalism. At the same time, their austerity measures will be deeply unpopular with large sections of the electorate and inevitably be met with intense working class resistance – it is a weak crisis regime that can be brought down through struggle.

Labour out of power

Out of power Labour will now seek to rebuild its relationship with the core working class vote that turned out in their millions in a bid to stop the Tories.

The talk of a so-called progressive coalition between

Labour, the Nationalists and Liberal Democrats came to nothing. This was not because Labour MPs had a principled objection to governing with the openly pro-boss liberals, but that, rather, they calculated letting the Tories and Lib Dems carry through unpopular austerity measures would see them return to power in a few years.

Labour will now claim – however deceitfully – to be opposed in principle to Tory and Lib Dem cuts.

The Labour Party membership and its branches, its relationship with the affiliated unions, will all become re-activated as they take the fight to

Continued next page

Con-Dems ready to launch vicious cuts

By John Bowman

The full scale of the cuts have been hidden from voters during the election campaign.

Now government departments across the board are looking at cutting one third from their entire budgets. Kevin Craven of Balfour Beatty said: “It is not going to be 10 per cent. My clients [senior civil service managers] are talking about 20-30 per cent cuts to meet the aspirations of their political masters.”

In healthcare, NHS managers have already ear-marked areas for frontline service cuts in anticipation of smaller budgets. The same has been happening in education where managers have been implementing some of the cuts in advance.

Surveys of senior managers in the NHS show plans to sack an enormous number of medical staff. The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) has warned

that a worst case scenario would mean 36,000 nurses at risk.

In education, the University and College Union reports 6,211 jobs are at risk or have already been lost due to cuts in further and higher education.

These cuts will affect those who rely on services as well as those who work in them. Job cuts on this scale will lead to heavy job losses in the private sector as many public workers are forced into economic inactivity.

Campaigns have already been able to save jobs at Leeds University, University of Kent. At the Whittington Hospital in north London, campaigners won the repeal of plans to close the maternity and accident and emergency departments.

What was great about the Whittington Hospital campaign is that the trade unionists came together with the local community in a united campaign. It's the type of resistance we will need to build everywhere.

The potential for this is clear from some of the talk from the top of the unions. Union leaders, who held back resistance to cuts before the election, have finally started talking tough now it is over. Dave Prentis, leader of the Unison public sector union said: “We will fight for the thousands of jobs in imminent danger if the Tories' dangerous and irresponsible plans to cut fast and deep are realised.”

But we can't trust Dave Prentis to turn these words into deeds – especially since he has gone into print promising bosses he will rule out a national strike. We need to pressure him to call a strike and build anti-cut committees linking up local service users in action with the unions. These joint committees could deliver strong action, even if the union leaders drag their feet or block action.

The rich and the bankers caused the crisis – now the Con-Dems want to make us pay. We must stop them.

ELECTION ANALYSIS

Continued from over

the Tories.

The strong showing for Labour in these elections has also translated into more than 10,000 recruits since the election. And the Labour Party's existing membership of 170,000 people will become increasingly re-activated.

The Labour Party leadership election will be an opportunity to open a debate in the whole labour movement over the future of working class politics.

The left of the party, after its impressive showing in key constituencies, must take on the right in the election, fight to reverse the pro-boss policies of the Blair and Brown years, and for a fighting action programme against the cuts.

Prospects and tasks

The election showed clearly that despite its rightist evolution under Blair and Brown the Labour Party remains what Lenin and Trotsky called a "bourgeois workers' party" – that is, one based on the working class, but at the same time carrying out thoroughly capitalist policies with a leadership loyal to the workers classes' enemies: the bosses.

There is a tremendous opportunity provided by the current situation, because of the political instability inherent in coalition rule and because the Tories lack any credible popular mandate for their austerity programme.

We need to rally the eight million workers who voted for Labour, arguing for them to take the struggle onto the streets and into the workplaces to defeat the austerity programme.

Indeed, now the critical task of the day will be fighting for a workers' united front against the cuts, for joint committees of action to link the up the



Whittington Hospital campaign saved the maternity ward and the accident and emergency department from closure

struggles from below.

By organising on a national and local basis, co-ordinated with delegate-based structures, they will be able to demand action from the union leaders, and also organise it without them when necessary too.

In the period ahead, socialists must turn to the millions of working class, Labour supporters and 170,000 party members, seeking to form a strong united front of resistance to the Tory cuts.

We should also urge them to settle accounts with the right-wing Labour leaders who manoeuvred for a coalition with the Liberal Democrats. The more Labour members and supporters are drawn into activity on the ground against the cuts, the more open they will become to militant anticapitalist ideas.

The failure to create an anti-capitalist party over the past 13 years leaves the working class not just without an electoral

alternative to Labour, but without a mass fighting organisation to lead resistance to the coming savage austerity programme and to direct it towards a challenge to the system.

We have to reiterate that the working class urgently needs a revolutionary anticapitalist party, many tens of thousands strong, to co-ordinate the fight back and seize the opportunities presented by the massive capitalist crisis still unfolding, so that we can put an end to this rotten system once and for all.

The Labour Party will never be such a party. But we need to show the need for this in practice to the millions of workers who backed Labour in this election and we will be in the best position to do so if we are alongside them, fighting together against Tory cuts.

This is the starting point for the fight for a revolutionary party in Britain today.

• **Read our full analysis at**
www.workerspower.com

Low vote for socialist groups

The election results were very poor for socialist candidates.

Only a handful of the 40 candidates from the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition received more than a few hundred votes, while only former Labour MP Dave Nellist in Coventry and Jenny Sutton in Tottenham got more than 1,000 votes.

In the face of the Tory threat, workers looked not to a scattered array of left-wing candidates in a coalition



Dave Nellist, one of only two TUSC candidates to win 1,000 votes

cobbled together at the last minute – but to parties so they turned to Labour.

Workers Power's candidate Jeremy Drinkall was also affected by workers rallying to Labour and won only 109 votes in Vauxhall.

A new party of the working class built out of the struggles of the last 13 years could have provided an alternative pole of attraction to workers angry with Labour's cuts and war. But without a nationwide party, the fragmented left was largely unable to win support from even the most militant workers.

This was a punishment for the failure of the left to back Worker Power's call to use the 13 years of Labour to take steps to form a new workers' party.

British army uses torture on Afghan citizens on daily basis

Court cases have revealed the extent of vicious attacks carried out by occupation soldiers

By Natalie Silverstein

Afghani prisoners are brutally tortured by British troops and the Afghan secret police on a daily basis, a new court case has revealed.

British troops face damning allegations that they routinely inflict torture on Afghani civilians suspected of being insurgents. The High Court is examining recent evidence gathered from prisoners captured by British forces and then handed to the secret police, called the National Directorate of Security (NDS).

"Prisoner A" was beaten every other day for two and a half months while hanging from the

ceiling. Other former prisoners describe similar brutal treatment including: electrocution while blindfold, hanging from the ceiling, beatings with weapons and sticks, and attempts to cut their wrists.

"Prisoner G" recounts that he "confessed" after six consecutive nights of beating with steel rods to the back of his legs.

The government actually accepted in court that British forces had access into the NDS facility for British interrogators, clearly exposing complicity in this torture.

At the same time, another High Court case heard evidence that British troops were aware of serious mistreatment as early

as March 2007, revealed in a memo from the NDS.

Despite this, the British Army continued transferring suspected insurgents to the NDS until September 2009, with more than 300 handed over since July 2006.

But it's not just in Afghanistan where this has been going on. The record of British troops in Iraq is equally appalling.

