



# We are the 99%

# Protest

# Strike

# Occupy



- All out on 30 November
- Joint strike committees in every town
- Workers and students unite - forward to a general strike

AS ANTICAPITALISTS continue their camp in central London, over two million workers look set to launch a united strike at the end of November in the biggest day of industrial action Britain has seen since the general strike of 1926.

This shows how angry people are with the coalition government, which lied its way into office and has no mandate for the cuts, privatisation

and unemployment it is inflicting on all of us.

This is a bankers' government through and through. And just as the Occupy movement has caught the imagination of millions in its militant defiance in Wall St and the City of London, so too has the call to arms from education, civil service, local government and NHS unions.

#### Pay more, work longer, get less

The strike is in defence of pensions. Millions of workers will lose tens of thousands of pounds each if the cuts go ahead. They are being told to double their pensions contributions, work till they're 68 and expect a far smaller pension in return. At the same time CEO's bonuses are going

through the roof.

The argument that we are living longer is rubbish; the life expectancy of managers and bosses has indeed risen, but the gap between them and manual, clerical and service workers has grown.

Besides, this is plain robbery. Our pensions are deferred wages, paid for out of the value created by our labour. No minister or official has shown that any of the schemes are unsustainable. On the contrary, they have hundreds of billions in assets. The attack is simply a smash and grab raid to rescue their ailing capitalist system.

#### General strike

When this is viewed alongside the

rest of the Tory-Lib Dem offensive, the scale of workers' anger is easy to understand. Unemployment stands at 2.5 million with a lost generation squeezed out of work and priced out of education. Vital services are being cut, cut and cut again.

The NHS and state schools are being starved of funds and prepared for privatisation. Inflation is eating away at wages, pensions and benefits.

Now the banks are demanding more money, while economists expect another recession or maybe years of stagnation. The crisis could suddenly get much worse. The euro crisis could bring the problems of Greece and Italy much closer to home.

That's why we need a general strike to stop all the cuts and make the bankers and the bosses pay for their crisis. Only an indefinite general strike can sweep up all our discontents – the unemployed, those in precarious jobs and young people – and mobilise the whole of the working class against the government.

Would such a movement pose a political threat to the coalition? Of course it would. It would offer the chance to kick out the government of the 1% and for the 99% to run society. We could nationalise the banks' assets, not just their losses, and use their vast wealth to renew and expand public services, guaranteeing everybody a comfortable and carefree retirement.

**Why we need an anticapitalist organisation in Britain today – turn to pages 8-9**





## Anticapitalism hits the streets

November is a crucial month in the fightback against the cuts. Demonstrations and protests by students and electricians will hit the headlines; there will be a large conference, Unite the Resistance, with hundreds of rank and file trade unionists; and everything will be building up for mass strikes on 30 November. And let's not forget the protest camps in London organised by the Occupy movement, which have made a real impact in the way people are thinking about the crisis.

Ed Miliband even wrote an article for Observer, arguing the protesters reflected a mood felt by millions of people – that the 1% are getting rich, and the 99% are suffering – and urged politicians to “wake up” and respond to this mood. If only Ed Miliband would take his own advice. He could start by giving his unconditional support to the fightback against the cuts, backing the strikes on the 30 November, and promising to reverse every single one of the Tory cuts. But the fact that he feels compelled to reach out to the #Occupy movement shows the dramatic growth of anticapitalist consciousness and the pressure of the movement. It's inconceivable that Tony Blair would have said such things about the anticapitalist movement of the early 2000s.

Hanging over all of us are the problems of the Eurozone which threaten the EU project, and could even trigger a new global recession. A default by Greece, Spain or Italy would certainly threaten the single currency and the European financial system. Angela Merkel warned that the results of the Euro debt crisis will last a decade – a decade of stagnation and low growth, with working class and middle class people asked to pay the costs of a long and bitter period of class warfare.

In the face of this, building the resistance and getting stuck into the fightback is critical. The strikes on 30 November need to be the start of a campaign of mass industrial resistance, of general strike proportions, aimed at bringing down the government. We need a social explosion against austerity – direct action, civil disobedience, strikes and occupations – that say we won't pay for their crisis.

The Tories and Liberal Democrats are scared of the prospect of mass strike action. They offered meagre concessions but still won't budge on the central issues – that workers are being asked to make increased contributions and work for longer for a pension which will be worth less. Disgracefully the Labour leadership have already said that “it's right that public sector workers are asked to work longer and contribute more” to their pensions, and welcomed the Con-Dem “compromise”.

Only determined action – escalating quickly beyond the partial, one day public sector general strike on the 30 November, towards an all out indefinite general strike – will bring down the Con-Dems. But we can't rely on our trade union leaders to bring this off. The leaders of the big unions are fiercely opposed to any decisive confrontation with the government. Dave Prentis already welcomed the concessions the government has made indicating he might pull 1.1 million Unison workers out of the 30 November action.

That's why it's so important to build rank and file organisations in the unions. The Unite the Resistance conference on 19 November should take practical steps to such an organisation.

This isn't just necessary, it's also possible. In Unite, the relatively small numbers of activists who supported Jerry Hicks' election campaign for leadership of the union have formed Unite Grassroots Left as an independent rank and file movement, consolidating his hundreds of supporters into a permanent network. Look at what the Sparks have achieved so far, if this was done in every union we'd be in a stronger position to obstruct any sell out.

The anticapitalist mood is certainly growing, but it is diffuse, uncoordinated and still in its infancy. A thousand ideas are in the mix, with everything from higher corporation tax to an end of corporations altogether being discussed under the arches of St Paul's. This is an exciting development, for the first time in years the media is using the word ‘capitalism’ again – it shows it must be in trouble.

We wanted to use this paper to begin what we think is an important initiative. We believe it is crucial now to build an anticapitalist organisation which can unite rank and file activists in the trade unions with the students and anticapitalists who are taking to the streets. The left is too divided – now more than ever we need unity. We need to unite to build a stronger, radical anticapitalist party in Britain with a strategy to bring down the system.

# The rich get richer...

Rebecca Anderson

DIRECTORS OF the FTSE 100 – the top 100 British companies – saw their incomes rise by an average of 49 per cent last year, while for the rest of us the average pay rise was less than 2 per cent. Someone's doing well out of the recession – but it's not you!

The directors have tried to camouflage these increases by awarding themselves 3 per cent in salary increases and the rest in bonuses and long-term share plans. But Incomes Data Services, whose research uncovered the scandal, has exposed the reality of boardroom pay.

While bosses and politicians repeat the mantra that we must all “tighten our belts” to justify cuts imposed on the majority of people, the super-rich minority have been accumulating a disgusting amount of personal wealth. The average income of a FTSE 100 chief executive now stands at a staggering £3,855,172. The richest of them, Michael Davis of mining conglomerate Xstrata, pocketed £18.4 million.

A second report from IDS showed the average pay awards for private sector workers was just 2.6 per cent. With inflation standing at double that figure, these workers have suffered a substantial pay cut in real terms. Public sector employees, meanwhile, are in the middle of a two-year pay freeze, which in real terms means a pay cut over the past year of almost 10 per cent.

Paul Kenny, leader of trade union GMB, branded the FTSE 100 directors “elite greedy pigs” and pointed to a recent report from his union demonstrating how



nine out of 10 workers have seen their living standards drop by up to 20 per cent.

The huge sums awarded to directors in the past year have come straight from the work of their employees, who have only received crumbs from their bosses' tables. Companies that refuse to pay their employees even an inflation-level pay rise should be nationalised.

But we cannot expect public sector CEOs – like the Vice-Chancellor of Leeds University who this year saw his salary rise by 12.4 per cent – to run these companies any more fairly. Instead they should be run under the control of their workers, who could put the millions of pounds of directors' pay to much better use.

## ... and the poor get poorer

Jeremy Dewar

CHANCELLOR GEORGE Osborne famously claimed that, “We're all in this together.” But when it comes to wealth and living standards, this simply is not true.

Price rises are outstripping wages and benefits week by week, month by month. The official index for inflation (CPI) rose to 5.2 per cent a year last month. But even this is an underestimate of the real rise in the cost of living. The more reliable (though still conservative) RPI index reported a 5.6 per cent increase – the highest since June 1991.

The highest jumps were in gas, electricity and other fuels, up 18.3 per cent; transport costs, up 12.8 per cent; and food, up 6 per cent. All of these items form a disproportionately high part of low-income families' and pensioners' household budgets, especially in winter.

Housing costs are also rapidly spiralling out of control. First time buyers have long been priced out of the market by landlords and property developers. As a result, rents are rising in every region in the UK, according to Shelter. Most tenants now spend more than a third of their incomes on rent alone, which is the official reckoning for housing poverty.

The poor are also the main victims of cuts in education, the NHS, social services and benefits because they rely on them most and cannot access the private sector.

The wealth gap increased rapidly in the 1980s and '90s under the previous Tory regime. Disgracefully, Labour allowed it to rise even further until the richest 10 per cent owned 100 times more wealth than the poorest 10 per cent. Now the Tories are back in office, Britain is set to become even more unequal.

No wonder anger at the 1% is rising – only by expropriating their wealth can we redistribute it and abolish the blight of poverty forever.

## ... and angrier!

Andy Yorke

THE UN'S INTERNATIONAL Labour Organisation has produced a report stating that “social upheavals” are on the cards due to growing cuts, unemployment and inequality. Meanwhile Andreas Whittam Smith, writing in The Independent, has declared that countries like Britain are now “ripe for revolution”.

The ILO cited a study showing that in 45 out of 119 countries the risk of social unrest is rising, and this includes the rich countries of Europe and North America as well as the Middle East. It states that 80 million new jobs are needed – includ-

ing 27 million in the wealthier countries – to get unemployment down to pre-crisis levels. The sheer impossibility of this, in the face of a double-dip recession, shows the deep crisis the world's capitalist class now faces.

Smith, a former editor of The Telegraph and Stock Exchange Gazette, notes the similarities with the 1848 revolutionary wave that swept across Europe. Smith wrongly disparages the “amateurs” and lack of concrete demands of the Arab Spring and global Occupy movement today, comparing them to the failed revolutions of 1848: “There was usually a brief, confused

period of demands and demonstrations”, whose “leaders and instigators were intellectuals devoid of political experience, not men of action”.

But there is a great difference between 1848 and today. Then, the working class was only beginning to take shape in Europe. Today, we have already seen general strikes in Greece and France, while there have been revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya.

These events show that the first steps taken by activists can grow into mass, militant action capable of shaking the system. The capitalist crisis has opened up a period when everything is possible.

# Public sector pensions – trade dispute or class war?

Jeremy Dewar, Unison rep pc

THE TORIES and the bosses are seriously worried about the coordinated strike on 30 November. Education Secretary Michael Gove and Cabinet Office minister Francis Maude have been at the forefront of those calling for an army of scabs to run schools, and for new anti-union legislation to make it even more difficult for workers to take strike action.

Last year the Daily Mail reported that “a unit has been set up in the Cabinet Office to prevent Britain grinding to a standstill in the event of mass public sector walkouts. Officials have conducted ‘war games’ to ensure that strikebreakers are available to run vital facilities”.

This shows that our enemies are more prepared for the coming showdown than we are. They instinctively know that the 30 November strike – N30 – will not only bring the country to a standstill for a day, but also give millions of workers and youth a glimpse of their potential power. They will see who really makes society tick, which class is truly indispensable, without whom nothing works.

This is the real threat posed by the coming strike. And this is why David Cameron and the rest are scared stiff by it.