A recent inquiry heard evidence that Baha Mousa and other Iraqi civilians were subjected to torture and mistreatment including punching, "hooding" and being placed in stress positions while in the custody of soldiers from 1 Battalion Queen's Lancashire Regiment.

Mousa died after British soldiers inflicted 93 separate injuries on him. A military intelligence officer who gave evidence also recalled detainees with boot marks on their backs, bruised heads and cut lips.

These horrific revelations expose the blatant hypocrisy of the UK government's claim that the "war on terror" and the continued occupation of Afghanistan are about spreading human rights and democracy. In reality, they have no regard for the lives or rights of Afghani citizens, on whom they are willing to inflict brutal torture and an ongoing murderous war to further their aim of domination in the region.

Solidarity stops University victimising student

Simon Hardy, a student at Westminster University, faced a disciplinary hearing on 7 May, as a result of an investigation into the occupation of the university in March. Here he tells us what happened

"I was officially investigated on alleged breaches of the student code of conduct, including trespass, harassment and general breaches of student rules at the university, as a result of the three-day occupation of the vice chancellor's office against proposed cuts.

The occupation was organised after a successful 200-strong demonstration at the university. I had been very visible using the megaphone and helping to co-ordinate the demonstration along with other anti-cuts activists. This resulted in me being singled out by Rikki Morgan-Tamosunas, the deputy vice chancel-

lor, and targeted for disciplinary measures.

During the interview, I was accompanied by a UCU representative, a welfare official from the students' union and the newly elected student welfare sabbatical officer.

Outside of the room about 40 students and staff gathered to show their support.

The disciplinary board agreed not to pursue the matter because the accusations were groundless.

Then the protesters came into the room and turned the disciplinary back on the university. They asked why I had been singled out, why I had only been given 24-hours notice of the interview and why it had been

scheduled on the same day as my exam.

The anti-cuts protesters also voiced their anger at how the students had been treated during the three-day occupation, with restricted access to the toilets and at times food was also not allowed into the occupation.

Additional security personnel had turned the Regent Street campus into a fortress, which was intimidating even to students not involved in the protest.

One lecturer asked why the students were being treated like terrorists and what this meant for the future of student activism at the university.

I told the demonstrators: "The huge amount of support,

including 50 messages of support to the UCU trade union, with only 24 hours notice was very inspiring and clearly terrified the university management.

"Their action of singling me out, from what was a collectively organised demonstration simply because I was photographed on the megaphone, was outrageous, as well as scheduling the interview on the same day as my final exam - which they claimed was a 'mistake', showed either wilful incompetence or cynical bullying on their part."

I and other student activists will not be intimidated and will continue to fight the education cuts."

INDUSTRIAL

Corus workers to ballot

Corus workers at Teesside Cast Products will finally have the chance to strike against up to 1,500 job losses at the mothballed Redcar plant.

On 22 April the Community and GMB unions ended a year of inaction by announcing a ballot, accusing Corus of refusing to disclose bids for the plant, including by Thai steel giant SSI.

Company executives didn't

even bother to turn up to a meeting discussing the industry's future.

Corus workers need a rank and file campaign to ensure union leaders follow through on promised action, and force Corus to open the books to expose the cuts that come with the deal.

After a year of inaction, many will feel it's time for a national steel strike against the job cuts.

Lecturers take strike action against cuts

On Wednesday 5 May – just one day before the general election – University and College Union (UCU) members around London coordinated an impressive day of strike action against proposed cuts.

In London, Kings College, Westminster University and 11 further education (FE) colleges came out onto the picket lines. These cuts are not just about a few jobs here and there, but about sustained attacks on our education – which is why many students also demonstrated in support of their teachers and lecturers.

At UCL, where lecturers are facing large-scale job cuts, including a merger of their world-renowned Languages Department, the strike was called off at the last minute

because “negotiations were going well”. In the end, the union accepted UCL's management offer of no compulsory redundancies.

However, the union negotiators did accept voluntary redundancies, which many union members are angry about, because they it will mean workload will increase substantially and the quality of education will suffer. As one UCU member at UCL said, “it was a sell out of collective struggle”.

What is needed now is a coordinated national strike, bringing out all the lecturers and teachers in mass united action against the cuts.

With cuts to higher education (HE) estimated at £1 billion and FE at £350 million, a national strike could be highly effective.

Civil servants defeat government in court

By Rebecca Allen a PCS activist

On 10 May a High Court judge ruled that it was illegal for the government to cut civil servants' redundancy pay without the agreement of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS).

This was a rare but welcome pro-union judgments from a British court. It means a new government will have to enter into negotiations with the PCS to agree redundancy terms.

The court battle followed three days of strike action this year and a lobbying campaign that won the support of 176 MPs, including 121 Labour back benchers.

The court decision is clearly a result of the determined action and campaigning of PCS members and is a victory for the union. But we must not be complacent.

The Tory-Lib coalition will target civil servants for huge cuts in jobs and pensions and will not be bound by the high court's ruling.

The PCS has said that members should be prepared to take further action to protect their jobs and redundancy pay.

This will be an important debate at this month's PCS annual conference where members can commit the union leadership to campaign for a deal which defends the terms and conditions of all members equally.

Unite the rail disputes

By Andy Yorke

Network Rail may have succeeded in stopping last month's strikes planned by the railworkers' unions by using the law courts, but the battle is far from over.

- The RMT rail union is rebalancing its members to strike as soon as possible to defend 5,000 jobs, including thousands at Network Rail and 1,200 as a result of the collapse of maintenance firm Jarvis in March (see below).
- National Rail is also proposing to transfer a further 1,800 jobs to private firms, or scrap them altogether to cut spending.

Unless the Acas talks can bring about a truce, the dispute will pose an early test for the next government.

It will take at least four weeks to organise a ballot and give Network Rail the mandatory one week's notice of any strike dates – due to the bureaucratic rules that the Tories introduced in the 1980s to outlaw effective industrial action.

- The RMT is also balloting its members for strike action against cuts plans being implemented by London Underground, which would see up to 800 ticket office, station and platform staff jobs axed creating a wave of ticket office closures and ushering in a culture



RMT leader Bob Crow

of unstaffed tube stations, particularly late at night.

- Eurostar members have voted by more than nine to one for industrial action over a failure by the company to give assurances that they will not implement a policy of lone working for train managers.

Activists are already calling for uniting the various struggles on the rail. Bill Rawcliffe, who has been leading the campaign against Jarvis, stood in Doncaster North as a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidate against the then Labour Minister Ed Miliband. He is arguing for a national rail strike, drawing together all the workers fighting on the tracks.

If activists force the RMT leadership into calling a united, national rail strike, it would smash the employers' programme of vicious cuts. Unite and fight!

RMT calls for nationalisation of rail maintenance work

Rail maintenance workers have launched protests against 1,200 job losses at sites all over the country after private rail firm Jarvis went bust in March. The cause is Network Rail cutting its rail maintenance budget.

While the bankruptcy administrator has continued to pay Jarvis managers, the workers have received nothing – no redundancy pay, pensions or back wages.

Network Rail has passed work to other private contractors and agencies paying staff half of what Jarvis

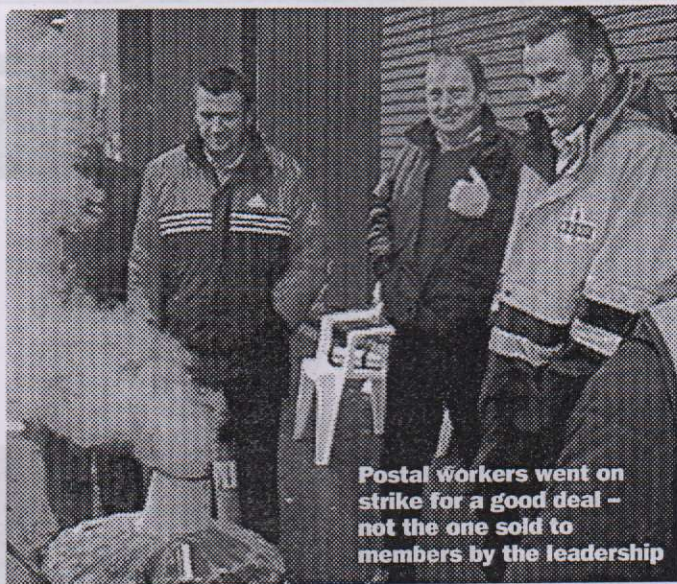
workers used to earn.

The RMT rail union has said it would take as little as £19 million for the government to bailout Jarvis, a drop in the bucket compared to the trillions for the banks.

But why should the private owners get a single penny in compensation?

The RMT has organised local protests around the country, starting with 300 angry-strong protest outside Network Rail HQ.

We need to unite the fight with the other rail disputes.



Postal workers went on strike for a good deal – not the one sold to members by the leadership

Post workers need rank and file organisation

By a CWU activist

The CWU leadership have won in their bid to get postal workers to accept the Business Transformation 2010 deal the union agreed with Royal Mail.

This was a rotten agreement. Although it upholds some of the union's rights, such as CWU reps' negotiating rights and paid release time, it contains a string of attacks:

- Sweeping office closures and job losses.
- A series of workload hikes for very little extra money.
- Saturday will become a normal work day, ruining postal workers' weekends.
- Turns worker against worker, with some getting some extra money while many others will lose out

Royal Mail and the CWU leadership will now claim they have the agreement of postal workers to make these changes.

But half the union membership didn't vote and over a third of those returning ballots voted no.

Together we can still mount a fightback and challenge the stranglehold of the union leaders that

want to give in to the bosses.

CWU leaders like Dave Ward – invisible during the strike – toured the country promoting the deal and even extended the ballot for longer to get a "yes" vote.

Royal Mail also released reps for local and regional meetings where officials sold the deal to members.

Now management has tabled new annual business plans in offices across the country, demanding cuts on top of the agreement's future changes to work patterns before these are even negotiated.

Royal Mail will try to push through change on its own terms. Postal workers need to respond immediately, just like the Liverpool posties at Copperas Hill who walked out last month after Royal Mail broke promises on redundancy pay. They didn't wait for the union leaders – but acted decisively in their best interests.

A rank and file movement is urgently needed to regroup CWU members willing to fight and organise resistance to the implementation of the 2010 deal – with the union leaders when we can and against them when we must.

Local journalists vote for strike

Journalists have voted for the first national strike on regional newspapers for 20 years.

Members of the National Union of Journalists working for Johnston Press newspapers voted 70 per cent in favour a strike against the introduction of new technology with lit-

tle preparation and consultation.

Managers are using the new system to slash jobs and conditions.

Regional media have been particularly hit during the recession so the strike at Johnston Press offers the chance for a national fightback.

BA workers vote to fight union busters

By Kam Kumar

British Airways cabin crew staff have voted overwhelmingly to reject the latest offer in their dispute with BA's managers with 81 per cent behind a strike on a 71 per cent turnout.

The staff have voted for 20 days of strike action in four weeks, showing their defiance of BA's attacks on their terms and conditions. Chief executive Willie Walsh has made it clear that BA has no intention of seriously negotiating, and that his goal is nothing less than to break Bassa, the cabin crew section of the Unite union.

Since the last strike in March, the bosses have ramped up the intimidation, suspending 55 union members and sacking five union activists. All this during a period of "negotiations".

This became clear when Duncan Holley, 12-year secretary of Bassa, was sacked on 6 May just before the strike ballot closed, a blatant provocation. Holley accused BA bosses of trying to "chop the legs off" Bassa.

The 12,000 BA workers have shown real fighting spirit in the last few months, demanding 12 days of

strikes last Christmas (pulled by the union after a court injunction) and going back on the offensive with seven days of strikes in March. But Unite leaders called a "cooling off period" to avoid giving Labour bad headlines in the run up to the election.

The deal was not worth the wait. Cabin crew cuts imposed last year have not been withdrawn and there is no guarantee to restore travel discounts and seniority rights for thousands of strikers.

The company refuses to guarantee reinstatement for those sacked or suspended, and demands an industrial relations review to gut union rights at BA. Plans for a new airplane fleet with staff on lower wages and conditions will mean a growing two-tier workforce, undermining the union.

The deal is so bad the union has recommended staff reject it.

Now Bassa workers plan to top that by shutting BA down in a series of four five-day strikes. Mass meetings at airports around the country, especially Heathrow where the strike was strongest, should demand Unite tops Woodley, Derek Simpson and Len McCluskey do not back down this time.

How to beat BA bosses

Strikers should organise mass pickets to shut airports such as Heathrow. Building links with rail and tube workers could also help shut down the airports.

BA's strikers need to fight for rank and file control of the dispute. The Unite leadership of Woodley, Simpson and McCluskey have held back militant action while BA has used legal threats, victimisation, intimidation and the creation of a 1000-strong "scabbin crew" and fleet of scab planes hired from other carriers.

The first strike cost the company up to £45 million, and the Ice-

land volcano cost another £100 million. These latest strikes will cost the company more but it is intent on breaking the union.

Mass meetings need to make the important decisions about the strike not the Unite leaders. These meetings should elect strike committees of recallable delegates to run the day-day operation of the strike, involve the mass of workers and report back. To win the workers will need to use their fighting spirit to take control of the strike themselves. That is the best chance to put Willie Walsh to flight and inspire other workers facing cuts.

Jerry Hicks for Unite leader

Jerry Hicks is standing for Unite's general secretary. He and his supporters have a great opportunity to build solidarity with the BA strikers. A tireless

campaign of solidarity would provide Jerry and the left with a springboard for victory for Jerry and start the process of linking up the militants in the union.

IMMIGRATION

Answering the anti

Dave Stockton exposes the daily barrage of media lies about immigration, which were used by all the main parties during the election to divide workers and prepare the way for cuts

The tabloids and the TV complain all the time that a “debate on immigration” is being suppressed.

In fact day-by-day they stir up anxiety, fear and hatred against migrants by claiming they are a major cause of unemployment, violent crime, benefit fraud, housing shortages, and on and on. They spread the lie that Britain is “full up” and “taking more than its full share” and that most asylum seekers are “bogus”.

The “respectable” politicians – Labour and Tories alike – then join in, agreeing that immigration is a problem, trying to prove that they will be “tougher” on it, whereas their rivals are “soft”. The result of this one-sided debate is that millions of ordinary decent working people, who have no feelings of hostility to their black, Asian or Polish neighbours and workmates, accept that it must be a problem – simply because everybody keeps repeating that it is.

But it is all a pack of lies.

Booms and slumps

Immigration rises and falls along with the booms and slumps of the economy. People come seeking work because there is work. So in 2004, the beginning of the boom, it rose to 244,000 a year and in 2008, with the recession, it fell sharply. This year is likely to be about 100,000. At the same time about 90,000 people a year emigrate and 5.5 million Britons live and work abroad.



Tory tabloid scare stories about migrants whip up atmosphere of hatred

As for the argument that immigrants are taking our jobs, this too is a lie. It is true that even in the so-called boom years of the 2004-7 there remained a high level of structural unemployment.

But this was almost entirely made up of unskilled or under-skilled workers, whose lack of training was the result of a long-term failure by British employers to train young workers. Apprenticeships have virtually disappeared here whereas in Germany they remain the norm.