## TUC on the back foot

But the TUC and union leaders are in danger of frittering away our advantages. First there was virtually no resistance to the coalition’s attacks for a whole year – despite half a million hitting the streets on 26 March. When they did mount a mass strike on 30 June, they failed to follow it up for five months. And even now, there are no plans for what to do after 30 November.

TUC general secretary Brendan Barber entered into secret talks with Chancellor George Osborne in Sep-



## PROTECT OUR WELFARE STATE AND PUBLIC SERVICES

tember without letting any union members know what he offered him. Now he and Unison leader Dave Prentis say the minor concessions offered by Danny Alexander could form the basis of a settlement. All union leaders agree this should strictly remain a trade dispute, to be settled scheme by scheme.

This approach is disastrous. It has already led to the FBU settling separately and pulling out of the strike. The powerful RMT union has kept out of the dispute all year because its members’ pensions are not currently under attack. And private sector workers have had their pensions raided by the bosses without so much as a fight.

Imagine if train and fire stations were closed on 30 November, if factories and supermarkets were shut down – the country would be at a standstill. These workers’ jobs, pay and pensions are not safe. If we lose this battle, they will immediately come into the firing line. This is the same old Tory tactic of the 1980s, taking on unions a few at a time until all are defeated: the “salami tactic”.

Worse, the government could break apart the current united front by offering temporary concessions

to, say, local government workers simply in order to weaken our side. And right wing union leaders, like Dave Prentis of Unison and Gail Cartmail of Unite, seem to be begging for this by stating that future talks and further strike action will be held on a scheme-by-scheme basis.

The truth is the union leaders are frightened of the anti-union laws, which forbid political strikes. Not a single one of our leaders, left wing or right wing, has ever defied these undemocratic laws. But this cowardly approach has only encouraged bosses, like British Airways, to use them more boldly, judges to interpret them more outrageously and the Tories to introduce even more draconian laws.

## Fighting to win

Against this doomed strategy, rank and file union militants and socialists need to fight for an alternative leadership and policy. Our starting point has to be that our class is facing a political attack, so our answer has to be political, too: a general strike. The question of the day, therefore, is how to get one.

In most towns, cities and boroughs, activists are clubbing together in joint

strike committees to organise meetings, rallies and demos. In some areas, they are also organising picket lines and recruitment drives to make the strike solid. These bodies will gain more authority if they contain delegates from every union and workplace and spread into the private sector, among the unemployed and youth, linking up with anticuts committees.

We should not wait for the next day of action to be announced, but demand another mighty strike before Christmas – this time even bigger, involving private sector workers. If the Tories still do not abandon their proposals, then we should launch two, three or four day strikes, rapidly escalating to an indefinite stoppage. The momentum of stringing the strikes together will encourage new layers to get stuck in and start to panic and break up the bosses.

To cement our own unity, we need to link our demands and add new ones. Our side should refuse to settle scheme by scheme but demand a comprehensive settlement for all: no one goes back until everyone has won. But public service pensions are far too narrow an issue to unite the whole of the working class. We

should demand the withdrawal of all the cuts. If this means defaulting on the national debt, then so be it. We didn’t cause this crisis and we shouldn’t have to pay for it.

All public sector unions should now join the fray, whether their pensions are under attack now or not. Leeds CWU branch recently passed a motion urging its executive to ballot nationally to join the pensions revolt. As Andy, a workplace rep, said, “Now is the time to fight, alongside other unions, not two years down the road and on our own.”

## Rank and file

Finally, but crucially, this alternative strategy can only come to fruition if rank and file union members wrest control of the dispute from their current leaders. Joint strike committees can form the basis for a completely new kind of leadership in the unions, one directly accountable to the workplaces and capable of acting without recourse to cumbersome bureaucracies. By sending delegates from these local bodies to regional and national strike committees, they can appeal over the heads of the union leaders and call action without them when necessary.

Many will complain that this cannot be done, that time is too short and shopfloor organisation too weak. But the Occupy movement has provided us with a valuable lesson. If young people can build a militant movement, not only in the USA but globally, in just two months, without a shred of bureaucracy but by operating democratically affording full rights to minority opinions, then so can the workers. After all, we have membership lists and structures that we can build on. We have a cause to unite around. And we have the determination, energy and talents of millions to help us: we are the 99%, let’s do it!

# Democracy, cuts and the law

**TORY GRANDEE** Francis Maude claims Unison’s 72% YES vote “shows there is extremely limited support for the kind of strike action their union leaders want,” basing his argument on the 29% turnout. Director of NHS Employers Dean Reeves also criticised in the majority of staff did not vote?

A vocal band of Tories and bosses are calling for strike ballots to be made compulsory over half of all eligible members vote YES.

It’s a shame Maude and his cronies don’t apply the same concern for democracy and mandates when it comes to forming a government. The Conservatives

gained just 36% of the vote in 2010 on a 65% turnout: in other words, 23.4% of those eligible to vote compared with the 22.8% of Unison members who voted YES.

But Cameron showed no hesitation in accepting his right to rule, albeit in coalition with the right wing of the Lib Dems. The bosses’ unions, the CBI and IoD, now so vocal in defence of the “silent majority”, did not dissent either.

At least Unison asked an honest question: “Are you prepared to take strike action on and after 30 November in defence of your pension?” The Tories and Liberals denied point blank that they were

going to tear up our pensions, demolish the welfare state and privatise our schools and the NHS.

Basic: But with or without new legislation, the bosses and the courts will always try and outlaw effective strike action. For all their words about the “free market” and “non-interference”, the capitalist state has always supported the employers.

The union leaders’ strategy of complying with these undemocratic laws has merely encouraged the bosses to use them and the Tories to add to them. But whenever workers

have defied them – as they did in 1972 – the capitalist state has had to retreat.

In fact workers often carry out actions that are prohibited by the anti-union laws, including secondary picketing, and are rarely prosecuted for it. For the union leaders always use the threat of these laws to prevent radical action. In fact for the union leaders the anti-union laws are perfect, it means they don’t have to launch strikes and campaigns which can actually win, they just hide behind the Tory legislation.

That’s why we say, defy the anti-union laws and drive them off the statute books!

## workers power

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# The G20 didn't stop the economic crisis: what comes next?

No matter what they try, nothing seems to work... The world leaders have gathered at the G20, and European leaders are having regular summits, but the economy is just getting worse. *Steve McSweeney* explains why

TWENTY PRESIDENTS and prime ministers, who together preside over 85 per cent of the global economy, assembled in Cannes promising to take bold actions to dispel the dark clouds of a renewed recession. Instead they found themselves discussing the political turmoil in a country of only 11 million inhabitants – forced to summon the Greece's premier for a dressing down.

The summit was not just a failure; it was a complete fiasco. The most powerful leaders on earth were revealed as completely powerless. The only significant decision they took was a recognition of failure – that the 10 year-old Doha Round trade talks should be wound up, having failed to complete their business.

The number one item was, of course, the “euro-crisis”, more specifically the Greek debt crisis. The possibility that the October 26th “rescue package” might be put to the Greek people in a referendum, in which it would surely be rejected, paralysed these political giants like rabbits in an oncoming vehicle's headlights. It revealed all too clearly the fragility of the entire European project.

Yet, even before Papandrou's referendum announcement, it was clear that the global economy as a whole was not recovering from the recession of 2008-9 as it had from all previous post-war recessions. In September, Mervyn King, Governor of the Bank of England, made the point that this was no ordinary downturn, it was “possibly the worst financial crisis in history”. Immediately before the Cannes summit, he emphasised that, “we are not out of the crisis yet”.

His argument was backed by the latest report of the Organisation for Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD) which cut its previous projections for economic growth in almost all the G20 states. For the USA, still the biggest economy by far, the forecast of 2.6 per cent growth next year was reduced to 1.7 per cent and for the following year from 3.1 per cent to 1.8 per cent. For the EU, the projection was for a slowdown from 1.6 per cent this year to 0.3 per cent next year.

A downturn was also expected in the “emerging economies” – China is now expected to see growth fall from 9.3 per cent next year to 8.6 per cent the year after. Although these still seem high, the direction confirms that these economies remain very dependent on their exports, in particular to USA, EU and Japan.

Taken as a whole, the picture is of a world economy that, as King said, has not recovered from the crisis. In other words, the policies adopted to resolve the crisis have not worked.

The flood of money used to bail out banks and major corporations, hundreds of billions of dollars, euros, pounds and yuan, only deferred the consequences of the crisis.

From the point of view of capital, crises are resolved by the destruction of huge amounts of accumulated capital – whether in the form of stocks of goods that perish or become obsolete, factories that are demolished as firms go bust, savings that are devalued through inflation or entire economies that are laid waste by war. Only then do “investment opportunities” arise for those who still have capital resources to invest.

The effect of the bail outs was to limit the scale of capital destruction and, at the same time, to create “sovereign debt”, that is, debt owed by states, on a vast scale. Now, as the temporary effects of the bail outs wear off, the problems of declining growth are reappearing. Predictably, this is worst in the most advanced imperialist economies, which have the greatest volume of accumulated capital.

This time, however, the mountains of debt mean that the same policies cannot be so easily repeated. On the contrary, governments are imposing “austerity packages” to reduce their own spending so that taxation can be used to repay those debts. These policies themselves slow down economic activity, increase unemployment and, therefore, reduce revenue to government.

#### Trade and China

These are the factors that ensured the Cannes summit would be unable to revitalise the world economy, even had there been no coincidence of the political crisis in Greece. The only way out for the “advanced industrialised nations”, that is, the old, established imperialist powers, was to try to engineer a deal to transfer resources from the “emerging nations”, most notably China.

Proposals to increase exports to those countries, or reduce imports from them, such as a revaluation of the Chinese yuan, were met by non-committal assurances but there was an agreement to discuss increased funding for the IMF. This is important for China because any increase can be made conditional on acceptance of its preferred policies for the Fund. For example, Beijing has proposed that the Special Drawing Rights of the IMF, essentially funds advanced to countries for specific purposes, be developed into, effectively, a reserve currency. Were that to happen it would greatly reduce Washington's ability to advance its interests by manipulating the value of the dollar.

Such potential policy clashes, like the expansion of the G8 into the G20 itself, reveal the new world order that



is developing. The crisis that broke in 2008 was the product of “globalisation” in the 90s and the early years of this century. That period marked the high point of US global superiority but inevitably also undermined it. Time and again, US capital avoided the consequences of its declining profitability by one means or another, most frequently by exploiting its financial strength, but in doing so it encouraged the growth of more profitable industry elsewhere.

**They are saying either continued national sovereignty and bankruptcy, or unification under the control of the European Central Bank**

The inability of the Cannes summit to develop any coherent policy direction may appear, at first sight, to be a consequence of the inadequacies of the various leaders present: Sarkozy hoping to gain an electoral boost, Merkel fretting about splits in her own party, Cameron trying to lecture others as his own policies prepare a further decline in the UK's fortunes, Obama hamstrung by Congress and Hu, waiting for retirement next year. In reality, however, Cannes was an accurate reflection of a world whose economy has never before been so integrated but which

is moving inexorably towards another convulsive crisis, a crisis which everyone present knew could not be resolved by talking.

#### Euro crisis

Greece is not alone in having huge debts because, as a eurozone country, its credit was assumed to be guaranteed. The fear now is that, if Greece could not, or would not, repay its creditors, and the rest of the Eurozone would not come to the rescue, then this could also be true of much bigger countries. Above all, it could be true of Italy, which has debts €1.9 trillion. Without a doubt, the consequences of a default on that scale would be catastrophic for the whole global economy.