For all the hype about expansion in education over the past decade, technical and vocational training has declined. In the boom years the employers constantly complained they could not get skilled workers in Britain.

Most foreign workers coming to Britain are skilled workers. With the slump, the numbers of skilled migrant workers has also slumped. In short immigration does not cause unemployment full stop.

Lies about housing

As for the claim “they are taking our council houses” this too is a lie. Less than 2 per cent of the 10 million people who still live in social housing are immigrants. These are mainly refugees who have been allocated empty and sub-standard social housing in the north of England and Scotland under recent “dispersal laws”.

The reason there is a shortage of social housing is that since the day of Thatcher virtually no council house have been built and their repair and mod-

ernisation have been tied to privatisation schemes.

It is also a lie that we have larger numbers of immigrants than other developed countries. A report by the London School of Economics shows a lower share of the UK population was born abroad (10.2 per cent) than Australia (25 per cent), the US (13.6 per cent), Sweden (13.6 per cent), Germany (12 per cent) and the Netherlands (10.7 per cent).

It is also a lie that immigrants are a drain on the country's resources. Official statistics show that in 2004-5 migrants contributed about one percentage point to the overall economic growth of 5.3 per cent and by some £6 billion in 2006. Migrants also contribute £41.2 billion in taxes a year, while claiming benefits or using

immigration lies

health and education services considerably less per head than native born Britons. Hardly surprising since they are mostly young, working, and paying tax and national insurance. Illegal immigrants (maybe around 500,000) by definition cannot access the UK benefit system and are exploited by sweatshop employers and rack-renting landlords. Nevertheless they too contribute to the economy.

In fact the work of migrants – the huge majority highly skilled and well educated – can be seen in the health service which everyone agrees is a “national treasure” and wants to defend. As anybody who goes to their doctor or visits a hospital knows, they make a massive contribution to the NHS, which would collapse without them.

Between 2002-3 and 2006-7, more than 14,000 nurses from the Philippines and 10,000 from India came to work in our hospitals following previous generations from the Caribbean and before that Ireland. Recently Poland has been the main European country sending nurses to the NHS.

As for doctors, latest figures from the General Medical Council show over 91,000 of the UK's 243,910 registered doctors gained their medical qualification outside Britain, most of these (68,836) from outside the Europe. 27,809 of these doctors came from India, with South Africa accounting for 7,775 and Pakistan 7,306.

Students: new scapegoats

Always on the lookout for a new scapegoat for their system, the Tories have added another immigrant horror story to the

list – foreign students. Their manifesto pledges to “tighten up on student visas” which they claim are “the biggest hole in our border controls”. In fact 309,000 visas a year are given to overseas students, mostly young

per cent were only given temporary leave to stay, which can be withdrawn at the government's discretion. Seventy-three per cent are refused and eventually deported. The cruelty and injustice of this denial of the right

nature. We demand their complete abolition.

The other reason is that fomenting national hatred and outright racism divides us when we most need to be united in the fightback against the crisis and the cuts.

It is in the interest of the working class to stand up against anti-immigrant racism. Immigrants and those born here must unite to fight the “respectable racists” in the main parties and the outright fascists of the British National Party. The fascists would treat the migrants and Asian and black people born here just like Hitler and the Nazis treated the Jews, and for the same reason: to save capitalism for the billionaires.

There is simply no “immigration problem” for them to solve. The problems we have are real but they are caused by the bosses, the bankers, their economic system – capitalism – and all its political parties and governments.

We demand open borders for asylum seekers and their right to work, to housing, to education and to healthcare, equally with everyone else. do not detract from but add enormously to the well being of everyone here.

As for those working in sweatshops or for low wages – just the same as the young workers and many women workers born here – we demand a decent minimum wage, the right to join a union and a fight by the unions to improve their wages and conditions.

In this way we can solve the real problems that capitalism causes: poverty, exploitation and racism itself.

Immigration rises and falls with boom and slumps – immigration does not cause unemployment

people from China, Russia, Japan and the US, who pay to study in British universities.

They pay between £5.3 and £8 billion in fees and other expenditures. The colleges and universities make a big profit out of them. Once again they pay into the system, they do not detract from it; the problem with education is the massive cuts being made by government and demanded by the bosses.

Asylum seekers

Certainly the section of migrants most abused by the press and mistreated by the state forces are asylum seekers and refugees, a tiny proportion to the population. In 2007, according to Home Office figures, there were 23,430 asylum applications, mostly from the war-torn regions of the world: the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Somalia, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, Iraq and Sri Lanka. Most are men without dependents, not eligible for social housing, despite the myths of them taking “our” council houses.

Under our harsh and unjust anti-asylum laws only 16 per cent of applicants were granted refugee status. Another 11

to asylum, can be seen in the fact that since 2000, 55 asylum seekers have taken their own lives, rather than be sent back to face prison, torture or a painful death.

Behind the scare

So why the barrage of complete lies on immigration? The reason is simple. It plays on people's real fears and anxieties – losing their jobs, not getting a house at an affordable rent, underfunded or closed schools and hospitals.

But instead of identifying the real causes of these problems – the employers that sack people, the governments or local councils that make cuts and their roots in the crisis of the rotten capitalist economic system – it scapegoats our fellow workers and fellow victims of all these real problems.

That is why communists say: stop scapegoating immigrants, stop introducing more and more racist measures to stop people coming to work or study in this country or people fleeing for their lives from our government's wars.

All the immigration controls are racist by their very

WORLD ECONOMY

Greek debt crisis

The Greek crisis has put the major European economies under huge strain as they battle to save the Euro. **Marcus Halaby** looks at the debt crisis threat to global capital

On Thursday 6 May, the same day that voters in Britain went to the polls, riot police battled demonstrators outside the Greek parliament in Athens, protesting against a massive cuts package announced by George Papandreou's Socialist party government.

Meanwhile, global financial markets went into a major panic, on fears that the Greek debt crisis could spread to other countries.

Market panic

Shares in the largest European banks fell substantially, taking major stock market indices down with them. The British FTSE 100 index closed down 2.6 per cent, the German DAX index 3.3 per cent and the French CAC-40 index 4.1 per cent. Even Japanese markets were affected, falling by up to 4 per cent in morning trading, and closing down by 3 per cent.

The major US indices closed down by up to 3.5 per cent, and the Dow Jones index even fell by 9 per cent at one point, its biggest within-day fall since the stock market crash in October 1987. This was led by falls of up to 40 per cent in "blue chip" stocks like 3M and Procter & Gamble.

This prompted the US financial watchdog, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), to investigate whether the market's volatility had been caused by a "fat finger" incident – the name given to artificial market moves caused by individual human error – despite the absence of any evidence for one. In this way, the SEC hoped to reassure traders that there were no more fundamental reasons behind these dramatic falls.

But their fears were not at all irrational. The credit ratings agency Moody's had cited "very real, com-

mon threats" to the banking systems of several southern European countries and the UK, arising from doubts about their governments' ability to service their state debts.

Britain's political paralysis

The foreign exchange market's reaction the following day, to the inconclusive result of the UK general election, demonstrated similar fears that the next British government might not be able to impose cuts quickly enough to avoid a similar crisis of market confidence.

The pound fell against the euro, and to a one-year low the dollar. Meanwhile bond traders, who decide how expensive it is for governments to borrow, watched avidly for the smallest signs that the Tories and the Liberal Democrats could reach a deal for a government with a stable parliamentary majority, to impose the cuts that all three main parties in Britain agree are necessary to appease the bankers and bosses.

The German parliament finally gave its approval to the 110 billion euro European Union (EU) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) rescue package for Greece on Friday 7 May.

Despite this, the BBC's Robert Peston expects "another alarming flight" of capital from the euro, from credit to Eurozone banks, and from Eurozone company shares and other euro-denominated assets when the markets re-open after the weekend.

Capitalist contradictions

Amongst the many contradictions that exist in the capitalist system, the two of the most destructive are:

- the contradiction between the demands of the world market and the straightjacket of the nation-state; and
- the contradiction between the

increasingly social character of the means of production and the private character of its ownership.

The first of these contradictions made itself visible in the Greek crisis. The struggle that is now taking place worldwide, over who will bear the cost of the economic crisis, primarily takes the form of a struggle between the classes within each country. But it also takes the form of a struggle between nations and nation-states.

The real choice facing the European bourgeoisie was one between bailing out Greece or being forced to bail out the (primarily) French and German financiers that held Greek bonds, in the event that Greece defaulted on them and withdrew from the Euro.

The German Chancellor Angela Merkel (and her counterparts in the EU and in the US) dithered over Greece's request for a loan, demagogically placing the need to look after "their own" voters over the outrageous demands of the Greek people, who were portrayed to public opinion at home as being lazy, corrupt, wasteful, profligate and so forth.

Merkel faithfully passed on the demands of her own country's bankers and bosses for savage austerity measures as the conditions for Greece's rescue.

Greek workers' resistance

However, the resistance of the Greek working class forced them to soften their demands, when it became clear that the Greek government could not impose them without provoking an explosion. The cuts package that Prime Minister Papandreou got through the Greek parliament is much less severe than what was first demanded of him.

convulses Europe



German Chancellor Angela Merkel (Front L), Greek Prime Minister Georgios Papandreou (C) and French President Nicolas Sarkozy (Front R) in discussions over the Greek debt crisis

This shows us that mass resistance – in the form of general strikes, mass demonstrations and so on – can force the capitalists at home and abroad to bear some part of the cost of the crisis that they caused. But it also shows that without resolving the question of political power – without a government based on the workers' organisations and defending their interests – the bosses and bankers will still find ways to claw back their losses from society as a whole.

Sovereign debt crisis

We are now seeing the emergence of a Europe-wide sovereign debt crisis, on a similar scale to the so-called "credit crunch" of two years ago. How has this arisen, and just who are these faceless "markets", whose periodic bouts of manic depression the politicians treat like the infallible and

impartial advice of disinterested experts?

In the first instance, this crisis of state finances is – quite visibly – the direct result of the bailouts that ended the first phase of the crisis of banking solvency that culminated in Autumn 2008. And this, in turn, had its roots in developments in the real economy, with declining profit rates in non-financial businesses, and historically low global interest rates, leading to the growth of a bubble of speculative capital in a bloated financial industry.

The first obvious sign that this bubble was going to burst arose in the so-called "sub-prime" mortgage market in the United States. The growth of this market, like the massive extension of consumer credit more generally, had allowed workers to continue buying consumer

goods and housing, despite real wages that had been more or less stagnant for over a decade.

An increase in unemployment in the US (relatively mild compared to what has happened since), led to a noticeable increase in house repossessions.

This in turn spread panic through the credit derivatives markets, where the banks had packaged up and sold to each other the loans they had made to the general public.

As it became more and more clear that the real value of these loans – and the complex derivatives based on them – was much lower than had been assumed, the banks increasingly stopped lending money to each other, and instead started speculating about which other banks were the most exposed.

This was the "credit crunch" that brought down major institutions – Lehman, AIG, Bear Stearns, Northern Rock, Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae – with such force, and which threatened to bring about the collapse of the financial system as a whole.

Governments across the world – with US President George W Bush and UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown in front – rescued the panic-stricken bankers with public funds to prevent this. But they did so in a way that socialised the banks' losses, and massively increased the public debt.

The role of the capitalist state

In this way, they demonstrated the role of the state under capitalism, that of being "a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie", as Marx and Engels put it.

By this, we mean not just that politicians act to defend the interests of individual capitalists (however corrupt their relations with them might

Continued next page

WORLD ECONOMY

Continued from over

be in any given instance). Rather, it is that the political class as a whole understand that the duty that they owe, to the ruling class that they serve, is to act to preserve the profit-making system itself.

The very same financial industry, whose central pillars had just been bailed out with cheap state credit, then made it more expensive for those same governments to borrow it back, to finance all those day-to-day matters that states borrow money from the bond markets for all the time.

It is bad enough to be in hock to loan sharks, but “we” are all now in hock to global loan sharks, who are only still in business because “our” politicians lent them money that they never be repaid.

The co-ordinated measures taken by the G20 countries in the Spring of 2009, to provide a “fiscal stimulus” to stave off a catastrophic slump, could only succeed in putting off consequences of the bailouts for the moment. The same has been true of the “quantitative easing” measures taken by Gordon Brown’s government in the UK, essentially amounting to printing money and quietly devaluing the currency.

The risk of default

What the markets fear most of all is that governments could default on their debts, in this way passing on the cost of their crisis to their creditors (banking, state and private) in other countries, as has already happened on a smaller scale, and in a different way, in Iceland.

It should be no surprise that it has been Europe’s smaller economies (like Ireland and Greece) that were first to be hit by a crisis of market confidence in their state finances. In both of the above cases, their governments could not print new money themselves (due to the rules of Eurozone membership), and simply did not have the resources to fund large and decisive bailouts of their own banking systems.

However, what applies to these smaller economies will also apply to richer and larger countries sooner



Greeks battle police (photo by Guy Smallman)

or later – the UK very much included. This is why the capitalists in all countries are demanding austerity measures and the reduction of state deficits, threatening capital flight and the withdrawal of credit if this does not happen.

The chaotic market versus the need for planning

The second destructive contradiction within the capitalist system – between social production and private appropriation – can be seen in the mechanisms that governments have tried to negotiate to deal with the next financial crisis, to achieve through state intervention what competition and market mechanisms cannot achieve on their own.

The IMF, for example, proposed a global tax on banks’ liabilities – a “financial stability contribution” – to a meeting of G20 finance ministers in April 2010. This would be paid into a global fund, which over time would amount to between 2 and 4 per cent of the GDP of the participating countries.

The UK’s Labour chancellor Alistair Darling welcomed this proposal. However, Canadian finance minister Jim Flaherty expressed his scepticism, saying that it might not be “be an appropriate tool for all countries”, and warning that a “perceived government guarantee against failure” could encourage “excessive risk-taking”.

Similarly, the Greek bailout has forced EU governments to discuss the creation of a 60 billion euro “European stabilisation mechanism” to be managed by the European Commission, so that any future bailouts

of Spain or Portugal do not have to go through the complex mechanisms of several national parliaments.

What does it tell us that such proposals are being discussed right now?

First of all that the combined state debt is now too large for a new bailout in the event of a new banking crisis.

Secondly, that bankers and politicians alike fully expect such a crisis to happen within the next few years – even if there is an intervening period of economic growth.

What a doomed system this is – one that has periodic and near-fatal heart attacks that it does not know how to cure but must learn to live with.

But it also tells us that the palliative measures used so far – the fiscal stimulus, the quantitative easing, and the loan guarantees from richer states to poorer ones – are running out. The bosses and bankers need cuts in state spending to restore their confidence – even if this will slow down or kill off the economic recovery. But to impose these measures, they need the state – with its police and its repressive powers – to forcibly hold down those layers of society that will bear the brunt of them, battering them into submission if they try to resist.