Barack Obama, whose own economic policies have been completely thwarted by the stalemate in Congress, did not appear to notice the irony in his complaints about the “complicated” nature of the EU's decision-making procedures. He was, however, right to recognise that the main obstacle to a solution to the Greek crisis is political. Greek debt may well be in excess of 100 per cent GDP – but Greek GDP is only some 2 per cent of the EU's GDP so Europe as a whole could cover the debt. The problem is that the EU is not “a whole”.

The EU illustrates, in practice, what Marx meant when he said that capitalism's own development would create a situation in which its productive forces, in this case the EU's economic potential as the biggest “economy” on the planet, would come into conflict with its “property relations”, that is, the way the economy is owned and organised on the basis of separate states, each of which puts its own

interest before that of the whole. To treat the resources of the whole EU as if they belonged to a single “country” and to transfer funds to one small part of that “country”, namely Greece, would be to override the interests of other parts. If that could be done for Greece, then why not for Ireland, or Spain, or Italy or anywhere else?

The biggest capitalist concerns, which have to operate internationally because of their size, have long wanted to see the EU become a unified system – but only on the condition that every region was obliged to follow the same economic rules and policies. The most obvious supporters of this strategy have been in the north of Europe, particularly, but not only, in Germany. Significantly, Gordon Brown recently revealed that, had the Euro been introduced on that kind of basis, he would have supported Britain adopting the currency.

Moving towards European unification was the strategy behind the European Constitution, which was famously thrown out as a result of a referendum in Denmark. Having failed to get what they wanted that way, the big capitalist supporters of unification are now trying a different approach.

By refusing to allow central EU funds to be used to bail out Greece, or anywhere else, they are forcing the governments of the so-called “peripheral” states to confront a harsh choice. In effect, they are saying: either continued national sovereignty, which will lead to national bankruptcy, or unification under economic policies dictated by the European Central Bank which would then decide what transfers might be allowed.



# Greece: the prospects for a revolution

Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou gives way to a coalition government as the EU leaders attempt to force through more cuts and austerity. But the Greek people are fighting back, writes *Martin Suchanek*

THE 48-HOUR general strike on 19 and 20 October was the biggest since Greece's economy was effectively placed under a dictatorship of the leaders of the "troika" of the European Commission (EC), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Greece's PASOK prime minister George Papandreou's desperate ploy of calling a referendum on the latest cuts package was immediately vetoed by the irate duo – Sarkozy and Merkel – who summoned him to Cannes. If the referendum went ahead, they made clear, the loans would stop, and if the Greeks dared vote "no" then they would be out of the Eurozone.

Papandreou faces not only the Herculean task of trying to force through Sarkozy and Merckels' "shock therapy" against the overwhelming opposition of the Greek people, without a shred of a democratic mandate. He also faces the unprincipled centre-right opposition party New Democracy (ND), led by Antonis Samaras.

Previous ND governments ran up gigantic debts to bankers in Frankfurt, Paris, London and New York, and ND are even more wholeheartedly in favour of the austerity plan than Papandreou is. They are now demanding that he resign and call an election.

The appalling fact is that there is no party with both the electoral strength and political courage to oppose the devastation of social and economic life that the austerity plans are wreaking on this small country. The ND politicians hope that the majority of Greeks, who oppose the cuts, will nevertheless give them a majority that will implement them more resolutely than Papandreou can.

To such an impasse has the "home of democracy" come. But it is the so-called democratic politicians of Europe who insist that the Greek people – from public and private sector workers to impoverished small farmers – must not be allowed any say over the looting and plunder of their country.

Papandreou's only answer is a desperate attempt to manoeuvre ND into a national unity coalition, or to back an emergency government of "independent" experts, headed by a former European Bank chief. This would be a government even more remote from the pressure of the people – government of the bankers for the bankers by the bankers.

## The government in the service of the banks

Greece shows many countries of Europe their future. The ironically named EU "rescue package" being implemented there is a historically unprecedented experiment, totally under the political supervision and control of the "troika". The Greek government has to sit up and beg for every single euro. It has to confess

that all the measures taken so far were too little, that more and yet more cuts and sell offs of public assets must be introduced.

On 20 October the Greek parliament agreed further cuts in public sector salaries of up to 50 per cent and effectively tore up all wage contracts in the private sector, leading to wage cuts of up to 20 per cent in real terms.

The dictates of the "troika" are in fact sharpening the crisis. But the Germany and France, the EU's leading powers, are not "rescuing" Greece but their own banks, pension funds and other institutional bondholders. They are using the crisis to establish a dictatorship of international finance capital, of the banks and giant industrial corporations, over the EU.

Their problem is that the Greek state could collapse under the burden of debt, with unforeseeable consequences, not just for the Eurozone but also for the world economy. With Spain and Italy also facing state bankruptcy, writing off half the Greek debt was unavoidable to ensure Greece can continue paying and servicing the remaining half.

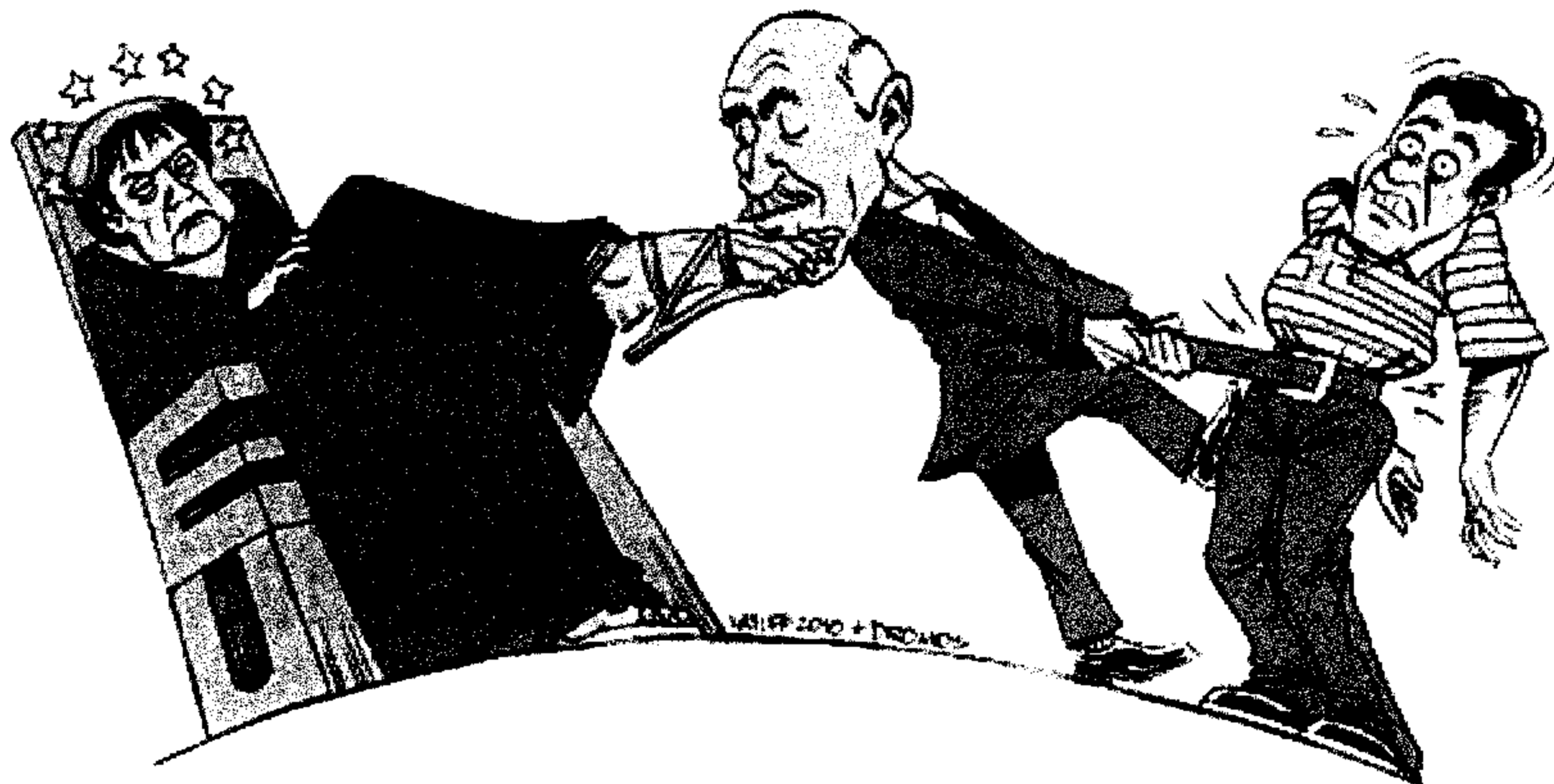
The harshness of the "rescue" is not only the means by which will Greece be forced into much greater, almost colonial, dependence. It will also strengthen the centralisation of EU finance policy under German and French control, turning the EU from an alliance of states into an imperialist federal state, under German hegemony with a French "partner." Of course, the big issue is: will the patients survive the shock treatment? And will the doctors?

Fortunately there is another actor on the stage, one that can avert the impending tragedy: the Greek working class.

## Rising class struggles

Over the last five years the country has experienced a wave of struggles. First there was the student movement of 2006 to 2007, with occupations and riots even before the world economic crisis broke. Then there was an uprising of the youth in December 2008, after the police murder of 15-year-old school student Alexis Grigoropoulos. This led to the collapse of the ND government, new elections and the electoral victory of the nationalist-populist PASOK.

Since 2009, there have been 13 general strikes and many sectional strikes. Inspired by the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia and the occupation of public squares in Spain, a "movement of the indignant" developed in Athens and other Greek cities. Finally, in recent months there have been long strikes in transport and in the public sector. Time and again, ministries and offices were occupied. In many districts public sector workers, in protest against the cuts, have stopped carrying out functions like the sale of tickets on pub-



The Troika of the European Central Bank, European Commission and the IMF are tearing Greece apart in a desperate attempt to save their system. The crisis is being passed onto the Greek people through austerity and poverty.

lic transport.

Alongside the occupation of the squares, a series of workers' direct actions have favoured the establishment of new mobilising structures on a local or workplace basis: action committees that draw in new activists and strengthen the mobilisations for the demonstrations.

The governing PASOK party has suffered a massive exit of members and a devastating loss of support in opinion polls, now down to about 15 per cent. Even though the two biggest trade union confederations still stand close to PASOK, several of their sectional trade unions have formally withdrawn their support.

This has put wind in the sails of the left parties. Together, they are receiving about 25 per cent support in opinion polls. It says a great deal about the situation that 50 per cent say they are undecided. These polls reveal an important aspect of the overall political situation: social polarisation. At the moment, this is benefiting the left in whom the population, in particular its more active sections, are placing their hope.

But crisis-induced polarisation cannot last indefinitely. Nor will it always favour the left; the forward impetus of the mass movement can only last for a limited time. Either it will successfully resolve the crisis by revolutionary means, or continual impoverishment will demoralise the people. This will lead to confusion among the masses on the one hand, and the radicalisation and advance of the counterrevolution as a result of increasing hopelessness on the other. In Trotsky's words the wine can turn to vinegar. The alternative is between revolution and counterrevolution.

For the generalisation and centralisation of the councils

The district committees, and the

action committees in the factories that have been created in recent months, must be generalised and built into full-scale workers' councils, presenting an alternative power to the state apparatus. It is not enough only to build more and more of these at the local level; it is necessary to coordinate them on a national level, on the basis of direct election and permanent recallability. A national congress of delegates from the existing district and factory committees, from the occupation assemblies, and from the schools and universities should be convened as quickly as possible.