They need to wage a ruthless class struggle against the majority of society. But as both the Greek workers’ struggle and the British election results show, the capitalists and their politicians are still far from achieving the balance of forces necessary to be confident about the outcome of this struggle – whether in terms of their own unity of ranks, or in terms of the passivity and resignation of the workers and the lower middle class. Britain’s political paralysis therefore reflects and is part of an international social paralysis.

Our task, the task of revolutionary socialists, is to address those layers within the working class, who today are looking to their trade unions and their traditional reformist parties for protection, with a programme to resist austerity, and to direct the resistance to it from being a purely defensive struggle to the struggle for a new, socialist society.

TURKEY

Workers unite against the crisis – May Day in Taksim Square at last

By Peter Main

For the first time since 1978, workers succeeded in celebrating May Day in Istanbul's huge Taksim Square. More than 200,000 marched under the banners of six trade union federations. The demonstration is powerful evidence of a revival of the Turkish and Kurdish workers' militancy in response to the economic crisis.

This revival was sparked by the Tekel workers' epic struggle to resist the destruction of jobs and livelihoods.

On 15 December 12,000 workers lost their jobs when Tekel, previously the state monopoly on tobacco and liquor, was sold off to British American Tobacco. Their strike brought together workers across the whole of the country, from the tobacco-producing districts of Turkish Kurdistan to the Aegean coast. These workers have taken on not only the government and the courts but also their own trade union leaders. Their union, Tek Gida-Is, is part of the pro-government Turk-Is Confederation whose leader is Mustafa Kumlu.

Tekel workers have used hunger strikes, occupied a public park in Ankara, besieged and then occupied the union headquarters, and forced Turk-Is to call a solidarity general strike in February. These actions won the admiration and support of workers across the country. Crucially, the strike brought together Turkish and Kurdish workers in a display of solidarity that has done much to overcome divisions carefully nurtured by the state for decades. The legal representative of the Kurdish movement, in effect



An estimated 200,000 demonstrated in Taksim Square

the largest opposition movement in Turkey, also called for mass participation in May Day under the slogan "Turkish and Kurdish workers unite!"

But immediately after the strikers won a significant concession from the courts which

year, photographs of those who died took pride of place on the demonstration.

For the last four years, Taksim Square has seen repeated attempts by socialist and workers' organisations, in particular the Revolutionary Workers'

The decision by the Governor of Istanbul to authorise demonstrations marks an important victory for the left

annulled a government order to conclude the dispute within 30 days, Kumlu ordered the dismantling of the "tent city" in Ankara that was the nerve centre of the strike.

This set back the workers' momentum - but it also undermined Kumlu's prestige. He was shouted down and had to be bundled away from the podium by the police for his own safety!

Historical Victory - Taking Taksim Square

In 1977, Taksim Square was the scene of a police massacre in which 37 demonstrators died. In 1978 the government banned all further demonstrations. This

Unions Confederation, DISK, to commemorate the victims of the massacre and to celebrate May Day. On each occasion, they have been bloodily dispersed by riot police. The decision by the Governor of Istanbul to authorise demonstrations marks an important victory for the left. This is not just a change of heart but recognition of the increasing impact of the left in the workers' movement.

This year, although the DISK contingent was by far the biggest, the demonstration was joined by the largest of the trade union confederations in Turkey, Turk-Is, which is aligned to the ruling Justice and Development Party, as well as Hak-Is, the con-

servative, religious trade union federation. Even within those confederations, the pressure of rank and file members has forced the leaders to act.

Workers' united front needed

May Day 2010 was an outstanding victory for the working class. It showed that working class action led by militant trade unionists and revolutionary youth can mobilise mass support and even force the existing leaders of mass organisations, despite their loyalty to the government, to mobilise their own organisations too.

Faced with a capitalist crisis of historic severity, the Turkish revolutionary left has two related tasks. The first is to create a unified revolutionary party on a programme of transitional demands that provides a bridge between the needs of the struggle today and the fight for working class power. The second is to unite the rank and file of the trade unions into councils of workers' delegates to organise mass political strikes to stop the government making the workers' pay for the crisis.

A new party and a rank and file movement within the unions could help resolve the crisis of leadership in the Turkish working class movement, by mounting a challenge to the hold of the treacherous bureaucrats like Kumlu and fighting for action despite them where necessary. This could allow a successful defence of the working class in a united strike wave. As in Greece, this could throw Turkish capitalism into an even deeper crisis, for which there is only one progressive solution: working class power and revolutionary socialism.

INTERNATIONAL

Into action alongside

The Greek crisis threatens to destabilise the whole of the Europe. Workers are staging massive strikes and protests to defend their jobs and services against swingeing austerity measures.

Dave Stockton looks at the lessons to be learned and the action we need to take

On 5 May more than 200,000 workers, students, women, pensioners, youth and the unemployed took to the streets in Athens, joined by tens of thousands in other cities and towns, to say "No - we are not going to pay for this crisis!"

In the third general strike since the Greek crisis unfolded in December, protestors stormed the parliament and clashed with riot police in the angriest expression of popular resentment in decades.

Police fired pepper spray, tear gas and stun grenades at the crowds as more people came out onto the streets. People were calling the politicians "thieves" and telling them to get out of the Parliament. "Bring back the stolen money," they demanded.

If anyone thought that the bad old days of International Monetary Fund (IMF)-imposed austerity programmes were over, then events unfolding in Greece in April and May have proved them wrong.

Debt trap

Greece's national debt of 300 billion euros (\$394 billion) is bigger than the country's economy, and it will reach 120 per cent of gross domestic product in 2010. On 27 April, the New York-based ratings agency Standard & Poor's downgraded Greece's sovereign debt to junk status, effectively shutting down its access to private capital and sending shock waves through financial markets around the world.



Supporters of the PAME union confederation march through Athens on 5 May

Greece is in a "debt trap" similar to those that ruined many Latin American countries in the 1980s and African countries in the 1990s. But Greece is a member of the European Union (EU) and the euro zone. This crisis, and the way the biggest imperialist countries have used it to assert their domination of the EU, has threatened the survival of the euro and the stability of the EU itself. They have finally agreed to bail Greece out - but not the Greek workers and poor farmers, only the Greek capitalists.

A huge proportion of Greece's has been incurred to service its existing debt levels - much of it owed to German, Swiss and French banks. Far from "the Greeks taking our money", as the German tabloids keep repeating, it is the Western banks that are taking over

Greece. Now they want to put its working people on starvation rations, too.

Speculators

The April crisis in Greece was triggered by financiers speculating on the possibility that Greece would default on existing debts. But even before that, a united front of Greek capitalists, the rulers of the EU and the IMF had pressured the PASOK government into implementing an austerity programme - despite being elected only six months ago on a programme of resisting any such restructuring of the economy. Democracy, that Greek word, supposedly the rule of the people is revealed once again to be the rule of the markets.

The EU and IMF dictated a 15 per cent cut in wages and salaries for both private and

public sector workers, a rise in the retirement age to 67 years and a cut in the pension levels, even more job cuts in the public sector, abolition of collective labour agreements between trade unions and employers, abolition of any legal restriction on job cuts in the private sector, and more cuts in education with class size increases.

The only thing standing in their way was the Greek workers. They simply said "No". Public transport workers, dockworkers, teachers, and museum workers struck and demonstrated as soon as the envoys of austerity arrived in Athens. The civil servants' union, ADEDY, and the General Confederation of Greek Labour (GSEE) called out their 2.5 million members. The union tied to the Greek Communist Party (KKE) - PAME (All-Workers Militant

the Greek workers!

Front) also played a leading role. This culminated in a 24-hour strike (the third since December) on 5 May.

On the streets of Athens, as many as 200,000 demonstrated, with tens of thousands protesting in other cities and towns, especially in Thessalonica, Greece's second largest city. Tragically the impetus of the struggle was weakened by adventurist actions by black block anarchists - if they really were such - by setting fire to a bank.

Three young bank workers inside were burned to death.

However, the arsonists were not the only ones responsible. Bank union militant revealed that these workers had been forbidden to strike that day on pain of losing their jobs, locked in the bank by their employers and the building had no fire exits or adequate extinguishers.

Despite the employers' culpability, the government has used this tragedy to smear the millions of strikers and demonstrators and the momentum towards an all-out strike wave was (temporarily) broken. The parliament was emboldened to pass the austerity programme the next day.

Resistance

Greek workers have shown they have the strength to block the imposition of the starvation cuts but they must go beyond one-day strikes to an all out general strike of both public and private sector workers, drawing in the pensioners and the rural population who will also be ruined by the cuts.

Workers in the two larger federations should demand that their leaders break with PASOK, which has proved to be an agency of the Greek and EU



Demonstrators chase police in Greek city of Thessalonica on 5 May

bosses. Workers in PAME should demand a break from the nationalistic policies of the KKE, such as getting out of the EU and "restoring the drachma", as well as its stubborn refusal to call for an all-out indefinite general strike. Only this can break the government's resistance.

Leaving the EU or the euro zone under capitalism would mean as bad or an even worse crisis - a collapse in trade and hyperinflation, while at the same time cutting Greek workers off from their brothers and sisters facing similar attacks in the rest of Europe.

Greek workers must demand united action from their leaders. But rank and file members should do so themselves at workplace and local level by forming councils of action. These should draw in delegates from all the trade unions, the students' organisations, and the organisations of the small farmers, too.

Given the brutality of the Greek riot police, shown once

again 5 May, and the danger of provocations, such as the killing of the three bank workers, workers and youth need build a mass defence militia.

At the forefront of the resistance are thousands of rank and file members of the larger parties of the Greek working class - the KKE and SYRIZA (the Coalition of the Radical Left), as well as the coalition of far left groups (ANTARSYA). They can mount pressure on the official leaders of the workers parties to form a united front of resistance. They need to come together in building action councils for an all out general strike and a defence militia.

For a workers' government

But an all-out general strike, by the very fact that it halts the economy and society, poses the question: which class shall govern Greece?

The answer must be a workers' government to reverse and resist all the cuts, to take over the banks and the big corporations and run them under

workers' control and workers' management, developing a plan of production.

A workers' government must have as its central tasks the dissolution of the armed repressive forces of the capitalist state, such as the army and police, and their replacement with the armed masses - the workers and small farmers.

A workers' government will expropriate, without compensation, the big capitalist businesses and banks.

The aim of the IMF and the EU is to teach a lesson to the workers of the whole of Europe: Greece today - YOU tomorrow!

If Greek workers are forced to submit to the barbaric cuts, such programmes will be rolled out right across Europe.

That is why across the continent the call must go up for solidarity action with the Greek resistance.

We must take to the streets with the Greek workers' slogans: we will not pay for their crisis, enough is enough, workers - rise up!

NEPAL

Revolution at a crossroads

Huge mobilisations in Nepal signal the revolution has entered a new stage. But can the Maoist strategy lead the masses to victory, asks **Dave Stockton**

On May Day hundreds of thousands flooded the streets of Kathmandu, capital of Nepal in a demonstration called by the Maoists.

At a mass rally, the Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal, known as Prachanda, declared an indefinite general strike. Its aim, he said, was to force the 20-party coalition government to resign and for the Constituent Assembly to draft the long-delayed new constitution. Prachanda also demanded a new government with the Maoists taking the premiership and having a majority of ministers.

The Maoists (or Unified Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist) had already headed such a government – from September 2008 to May 2009 – with Prachanda as prime minister. He resigned when the president refused to support his sacking of the commander in chief of the army, who had refused to incorporate 19,000 Maoist guerillas into the army. Now, the Maoists want to force their way back into a coalition.

General strike aims

For the six days of the strike the country was shut down, largely as a result of the actions of the Maoist Youth Leagues – young people from the countryside who flooded into Kathmandu to enforce a general shut down of factories, businesses, shops, and so on. This meant the indefinite strike did not have the organic involvement of the urban Nepalese working class, but was effectively imposed on them by the Maoist youth.

Many of the Maoist youth, who have as yet gained little



Maoists supporters march in Kathmandu burning effigies of ministers

from the 2006 revolution that overthrew the King of Nepal, saw the strike as bringing their party to power, not just to gain ministerial portfolios, but to take revolutionary measures to seize the land from the big landlords and to take socialist measures in the interests of the poor, the youth and the workers. A young cadre interviewed by a foreign journalist about their objectives replied, "We come for socialism. We say 'Peace and Constitution.' People will have the same rights. We do not come to retreat."

For the Maoist leaders the general strike arose purely from their impasse in persuading the 20-party coalition government to re-admit them to government in a leading role. There is therefore a clear contradiction between the limited reformist aims of the Maoist leaders and their rank and file.

Also the revolutionary tactic of the indefinite general strike was used for very limited aims and without the positive, democratic involvement of the urban working class on whom the strike really depended.

Prachanda's reasons for calling off the strike shows how

unprepared the Maoists were for a struggle for power. "We have decided to stop the general strike considering the difficulty caused to the ordinary people, and also in view of the conspiracy hatched by this government to instigate violence. But we have not stopped our people's movement," he said.

Clashes with the Maoists

Without a doubt it was better for it to end in farce than as a tragic conflict between the peasant youth and the urban working class. But the bureaucratic leaders of the Maoists had no understanding that a general strike cannot succeed if it does not involve the workers in the factories and small workshops from day one, if it does not express their needs and demands first and foremost, and if, the workers through democratic councils and committees are not in charge of it.

The reason the strikes failed to actively involve the workers were that many, including those in the largest union federations, did not support a purely political strike aimed at governmental parties that their unions support. As a result, the youth

sections of these parties increasingly clashed with the Maoist youth who were trying to enforce the strike. Prachanda was terrified that large-scale street violence would wreck all prospects of a new government with himself as premier once again.

The Maoist leaders are pursuing a parliamentary road, with a long period of capitalist democracy, in which Nepal is supposed to be modernised by capitalist development led by a Maoist dominated coalition government with the bourgeois parties. The utopian project includes encouraging foreign capital (Indian, Chinese and Western) to set up in Nepal in Special Economic Zones (SEZs). When in power in 2008-9 the Maoists ministers drafted legislation to ban strikes in the these zones – hardly a measure likely to win over Nepal's workers from the reformist-led unions.

A leaflet handed out on May Day by League for the Fifth International supporters and members of Revolution-Nepal, the socialist youth movement, offered a revolutionary alternative to the workers. It said:

"Nepal needs a revolution – one which gives power not to a government of politicians but to assemblies of workers and peasants. To achieve the goal of socialism, we need to build a revolutionary party which can take power and end capitalism now. Its programme would fight for to take Nepal out of feudalism and primitive capitalism and towards a socialist economy by taking power into the hands of the workers and peasants. For socialism in Nepal: part of a socialist federation of South Asia."

LUDMILA STAL

Underground activist extraordinaire

Our series on the lives and struggles of great revolutionary women continues with Marija Cubalevska's look at the life of Russian underground militant Ludmila Stal



Ludmila Stal was born in 1872 in Yekaterinoslav in the Russian Empire, which today is Dnipropetrovsk in Ukraine.

Although her family were well-off, she was a rebel from her early days, when she was involved in an underground Marxist circle at her school, handing out illegal leaflets and pamphlets calling for the overthrow of the Tsar. She was expelled, but this did not deter her from pursuing revolutionary activity.