It must not only discuss and decide upon a programme for the overthrow of the austerity government, whoever forms it, but also decide on what to replace it with. It is precisely here that the fundamental weaknesses of the emerging Greek revolution can be seen. The overthrow of the government, even the idea of an uprising, is on everyone's lips. What is missing is a clear perspective not just of how to bring down this government, but what should happen afterwards.

## Unlimited general strike!

The burning necessity is an all-out unlimited general strike. This demand must be made on the big trade unions: ADADY and GSEE BC and ABC and PAME, which is close to the Greek Communist Party (KKE).

But a wait for the say-so of the union tops and reformist party leaders will be a long one. The strike committees, assemblies and the embryonic workers' councils must start mobilising now for all-out strike action – mass political strikes – to block the cuts and bring down any government that tries to implement them. This will require self-

defence organisations built by the unions, youth groups and the existing stewards' organisations of the various left groups.

The central political demands for the movement now must be an end to the austerity packages, the cancellation of debts (including those of local government) and the expropriation of the banks under workers' control. These measures all point in one direction – transition to a democratically planned economy. They can only be implemented by a workers' government, one based on the organs of struggle created by workers and youth, an alternative power which can break up the capitalist state apparatus with its police and military and replace it with council democracy and the armed people.

The call to take the course of an anti-capitalist workers' government must be made to all left parties: the KKE, SYRIZA (a left reformist offshoot of the KKE), Antarsya (a federation of revolutionary groups) and the trade unions.

To fight for such a strategy, a conscious revolutionary leadership, and therefore a new revolutionary party, is the key question of the Greek revolution today. Today there are in the Greek movement a number of groups and parties and alliances that waver between reformism and revolutionary Marxism. These groups more or less openly express the need for a revolutionary change. Most of them, unlike the reformists and anarchists, recognise that the question of workers' political power must be posed and answered. It is high time for them to unite on the basis of a revolutionary action programme.

• This is an edited version of a longer article on [fifthinternational.org](http://fifthinternational.org)

# Egypt after the Maspero massacre

**VIOLENCE AGAINST** Egypt's Coptic Christian minority, about one-twentieth of its population, is not a new phenomenon. Hosni Mubarak's regime, and Anwar Sadat's before it, frequently allowed or enabled "popular" expressions of hostility towards the Copts as a safety-valve for social discontent. What is new, however, is direct violence from the state, which under Mubarak posed as a neutral institution mediating a solution to "sectarian tensions", between an apparently "problematic" minority and the ever-present bogeyman of Islamist extremists.

At least 23 people were killed in Cairo on 9 and 10 October, when the army fired live ammunition and drove vehicles into protesters who tried to stage a sit-in at the state television building at Maspero. The demonstrators – Muslim as well as Christian – had been protesting at the recent burning of a church in Marinab village, near Edfu in the rural Aswan Governorate, as well as the hostile and biased coverage of the state-run media.

State television, in turn, engaged in open sectarian incitement, calling on the public to "defend the army" from a supposed uprising of armed Christian extremists, forcing other television stations to distance themselves before being shut down by the army for trying to cover the Maspero protests. The same sort of thugs who tried to break up the anti-Mubarak protests in Tahrir Square during the infamous "Battle of the Camel" on 2 February got the message, and came out armed with sticks and knives.

The 25 January Revolution saw barriers come down between Copts and Muslim Egyptians, with Christian protesters protecting Muslim protesters at prayer, and Muslim protesters holding placards with the combined cross-and-crescent symbol of



the early twentieth century Egyptian independence movement. But the months since have seen growing violence against Christians, most notably from the Salafists, an ultra-puritan Islamist movement that had opposed the anti-Mubarak protests. The most frequent causes for violence have generally involved disputes around the building or maintenance of places of worship – an area heavily regulated by the state – and surrounding conversion and "mixed" marriages, with Christian men only allowed to marry Muslim women legally if they convert to Islam.

Moreover, anti-Coptic violence in Egypt has a history. As the Christian Palestinian academic Joseph Massad pointed out, after the bombing of a church in Alexandria in the weeks before Mubarak's downfall, sectarianism in Egypt long predates

Sadat and Mubarak – but it was Sadat's decision in the 1970s to abandon the Palestinians and ally himself with Israel and the United States that saw the majority of Muslim Egyptians opting for Islam rather than the "Arab cause" as the new "extra-Egyptian framework for their identity". Massad added that this spurred many Christian Egyptians "to revert to a more parochial and local identity of Coptiness, rooted exclusively within Egypt."

This followed the radical Arab nationalist period under Gamal Abdel Nasser in the 1950s and 1960s, which had "included and welcomed Egyptian Christians under its banner", even though it was not always "the major political current among most Egyptian Christian intellectuals".

It might seem ironic that the Arab world's Christian minorities have

invariably been more threatened under the rule of pro-Western regimes than of anti-Western ones. The fact remains, however, that the "concerns" of the Western imperialist powers – notably reiterated by US President Obama in his June 2009 speech at Cairo University – for the rights of ethnic, national and religious minorities in the Arab world, have only ever served as a pretext for intervention when it serves imperialist interests.

Egypt's ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) can rest assured that Obama will not make more than the most token protest against its massacre of the Maspero demonstrators, however much some Islamophobes in the West may point to it to "prove" Islam's supposedly unique tendency for religious intolerance.

## Worker fight for their rights



Since the fall of Mubarak, workers have taken their chance to launch strikes and protests over both political issues and working conditions. There have been strikes of telecoms workers against the management board and demanding the release of fellow co-workers, a strike at Egypt's Misr Cement over wages as well as lawyers locked in a dispute with judges over the new Judiciary Authority Law, which gives judges the right to detain lawyers in the courtroom if a judge considers that they are being 'disrespectful'.

Even the hated police force have been on strike, demanding shorter working hours and a 200 per cent increase in pay.

The military government is currently discussing a new draft law which would improve workers' conditions and rights. It includes cancelling Law 35/1976, which gives the state control over trade unions in terms of finances and activities.

The problem is that all the strikes are disconnected, which means that the bosses or the government can deal with the different disputes separately.

# Military trials and constitutional principles

THE EGYPTIAN army's attack on unarmed Coptic demonstrators has not occurred in a vacuum. It takes place in the run-up to parliamentary elections, due to begin on 28 November and end on 10 January; following large protests against the trial of civilians by military courts; and in the midst of controversy around a new "constitutional principles document" put forward as the first draft of Egypt's new post-Mubarak constitution.

Drawn up by Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs Dr Ali al-Selmy, a member of the liberal nationalist Wafd party, it grants the army top brass a whole raft of special powers, placing the defence budget above parliamentary scrutiny and giving the military a veto over questions of war and peace. It also purports to give strong powers to the Presidency, although as Moroccan-American journalist Issandr El Amrani noted: "this ignores the fact that the parliament may choose a parliamentary system without a strong President to begin with".

What is clear is that SCAF and its chosen civilian ministers are preparing the way for a "democratic" counter-revolution to reverse the gains made by the masses on the streets since January, by creating a militarised Turkish-style state in which elected politicians must consult the military on any questions of real importance.

The situation on the ground reflects this, with around 15,000 civilians tried in military courts since Mubarak's forced resignation on 11 February.

Activist and blogger Alaa Abd El Fattah of the No Military Trials for Civilians (NMTTC) movement was arrested at the Maspero protests alongside another activist Bahaa Saber, charged with "assaulting military personnel", "stealing weapons" from the army, and "inciting violence against the military". They have refused to answer questions from military personnel while under interrogation, and have since called for an Egypt-wide boycott of the military courts. The fact that Fattah has been

charged with inciting violence when it was military armoured personnel carriers that crushed so many people to death shows how outrageous his trumped up charges are.

SCAF's chairman and commander-in-chief of the armed forces, Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, has promised to end civilian trials in military courts "except as provided for by martial law". But the Military Justice Code allows the military authorities the sole right to determine if a case is within their jurisdiction. There is now a growing campaign against the military trial of civilians and the acting government's denial of the right to criticise the military.

It is clear that although Mubarak has gone, there is still a serious lack of democratic rights in the country. That is why Egyptian revolutionaries are calling for a revival of the 'stifled revolution' and a concerted effort to break the power of the military over political affairs. They have linked their struggle up with those in the Occupy movement across the world. Fattah



Activist and blogger Alaa Abd El Fattah

wrote a letter from prison saying "Our strength is in our shared struggle. If they stifle our resistance, the 1 per cent will win – in Cairo, New York, Lon-

don, Rome – everywhere. But while the revolution lives, our imaginations knows no bounds. We can still create a world worth living."

# How can the sparks win?

Simon Hardy

THE ELECTRICIANS' dispute has shown what a well organised rank and file movement can pull off today. From an initial conference in August to weekly protests and now a ballot of a thousand Balfour Beatty electricians, the sparks' movement is an excellent model to follow.

But there is only a short time to go before the Joint Industry Board agreement is ripped up. Balfour Beatty will impose new contracts on 7 December, imposing a dramatic reduction in wages, by as much as 35 per cent in some cases.

As two of the Sparks' leaders, Steve Kelly and Russ Blakely, wrote: "The construction employers were determined to create a docile and atomised workforce who would end up accepting almost anything."

The campaign has focused on picketing out the sites of the seven major construction firms and demanding a national ballot. This was an excellent strategy but it hit two problems.

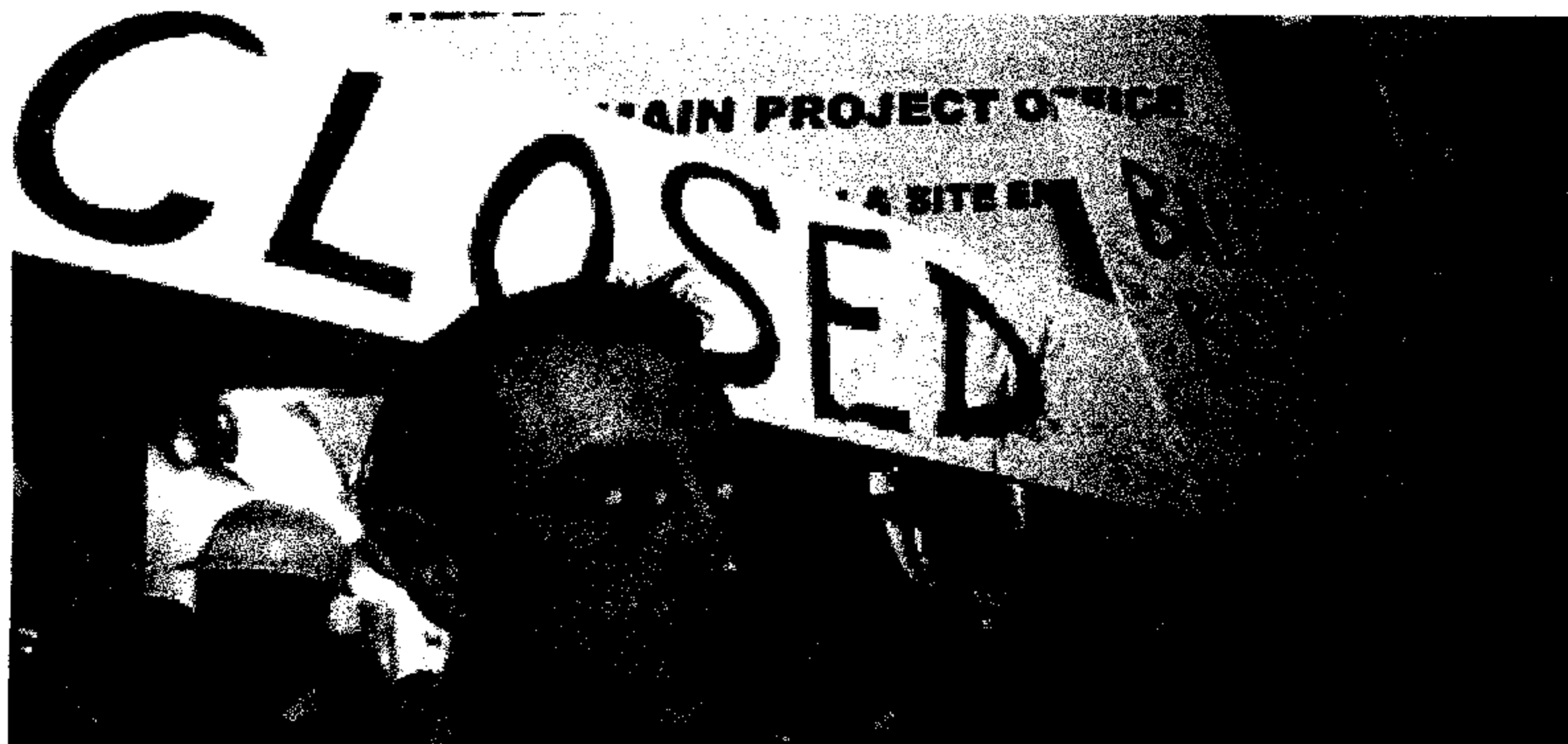
Firstly, the picketing has not been entirely successful; sites have only occasionally been shut down, and business has tended to carry on as normal, but

with a noisy demo outside. On the London protests, activists often "take the road", pulling people away from the more important task of picketing entrances or raiding sites. By the time the police come it is often easy for them to force a gap in the picket line to keep the site open.

Secondly Unite delayed calling any kind of ballot. Now only Balfour Beatty electricians are being balloted, and it has been left so late that no legal strike could start before 7 December, the day that workers are being forced to sign new contracts. Why are Balfour Beatty workers striking alone? Why has it been left so late?

There is still time to win the dispute, but the campaign, led by the Site Worker bulletin and supported by Grass Roots Left, needs to ratchet up a gear or two:

- Picket out the sites – only work stoppages will force concessions
- Strike against all the employers, not just Balfour Beatty
- Don't wait for official ballots – use flying pickets to spread the action
- No return to work until the JIB agreement is reinstated for all – all out and stay out!



## What do bureaucrats think of the rank and file?

A leaked email from Bernard McAulay, Unite's National Officer for Construction, reveals how angry the bureaucracy is with union members getting organised independently. He criticises Grass Roots Left, saying "the constant scurrilous attacks on officials by this small fringe group does have an impact on our

campaign, as this cancerous group are simply opportunist's and extremely divisive when making their contribution at meetings" (all mistakes courtesy of McAulay).

He finishes his email saying that other Unite full-timers should be "opposed to becoming involved in this poisonous campaign by these

mindless individuals who will simply hide by the Union's Equality policy". McAulay certainly knows how to encourage union activism! McAulay was even more shocked when Steve Kelly from Site Worker got up at a meeting that McAulay was also at and read the email out to rank and file construction workers!

# BBC ballots for strike action

Joy Macready, NUJ pc

BBC WORKERS are gearing up for battle after the broadcaster announced plans to axe another 2,000 jobs. It aims to reduce costs by 20 per cent over the next five years – or £670 million a year – and drastically revamp programming.

If this goes through, 7,000 jobs will have been lost since Mark Thompson became director general in 2004. This time round, between 550 and 650 jobs in the news department and original programming will be

slashed. At a recent meeting in Belfast, Thompson (who was paid £838,000 in 2009-10) insultingly told staff: "No one is forcing you to stay." Bet they wish someone would force him to go!

Three unions – Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union (Bectu), Unite, and the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) – opened a ballot for strike action on 4 November. This gives activists in all three unions a great chance to stand up and fight for their members. A huge blow to the BBC

bureaucrats would be to align the action with the public sector strikes planned for 30 November.

First, we have to fight for a massive YES vote. On the ground, union members at different sites should organise cross-union meetings and arm members with the arguments to encourage all BBC workers to support the strike. They should launch a recruitment drive among non-union members and campaign around the slogan: "Picket lines mean don't cross".

It is also important to engage with

the public. As Michelle Stanistreet, general secretary of the NUJ, said: "BBC executives and the coalition government might not care about quality journalism and programming, but staff and members of the public care passionately about the corporation's future."

It is vital that cross-union strike committees are elected to control the strike's progress. This will help build up trust between members of the different unions so that their leaders cannot pull the rug out from under the strike and make a deal

behind the backs of the strikers.

Mass meetings and strike committees also need to come up with a plan of action. After a series of one or two day strikes in the public sector, many trade unionists are coming to the realisation that only an all-out indefinite stoppage will truly stop these savage cuts.

As we have witnessed in previous rounds of cuts and the pensions dispute, rank and file activists should not rely on their leaders and have to be able to lead the struggle without them if necessary.

# Builders' union bars militant from election

Jeremy Dewar

MICK DOOLEY, a bricklayer who has been blacklisted and imprisoned for his militant trade union activities on construction sites in the 1990s, has been banned from standing in the building union UCATT's election for the top post of General Secretary. This outrageous, bureaucratic diktat is an affront to every worker on the sites and every trade unionist.

Dooley forced the new election, last March, when he uncovered fraud (or incompetence) surrounding the previous ballot: half of UCATT's membership, 70,000 workers, never received voting papers. Since then, the incumbent General Secretary, Alan Richie, has been suspended, while allegations of financial corruption are investigated.

But now a panel of three general council and three executive council

members has barred both Mick and Richie from standing on the grounds that they are... "incompetent". Talk about the kettle calling the pot black!

This decision is a blatant piece of gerrymandering, taking out the bureaucracy's most vocal and consistent critic. The simultaneous barring of Richie is just camouflage – the officials knew they could not get away with only debarring Mick – and leaves the field clear for Richie's main ally and fellow bureaucrat, Steve Murphy. How convenient.

Mick's real crime was to dig around and start to root out corruption and malpractice in UCATT's HQ. He has played an important role in the current campaign, led by rank and file bulletin Site Worker, to stop employers from cutting electricians' pay rates by a third. Mick has also collaborated with Jerry Hicks of Unite and Workers Power in spreading the idea of

building a Grass Roots Left.

Only last month, Mick told our Anticapitalism event that, "if elected general secretary I will fight for socialism" and pledged to "openly criticise other trade union leaders" should they sell out.

All UCATT members and other trade union bodies should pass resolutions objecting to the barring of Mick's candidacy and demanding the vetting panel (what a disgusting concept in a workers' organisation) reconvene and reverse its decision (there is no appeals procedure). They should also support Mick's attempt to take out a High Court injunction to stop the election, while not relying on the bosses' courts.

Our movement needs leaders like Mick, who are prepared to stand up to the bosses, take on the anti-union laws and name the traitors who betray workers in struggle.

# Grass Roots Left agrees platform

Marcus Halaby

FIFTY RANK and file union activists, mainly but not exclusively from Unite, gathered in Birmingham on 5 November for the Grass Roots Left's (GRL) second conference. Held six months after the GRL's launch in May, it was a much more productive meeting, reaching agreement on a platform and a constitution.

The platform voted on called for the election of all union officials, who would also be subject to recall, rank and file control of disputes, militant action to fight all the cuts, defiance of the anti-union laws, a mass unionisation drive and the building of rank and file organisations across the European trade union movement.

A debate took place on whether to include the call for nationalisation

under workers' control of enterprises laying off staff, with one speaking preferring to call for mutualisation, and another arguing that the call for workers' control would be too prescriptive. A Workers Power supporter countered that the scale of the economic crisis meant that we would be entering a period of struggle, in which this slogan would acquire greater relevance and popularity.

Conference also passed a Workers Power resolution on the electricians' dispute, calling for rank and file organising meetings to prepare for industrial action on 30 November, to coincide with the public sector strike, and to campaign for an all-out strike.

Conference was a good step forward, but GRL remains a small organisation. Its supporters' main task now is to build the organisation in the struggles that lie ahead.



# We need an anticapitalist

SOMETIMES THE ruling class can be more alert to the opportunities posed by a crisis. Milton Friedman, a right wing economist who spent his life fighting to dismantle the welfare state, said of his own project that it would only come to fruition in a time of great upheaval.

"Only a crisis—actual or perceived—produces real change", he wrote. "When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable."

And indeed Friedman was right. Crises are written into the DNA of capitalism. Capital treats each and every one of them as an opportunity to re-organise society in its exploitative interests.

Austerity and sweeping privatisation that we see across Europe are part of this drive to make working people pay the costs of the capitalist crisis, and to use tax revenues to secure the wealth of the world's richest people—the investors, financiers and bankers who sit at the top of the system.

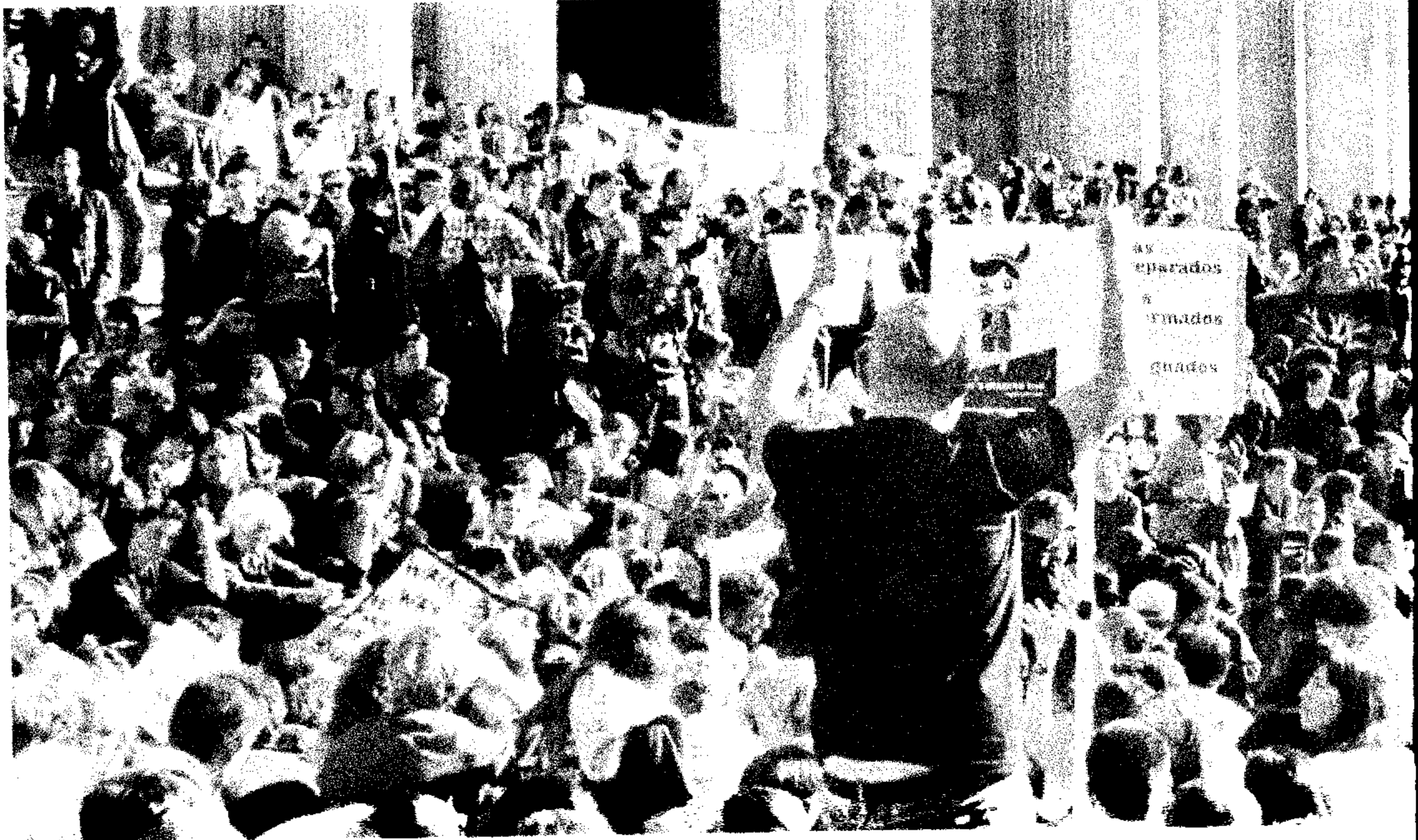
Not content with the staggering wealth they have accrued over the last decades, the 1%—as they have been called by the occupiers of London, Syntagma Square, Wall Street, and beyond—are using the crisis to bring about another massive shift of wealth and power into their own hands.