At 23, she moved to Omsk, then capital of southwest Siberia and the Steppes, to work for a Marxist paper called Stepnoi Krai ("Steppe Land"). The next year she moved to Moscow to take part in a range of underground socialist circles and student organisations. The revolutionary youth were constantly debating the way to get rid of the Tsar. Ludmila strongly opposed the most widespread view at that time - populism - which wanted to unite 'the people' against the Tsar, with the peasantry as the leading force. Instead she argued for the Marxist view that a mass workers' party should be built to bring the working class to the head of the revolution.

In 1899 her house was raided by police and, on the advice of her comrades, she emigrated to Paris where she came across the newspaper Iskra ("The Spark"), which was at that time edited by Russian revolutionaries, including Plekhanov, Lenin and Martov. She returned to Russia, smuggling in banned issues of Iskra, but was arrest-



Revolutionary women soldiers guard the Winter Palace

ed and sent to prison.

After she organised a protest against the mistreatment of a fellow prisoner, the authorities labelled her a "dangerous revolutionary" and she was in and out of prison for a whole decade, making numerous daring escapes. Back in Paris in 1912, she and Inessa Armand launched the newspaper Rabotnica ("Woman Worker") - the first ever paper aimed at working class women in Russia.

In August 1914 the First World War began and the Social Democratic parties in Germany and France backed the war. The Bolsheviks were the only mass party that stood firm against imperialism; Ludmila helped to organise an illegal Fighting Group for Peace and against Chauvinism from within the French Socialist Party. Here Ludmila's experience with illegal work was invaluable, as the

French socialists had little such experience.

And at the end of 1914, Ludmila, working again with Inessa and also with Russian revolutionary Nadezhda Krupskaya, launched the Initiative for the International Women's Conference in Bern, Switzerland, which spoke out clearly against the war.

In February 1917, after the biggest general strike in history, the Russian working class overthrew the Tsar. Revolutionaries hurried back to Russia from exile. In April the Bolsheviks debated the way forward for the revolution - Lenin argued that the Bolsheviks should not support the provisional government of populists and Mensheviks because it was still a capitalist government. He demanded that the new government pull Russia out of the war, and said the Bolsheviks should call for all power to be trans-

ferred into the hands of the workers' council or soviets, which were councils of recallable delegates from workplaces, estates and soldiers' battalions. Ludmila backed this revolutionary approach against those such as Kamenev, Muranov and Stalin who wanted the Bolsheviks to back the regime.

This programme won out within the Bolsheviks and led to the victory of October 1917 when the soviets seized power in an armed uprising, setting up the world's first workers' state. Ludmila worked closely with fellow revolutionaries, Alexandra Kollontai, Klaudivia Nikolajevna and Konkordia Samoilova, in convening the First Petrograd Conference of Working Class Women. When the capitalists launched their war against the young workers' regime in 1918, Ludmila edited newspapers for Red Army soldiers, making sure they combined illegal were fully aware of the political cause they were fighting for.

Ludmila remained active after the civil war, but sadly never challenged the degeneration of the revolution into a bureaucratic dictatorship under Stalin after 1924. But her revolutionary work in the early years gives us not just a sense of the great events of her day and of her personal skill, determination and heroism, but of the necessity for a revolutionary party of being able to combine mass open work with illegal work in the underground - with all that can entail.

• For more in the series go to <http://www.fifthinternational.org/revolutionary-women>

Undemocratic Britain

By Richard Brenner and Luke Cooper

The election result revealed the deeply undemocratic nature of the British system.

The Lib Dems won 6.5 million votes – 23 per cent of all votes cast – but got just 57 MPs, only 8 per cent of the seats in Parliament. It took 285,616 votes to elect one Green, 119,000 votes to elect a Lib Dem, but just 33,000 for each Tory or Labour MP.

This is blatantly unfair. And of course it makes it very difficult for a new working class party to challenge the domination of the official pro-capitalist parties. That is why communists call for proportional representation – the most democratic system possible in a parliamentary election, in which you vote for a party that presents a list of candidates. A party winning a third of the votes would get a third of the seats – and a party winning one per cent would get one per cent of the seats.

Capitalist democracy

The unfair voting system is not the only undemocratic thing about Britain.

An unelected hereditary monarch has the power to appoint prime ministers, dissolve parliament and even declare war. An unelected House of Lords can block and delay laws. The new Con-Dem coalition plans to make it harder for parliament to unseat the government by raising the number of common's votes needed for this from 51 to 55 per cent – which would mean the government can survive with the backing of only a minority of MPs!

All these obstacles to the unrestricted rule of the majority are there for a reason. Britain is not just a democracy, it is a *capitalist* democracy. In this society wealth and power is in the hands of a small minority of the people.

Naturally that minority fears what majority rule could bring. So they impose a series of “checks and balances” to preserve their rule and their property should the masses wake up and try to take over.

That is why communists want to sweep away each and everyone of these restrictions. We don't just want PR, we want to abolish the monarchy and the House of Lords and break the privileges that the rich and powerful have over politics and government.

We should never forget whoever wins an election, the most important parts of the state remain completely unchanged. In the last weeks while the politicians have been campaigning, the unelected civil servants are the ones who have drawn up lists of real cuts to be put through after the election, which the politicians didn't dare outline to the people before the poll.

Alongside the unelected faceless civil servants, an unelected judiciary creates new law – almost always coming down on the bosses' side: like when they ruled the BA strike illegal even though it got more than 90 per cent support in a ballot.

The police and army chiefs are also unelected. Drawn from the same top public schools and top universities, they mingle with the rest of their privileged class and speak with the cultivated accents of the elite, light years away from the Scottish, Geordie, and Cockney accents of the privates who fight and dies in the dust of Afghanistan.

The military – which tellingly swears allegiance not to Parliament but to the Queen – is the last line of defence against the threat of dispossession that majority rule always poses to a minority ruling class.

MPs not subject to recall

In even the most democratic capitalist countries, the ruling class is careful to ensure that MPs are not subject to instant recall by the people who elected them. This means that the MPs can promise one thing before they are elected, and do something completely different once they get in. It is no wonder then that deception becomes the rule in capitalist politics – MPs are unaccountable and cannot be recalled once they break their promises.

Apart from voting every five years or so, workers have no control over government. Between elections the politicians do as they please safe in the knowledge they cannot be brought to account, the civil servants rule on behalf of the rich as ever, the elite control security and, of course, in every workplace the bosses exercise an outright dictatorship.

Workers' democracy

A working class democracy would be the opposite of capitalism's excuse for a democracy. Power would rest in the hands of workers' councils – made up of recallable delegates, elected from every workplace and every working class community. Delegates could be recalled by their electors at any time so that they could not deceive or deny the people's will. Delegates from local and regional workers' councils could comprise a council of delegates on a national basis which could elect the government: all subject to recall.

These workers' councils would be executive bodies, drawing up laws, governing and judging disputes. Administrative positions would be rotated to prevent the emergence of a privileged bureaucracy such as in the former USSR (and like every capitalist country today).

Crucially, this system of workers' councils would not be imposed from above. It can only happen in the first place by creating workers' councils out of the movements of resistance that the working class is forced to mount when the capitalists try to make us pay the costs of their economic crises.

The fight for workers' democracy today begins with the need to link up resistance to the coming Con-Dem cuts into delegate-based committees of action from our workplaces and communities. These could both co-ordinate a national strike and direct action to beat the cuts, and challenge the capitalists control of property and power – ultimately seizing the power and creating a revolutionary government and a new working class state.