A growing number of people are starting to see through this agenda.

## Strategy

But two questions are faced by everyone who wants to see the plans of the rich frustrated and ultimately defeated.

The first is how to stop the cuts and austerity. Workers Power has been consistent in its message that if we want to stop the government then we



have to bring it down through mass strikes and protests.

The second is what kind of organisations we need to bring about. This second question becomes all the more important once you ask the first, because once we know what's necessary then we quickly become conscious of the inadequate response of the working class movement—the failure of the existing leaderships and organisations to fight to bring down the austerity governments of Europe.

Transforming the trade unions is central to this task. Building a rank and file movement is a necessary part of the struggle against the bosses,

because we can't rely on the leaders of the big unions to do what has to be done—they are too venal, too conservative and too bureaucratic. The left as well as right union leaders see no alternative to working within the capitalist system, the reality of the profit system and the restrictions imposed by its governments and laws.

We also need a united anti cuts movement: one that can bring together the direct action campaigners with the trade union activists and the far left parties, one that involves the union leaders willing to fight but not one which submits our actions to their veto.

Currently there are three national anti cuts campaigns and numerous local committees—but there is no real co-ordination or democratic forum to bring them together. Unfortunately, sectarian rivalries of far left organisations each attached to their own 'branded' anti-cuts campaign—SWP with Right to Work, Socialist Party with the Shop Stewards Network, Counterfire with Coalition of Resistance—has so far obstructed the development of a united movement. All of them tend to tailor their strategy to attracting big name union leaders to their platforms. We need to overcome this combination of opportunism

towards the leaders and sectarian obstruction of maximum unity of the resistance so that the militant wing of the movement maximises the pressure it puts on the TUC and the unions leaders and builds up an alternative leadership to them.

## Moving beyond resistance

We need a winning strategy for the anti-cuts movement. But the resistance against austerity also poses fundamental questions about what kind of society we want to live in.

By seizing public space and making a global criticism of the politics of austerity and inequality, the Occupy movement has put anticapitalism back on the political map. In doing so it has posed a series of questions to us all, including the organised left, which our movement is yet to fully answer.

How do we move beyond capitalism? What kind of alternative do we need? How do we unite in a new political organisation that can win this alternative system? And how do we relate our vision of what a new society should look like to our practice—how we organise to win in the here and now?

These are vexing questions for the movements of the day—not least because rarely in modern history has there been such a deep crisis of capitalism, yet such little faith in the possibility of an alternative system. However the conditions are the best they have been for a generation to popularise radical anticapitalist ideas.

The idea that wealth should be democratically socialised in the interests of the producers, what Marx dared to call socialism, is always a rational idea, but today it's also a burning necessity.

# Unite the resistance

**THE UNITE the Resistance conference on 19 November will bring together hundreds of rank and file trade unionists who are set to strike in defence of their pensions later in the month.**

It will be an opportunity to develop the cross union rank and file organisation, independent of the official leaderships, that is capable of holding them to account, and taking action without them should they try and sell the struggle out.

Unite the Resistance will be able to achieve these things if it begins to move away from the model of front campaigns that dominant the practice of the socialist left in Britain.

The conference will see a number of different workshops—with the opportunity to share experiences, network and discuss campaigning

proposals.

Such workshops are undoubtedly important. But it's also crucial that the conference discusses and agrees a strategy for the movement in the run up to 30 November strikes.

We need to be drawing up concrete plans for the rapid escalation of the dispute. Even a one day strike of 3 million workers is unlikely on its own to force the government's hand.

Maximum co-ordinated strike action—official if possible, unofficial if necessary—must be organised to throw back this Tory led offensive.

The conference should also call for a general strike to bring down the government and see the battle of pensions as part of a massive industrial campaign to force the Tories out.

We should push for longer strikes around 30 November—to send the

message to both the union leadership and the Tories, that we are prepared to escalate this dispute. We should fight to get the endorsement of the union leaders, but be prepared to take unofficial action too.

To give workers the confidence to do this we need to build cross union strike committees across boroughs, towns and cities so that the rank and file of the unions are able to organise effective coordinated action from below, if the union leaders aren't prepared to do it from above.

The conference should seek to develop strong links with local anti-cuts committees, communities and all groups taking action against the government and banks—UK Uncut, Occupy the City—with the aim of developing a mass movement of strikes, occupations and direct action

against the government and its business allies.

The potential of Unite the Resistance, however, is as a cross-union rank and file movement fighting with the union leaders where possible, but also without them where necessary.

For this potential to be realised it must genuinely unite the resistance. It can't just create another branded, SWP front campaign which is bureaucratically controlled from the top down.

It will only be taken seriously by militants if it actively seeks to co-ordinate with the broadest possible range of socialist and trade union campaigns, such as the National Shop Stewards Network and the Unite Grassroots Left, to develop a powerful rank and file movement.



# st alternative



General assembly at Occupy London

## Building the left: The lessons of the last 10 years

Luke Cooper

RARELY HAVE the tasks of the epoch weighed so heavily on the radical left. With social breakdown sweeping Europe, the world order fracturing, and the social democratic parties, from Pasok in Greece, the PSOE in Spain, and Labour in Britain, almost universally falling behind the austerity consensus, there is an urgent need for strong, radical parties of the anticapitalist left.

This is not a new development but is given added urgency by the global crisis. In many European countries over the last decade a space opened for new parties of the radical left.

In Britain, Labour under Tony Blair underwent a dramatic shift rightwards, taking many of Thatcher's anti-working class policies much further than she had dared and giving unwavering support to George Bush's war on terror in Afghanistan and Iraq. Many activists and organisations recognised the opportunity this presented for new political formations to the left of Labour.

But the last decade saw these initiatives fail. The circumstances in which they emerged certainly shaped these failures. With the anti-war movement receding and a credit fuelled boom in the British economy underway, there was not the intense class bitterness that characterises today's situation.

Nonetheless, these projects also suffered from a series of political failings that we must learn from.

### Respect

Two experiences are particularly important. In 2004, the Respect Coalition was formed by the Socialist Workers Party and George Galloway. After the huge mobilisations against the war this came at the high point of political opportunity to make a real breakthrough for the radical left.

But rather than look to win a new generation to a fighting, class struggle perspective, and a socialist alternative to capitalism, the leaders of Respect were explicit that these should be dropped to win votes. The idea was to focus on Muslim areas in order to pick up votes on an anti-war basis.

Lindsey German, who has since founded the Counterfire group, infamously said at Respect's founding conference, "people were looking for something less explicitly socialist". The tragic irony was that this attitude reinforced a key claim of dominant ideology. What the writer, Mark Fisher calls 'capitalist realism', the prevalent idea that there is no alternative to capitalism. This consensus will only be challenged if mass political organisation makes an alternative appear credible again.

At the SWP's annual Marxism conference the previous year, German had even argued that the left should not make a "shibboleth" of

gay and lesbian rights, if it obstructed winning votes in Muslim areas. This was and remains a quite shameful thing for a Marxist to argue.

It was right to focus on winning Muslims to a new project – they marched in their hundreds of thousands against the war and suffered terrible racism – but we needed to win them as anticapitalists and class fighters against the system, not just as liberal progressives.

Quite predictably political tensions emerged in trying to unite socialists with liberals in a relatively small coalition and so it split in 2007 with Galloway and the SWP going their separate ways.

The key lesson is that a new political project has to promote a political alternative to the system and has to be a fighting organisation which is actively trying to transform the labour movement from below.

### Scottish Socialist Party

Another experience was the Scottish Socialist Party that won six seats in the Scottish Parliament in 2003. It was run much more democratically than Respect, was explicitly socialist, and saw the need for a political party, not just a coalition. Many activists rightly see this experience as more positive.

But it suffered from political failures too. Leaders of the SSP identified the need to form a transitional organisation which grouped together sections of the Trotskyist left with a new layer of activists. But there notion of what a 'transitional organisation' should be was a mini-reformist party.

This led to an excessive focus on elections. The downfall of the party in the course of the Tommy Sheridan sex scandal reflected this. Both wings of the bitter argument were sensitive to the distortions of mass 'public opinion' as it is reflected through the media, and so they refused to say simply 'it was a private matter', and then get on with the task of building resistance to the system.

But more problematic still was the attitude that the SSP took to the leadership of the labour movement. SSP leaders hoped to win the affiliation of the unions, and so made no attempt to organise cross-union rank and file movements which could fight with the union leaders where possible, and also without them where necessary. A critical moment in the party's evolution was its failure to attack the sell out of the FBU strike in 2003 in the naive hope that the union leadership would return the favour and support the affiliation of the union to the party.

A new anticapitalist organisation is needed in Britain. We need to learn from all these political mistakes and build a party that fights to fundamentally transform the working class movement, is democratic in its organisation, and shows in practice how we can get rid of the capitalist system.

But the working class has only ever become convinced of the practicality of this idea when mass political organisations have made it the order of the day.

That's the challenge for today's movement and the far left organisations. Can they build new political organisations, beyond the existing left, able to make socialism credible again?

Workers Power, along with others, has begun discussions on how to answer these questions. We want an open discussion with new layer of activists working together in the anti-cuts movement who share a desire not to "go on in the same old way" and explore new avenues for unity.

This crisis is so serious, so deep, that carrying on in the same old way is simply not good enough.

Our view of what a new organisation should look like is in the process of development. We expect it to change and undergo refinement through the course of the discussions we undertake.

But as a starting point a new organisation needs to go beyond the coordination of resistance to show how the cuts can be beaten and name capitalism as the fundamental problem.

It needs to have a perspective of transforming the working class movement – supporting and developing rank and file initiatives from below, opposing sectarian divisions and building a united anti-cuts movement. It must see the fightback in Britain as part of an international struggle. We believe it should support all the revolutions in the Middle East against dictators and back the Palestinian people against Israel.

We also believe that a new organisation needs to be open to new layers whether or not they agree with all

of our ideas.

### Our role in the movement

Workers Power is a Trotskyist organisation – we believe that a political instrument similar to that which brought the working class to power in Russia is needed. But we accept that Bolshevism has a bad name in the movements of today. It is tarnished both by the legacy of Stalinism and, it has to be said, by the cynical manoeuvring of many on the British left.

Many activists who have come into the movement in recent years have seen grassroots and horizontal networks build vibrant and inspiring campaigns, when the traditional labour movement has shown inertia and passivity in the face of today's new tasks. But they are also coming to realise that the millions of people still organised in the labour movement, able by strike action to bring the profit making system to a halt – will be essential for our ultimate victory over it.

It's beholden on us to help a new generation of activists rediscover the revolutionary democratic tradition of Bolshevism but in the context of the practical tasks our movement faces. We need to combine, for example, the openness, participation, and democracy of the assemblies, with the social weight and discipline of the organised working class, but without its undermining bureaucracy.

Importantly, we need to have some humility about our own tradition, modest about the forces that we can bring and determined that a new political project is genuinely the property of a new generation of activists. It has to be thoroughly democratic and avoid the bureaucratism that has

undermined previous left initiatives.

Debate has to be fraternal but honest. A principle of all rational argument is that either side will think they are in the right – we need to respect differences as well as working for clarity and unity.

We are not therefore saying, like many on the left still are, simply 'join us'. Neither are we saying that we should rush into founding a new organisation without serious reflection and discussion. But we see that there is mood amongst a new generation of activists to engage in fraternal debate about how we win – not just against the Tories in Britain, but how we get rid of this capitalist system once and for all.

We can learn lessons from the international left too. In recent years the foundation of organisations like P-Sol in Brazil, the NPA in France or Antarsya in Greece show that it can be done. But in this day and age, with everything that is at stake, we have to work towards unity that can deliver victory. That means left groups should put aside narrow organisational interests and look to the growth of the wider movement.

In Britain attempts to forge a new left have a poor record. The lessons of past efforts should be debated (see box). But the worst attitude now would be that these previous attempts did not work, so why try again? The class struggle goes forward in ebbs and flows, in the process of a retreat we can often work out how to advance. It falls on the revolutionary left today to begin that discussion again.

If you are interested in this project, or what to know more information, then please contact us on [info@workerspower.net](mailto:info@workerspower.net) or call 0207 708 4331



# The great strike of 1972

Summer 1972 saw over 300,000 builders workers launch their first truly national strike. *Dave Stockton* looks at how their victory not only raised wages, but unionised 11,000 workers, cut back on subcontracting and helped lower the rates of deaths and injuries on sites.

THE ALL-OUT STRIKE took place mainly due to the initiative and fighting spirit of militants and a minority of regional officials organised around a monthly paper: The Building Workers Charter - Organ of the Rank and File Building Workers. The background to the 1972 strike was the building boom of the 1960-70s, which saw around 330,000 houses built a year.

As construction workers know only too well, the temporary character of the job and the myriad employers and subcontractors and its many crafts make for a constantly changing workforce, differing contracts and pay rates. Employers are constantly seeking to break union organisation by bringing in non-union labour and by blacklisting or victimising militants.

The other major factor was the practice known as labour-only subcontracting, or the "lump". Lump workers were self-employed and thus not entitled to holiday pay, national insurance or PAYE tax deductions, instead receiving a lump sum, supposed to cover all expenses. Between 1965 and 1970, the number of "lumpers" more than doubled to 400,000.

The lump led to shoddy work and an increasing number of fatalities and accidents. Because lumpers negotiated their own terms of employment, trade union organisation was undermined. Between 1951 and 1971, building unions lost 31 per cent of their members. The only response of the officials, then as now, was amalgamation - to protect their own salaries.

The principal unions involved in the 1972 strike were the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) and a new amalgamation of older unions, the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians (UCATT). The militancy and success of the strike owed little to UCATT's new general secretary, George Smith, who had done nothing to fight against the lump and, worse still, had for years colluded with the employers in blacklisting shop stewards, especially members of the Communist Party (CP).

CP militants, like Lou Lewis and Pete Kavanagh in London, Dennis Dugen and Alan Abrahams in Manchester, played a key role in creating bodies like the Manchester Building Workers' Forum, the Merseyside Shop Stewards Building Operatives' Committee and the London Joint Sites Committee. Similar bodies spread to Stoke and Birmingham, where again CPers, like Tommy Walker and Pete Carter, played a leading role.

It was these militants who came to the conclusion a national rank and file organisation was needed to fight for an industrial union for all trades and to fight practices like blacklisting, victimisation and the lump. They took the initiative in drawing up the



The Shrewsbury Two, Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson

Building Workers Charter (BWC).

In April 1970 288 delegates from 50 union branches and a similar number of stewards from sites met in Manchester and founded the BWC as a rank and file movement. A year later its conference attracted 500 delegates, and in April 1972 865 delegates. Sales of Charter, its paper, reached 15,000 an issue by 1972.

#### Breakthrough

The BWC won a major breakthrough in Birmingham where organisation was much weaker than London, Manchester and Merseyside. In Birmingham CPers like Pete Carter, Mike Shilvoek and Phil Beyer, plus a few International Socialist members (IS, predecessor of the SWP) like Gerry Kelly, led the way. With the support of a left Labour district official Ken Barlow, they launched a campaign to organise Bryant & Son's sites.

Pete Carter described their tactics: "We organised all types of activity against [the lump], including demos, strikes, sit-ins, raids on sites; you name it we did it." Gerry Kelly also remembers: "By February 1972, we had abolished the lump and won a 50 per cent rise in the basic rate."

The Charter was responsible for UCATT and the TGWU adopting a militant claim for 1972: £30 for 35 hours. The national

leadership tried hard to keep the dispute to one of selective strikes aimed at forcing deals out of individual employers. If this strategy had prevailed it, would have fragmented the strike and could have led to a defeat.

The strike began on 26 June during the most intense period of class struggle since the General Strike of 1926. The miners had used flying and mass pickets to win a massive victory in February, when 10,000 Birmingham engineers helped close the Saltley coking coal depot. In June, a dockers blocked container depots. Five dockers were arrested under the anti-union laws and imprisoned in Pentonville.

This led to a wave of unofficial strikes, the TUC threatening a general strike and the Tory government backing down. It was clear both government and employers were on the ropes and that a general strike would have finished them off... if only there had been an alternative leadership based on the rank and file, a movement uniting all these militant sections able and politically willing to go beyond what the union leaders would do.

There was of course a party with thousands of members in industry - the Communist Party. But it was in a strategic block with the left union leaders, including Jack Jones of the TGWU. Its programme The British Road to Socialism envisaged a Labour Government installed by general elections not by a general strike. Therefore the

CP and its militants ensured every dispute remained in or returned to the channel of a normal trades dispute.

So it was with the builders' strike: if the leadership wanted selective strikes then so be it. Fortunately the rank and file launched flying pickets to overcome this obstacle. The CP militants who had set up the BWC were divided over tactics. Most wanted an all-out strike but the party did not want to jeopardise its relations with the officials, so it supported the selective strike. Lou Lewis and Pete Kavanagh went along with this line, saying those calling for an all-out strike were "living in cloud cuckoo land".

But the Birmingham militants worked for an all-out stoppage. Pete Carter, despite being a CP member, stood well to the left on strike tactics, as did Gerry Kelly. They pursued a policy of mass demos and pickets, which called out all the sites they found working. On 14 July, for example, a 4000 strong march in Birmingham stopped 90 building sites. In Stoke, Merseyside then in most other areas, these tactics unravelled the selective strategy.

In Telford and Shrewsbury on 6-7 September flying mass pickets from North Wales invaded, unionised and brought out sites, activities which later led to the arrest and imprisonment of Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson, and their shameful abandonment by the union officialdom and the TUC.

#### Limits of Broad Leftism

By mid-August there was de facto an all-out strike. But when it came to negotiations, George Smith and the executive came into their own. There was no centralised organ of the rank and file to resist it. Throughout the strike's 13 weeks not a single issue of the Building Workers Charter appeared.

Even Lou Lewis later confessed, "in the strike the Charter went to sleep" adding the excuse that "key ones of us were so involved in man-

ning the dispute", neither was there a national meeting to discuss tactics or goals. The deal on offer was for a substantial wage increase - some 25 per cent. But the issues of the lump, blacklists and victimisation were not pressed.

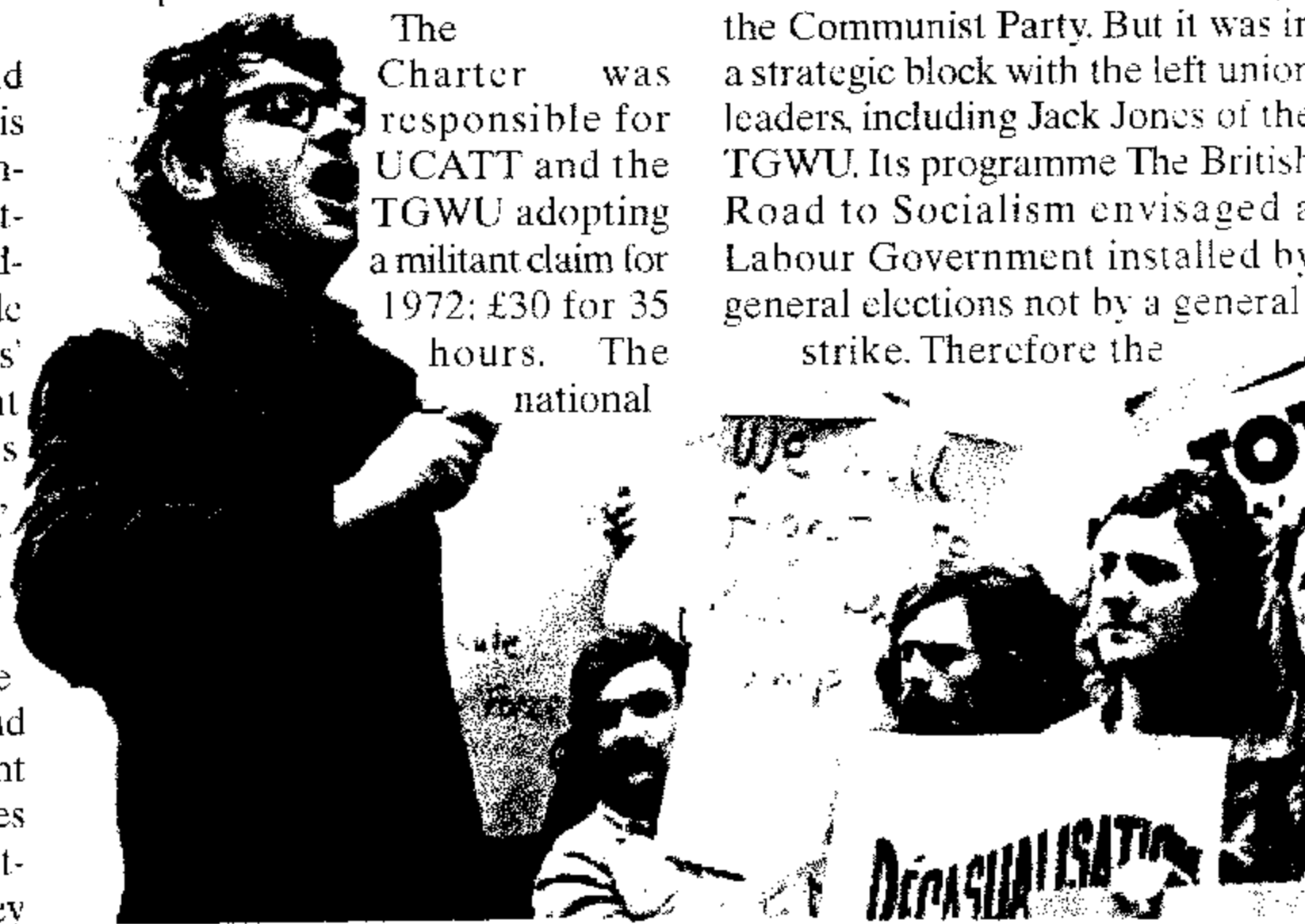
The protest from the rank and file were massive; 12,000 building workers marched in Liverpool, demanding no settlement short of the full claim. Yet Smith refused to put the agreement to a vote. The CP's Morning Star complained and Lou Lewis lamely protested that Smith had assured him this would not happen. But when had Smith, who was to become a Lord for his services to capital, ever consulted the members?

But the CPers were not naïve dupes. Rather what was happening was direct result of the party's approach to rank and file organisation. It saw its usefulness in right-wing led unions where it could pressure existing officials and help get left candidates elected, but it was not meant to challenge for leadership of a dispute or raise political slogans.

The executive's control of negotiations meant that in the end this magnificent strike was sold short and afterwards a wave of victimisations, most notoriously the Shrewsbury Two, went unanswered.

The bitter truth is that the trade union officials form a privileged caste whose interests clash with those of the rank and file whenever they are in struggle. This will always be the case as long as these officials are irregularly elected, impossible or difficult to remove, paid far more than their members and control negotiations.

Militants should set themselves the task of dissolving this caste, replacing them with elected and recallable officers, accountable to the members and conferences, and lay executives. In all major disputes, local and national strike committees should be elected and exercise control over all negotiations with any deal being put to mass meetings of the strikers themselves to vote on.



CPGB member and Charter leader Pete Carter addressing a workers rally

## The Building Workers Charter

1. £1 per hour basic for a 5 day, 35 hour week.
2. Three weeks holiday with full pay; Xmas Day and Boxing Day as statutory holidays; New Years 3.Day and May Day as additional paid holidays.
3. A fully comprehensive pension scheme.
4. Decasualisation of the industry; registration of all workers.
5. Adequate safety and welfare regulations.
6. Democratise the trade unions a) the delegate conference to be a policy making body, and b) all officials to submit to election every three years and branch officials every year. c) Disbanding of selection boards.
7. Full recognition of selected stewards and regular area stewards meetings.
8. 100% compulsory trade union membership.
9. Total opposition to the 'lump.'
10. Full protection of shop stewards.
11. One democratic union for the whole industry.
12. Nationalisation of the building industry.



# Dale Farm eviction – the racism that shames Britain

The shocking police violence around the eviction of travellers at Dale Farm exposed the racism at the heart of British society, write *Natalie Silverstein and Luke Cooper*

IT WAS about planning permission – nothing more, or nothing less. That's what the leaders of Basildon Council, along with the tops of the Labour and Tory parties, all claimed.

The truth none of them dared to speak was that it was about racism. Yet once or twice the disguise slipped. Rodney Bass, chairman of Essex county council, referred to the "Irish criminals" of Dale Farm in a letter to the mayor of Basildon.

This was a Tory council stoking the tribal prejudices of its electorate, in a populist gesture that did nothing to alleviate the suffering of ordinary people's lives.

Opinion polls showed 63 per cent of people in Britain supported the eviction. So many lies and prejudices circulate about Irish travelers – that they are criminals, don't pay tax, don't work, etc – that racism towards them is sadly accepted.

The Council justified their actions on technical grounds, a failure to fill out forms and go through the "proper



A protestor at the Dale Farm eviction, many were beaten by police

channels", but their aims was to fan flames of popular prejudice.

A myth that has been circulating was that this was "green belt" land and the Dale Farm community was contributing to the eating away of our countryside by the town.

In truth, it was a scrap yard when the travelers first arrived. They transformed it into a home for scores of families without any help from the state.

Isn't this just the kind of community enterprise and endeavor that Cameron's Big Society lauds? Not it seems if you are the target of one of today's acceptable racisms.

Dale Farm was an example of integrated and successful traveller community which makes the attack on it from the Tories all the more outrageous.

The resistance the people of Dale Farm put up was courageous. 100 riot police baton charged the camp using taser guns on at least two protestors.

Defying the court order that stip-

ulated there should be no destruction of property on parts of the site recognised as legal and not liable to eviction, the police mob were a law onto themselves with many residents injured and removed on stretchers.

86 families were evicted – who have now decamped to a site 10 miles away, to face further intimidation from the council and local community. Of those left at Dale Farm there is a threat of further action to remove them from the legal part of the site.

As the government cuts threaten to create misery across working class communities all over Britain, the costs of the Dale Farm removal come to a shocking £18 million. So racism doesn't just shame Britain it also costs working class taxpayers too.

It might not be electorally popular to defend travelling communities in Britain, but it's essential. Racism will only divide us at the very moment when we need to unite together to beat the cuts and kick out the Tory criminals.

# The Jarrow March – for jobs and dignity

*Joy Macready and Dave Stockton*

MORE THAN 250 people, including 50 young people, left Jarrow in Tyne and Wear on 1 October, to march to London for a national demonstration and rally in Trafalgar Square on 5 November. This follows the footsteps of the original Jarrow march in 1936, when more than 200 unemployed men tramped the 300 miles in four weeks. The march had backing of unions like the RMT, PCS and Unite. Film director Ken Loach and actor Stephen Fry also expressed their support.

Organised by the Socialist Party and its Youth Fight for Jobs (YFJ) campaign, it was intended to draw attention to the plight of youth who face high unemployment in Britain today, accounting for almost 40 per cent of the unemployed.

The number of 16 to 24 year olds out of work is now just short of a million (991,000), with an increase of 74,000 over the three months to September. Even after stripping out full-time students, there was a sharp jump in the number of youth looking for work, with a total of 721,000.

The situation is that much worse in the North East, where 11.3 per cent are out of work, nearly double the 5.8 per cent in the southeast.

Going into Higher Education is now not an option for many young people, with tuition fees as high as £9,000 per year. And even Further Education is barred to many by the scrapping of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).

The YFJ marchers called for a massive government scheme to create jobs, the reinstatement of EMA, the reopening of axed youth services, the scrapping of controversial workfare schemes and a huge building pro-

gramme of green and affordable social housing.

The march ended with rallies at Embankment and in Trafalgar Square, addressed by Jarrow's Labour MP Stephen Hepburn, RMT general secretary Bob Crow and Bolsover's Labour MP Dennis Skinner.

## Is the Jarrow Crusade a model to follow?

In the 1930s Britain, like many other countries, was suffering from the effects of the Great Depression, and areas of heavy industry like Jarrow were hardest hit.

At that time, unemployment benefit lasted only for 26 weeks, and after 1931 any further relief was subject to a harsh Means Test, where the entire family's income and resources were assessed. Relief was denied until all savings and resources had been used up.

Many families were evicted from their homes, while able-bodied men on Poor Relief were ordered to do hard labour without pay, like crushing stones for road building.

While 200 men marched from Jarrow, no women were invited to take part, with the exception of Jarrow's Labour MP Ellen Wilkinson, who accompanied the march for parts of its route.

The men were demanding that a steel works be built to bring back jobs to their town, as the big shipyard in Jarrow had been closed down in the previous year. The yard had been Jarrow's major employer, and its closure compounded the existing problems of poverty, overcrowding, poor housing and high mortality rates.

The marchers themselves were warmly received in towns and cities along the route and helped by local trade unions and local Labour Par-



The Jarrow march, then and now

ties, despite the fact that the Trade Union Congress (TUC) and the national Labour Party instructed their branches not to support it. Indeed, the Labour movement's official leaders didn't launch a single campaign against unemployment throughout the 1930s.

Perhaps for this reason, the marchers' demonstration at Hyde Park Corner on 1 November 1936 was sparsely attended compared to a nearby Communist Party rally, which decided to join them to swell their numbers. The marchers had collected 12,000 signatures for the Jarrow petition for work, which Ellen Wilkinson presented to the House of Commons on 4 November.

However she dissuaded the marchers from political agitation in the capital, including from staging a sit-in. Instead she sent them on sight-seeing tours. Nevertheless Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin refused to meet the marchers and would do nothing for them. All they were given was £1 each to get the train back from London. Jarrow's shipyards remained

closed till the outbreak of war, and the town was the scene of severe rioting in 1939.

## An alternative - militant political struggle

The Jarrow Crusade generally gets a good press precisely because it proclaimed itself apolitical and sought support from Tories and Liberals. No Communists were allowed to participate. Moreover it concentrated narrowly on Jarrow. Yet compared with the Hunger Marches of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM), it was small scale and decidedly un-militant affair. Even the name on its banners – crusade rather than march – was meant to distinguish it from the Communists.

The NUWM, led by Communist Party members Wal Hannington and Harry McShane, had about 50,000 members, organised in local branches across the country. It organised 'hunger marches' against mass unemployment in 1922, 1929, 1930, and 1932.

Its biggest effort was in 1932 – the trough of the great depression with

unemployment at 2,750,000. That year the NUWM mobilised in many cities against the Means Test, against evictions and reductions in Poor Relief. Violent clashes occurred between the unemployed and the police. In October, 18 contingents from as far away as Scotland and Northern Ireland converged on London. They carried with them a petition demanding an end to the Means Test signed by more than a million people. In Hyde Park, 100,000 people mobilised to welcome them.

The government was frightened and vicious. It mobilised 70,000 police, more than at any time since the Chartist demonstrations in 1848. It deployed agents provocateurs to foment trouble. Constables on horses charged the crowd and seized the petition, refusing to allow it to be presented to Parliament. A battle ensued at Hyde Park Corner, and rioting in the capital continued for four days, in which 70 people were seriously injured. Further NUWM marches took place in 1934 and 1936 all much larger than the Jarrow Crusade.



# Syria: Assad's concessions are a fraud

Rachel Brookes

DESPITE PRESIDENT Bashar al-Assad's promises not to shoot protesters, his regime has continued to kill civilians, most recently in Damascus and Homs. The Arab League's week-long talks to produce a peace plan made his regime hypocritically issue an amnesty for those carrying arms. But the uprising itself remains largely unarmed, while most armed civilians belong to pro-regime militias, despite the desertion or defection of some soldiers and officers to the "Free Syrian Army".

Opposition groups called for Friday protests to "test" Assad's commitment, leading to clashes on 4 November. Despite eight months of bloody repression, the people still remain on the streets.

Unlike Egypt, Tunisia and now Libya, where the people have disposed of their dictators, Syria has not yet been able to do the same. Assad has refused to step down and has killed thousands to stay in power.



Arab League negotiators have proposed the release of all political prisoners, a new constitution and free presidential and parliamentary elections monitored by foreign observers. But opposition groups do not want to enter a dialogue while the regime remains in place.

Burhan Ghalioun, a senior figure in the exiled Syrian National Council commented: "We offered to engage in negotiations to move from a authoritarian regime to a democratic regime. And we ask that Bashar al-Assad resign." The opposition has also demanded the end

of the 48 year old state of emergency, which Assad had provisionally suspended in April, an end to torture and extrajudicial killings, and the release of thousands held without trial. Assad has offered little to meet these demands, making only token moves to buy time from the West and from the other Arab regimes.

## Against imperialist intervention

The West itself remains confused as to how to deal with the situation. After the fall of Libya's dictator Gaddafi, some in Europe and the US began to call for a new military intervention in Syria. However, NATO chief Anders Fogh Rasmussen has categorically ruled it out. Gaddafi's overthrow has also emboldened the Syrian people, showing them that anything is possible.

Indeed, Western intervention would be devastating in Syria, a front-line state in the struggle with Israel. Its evident intention would be to co-opt the Syrian opposition, much as in Libya, although the sit-

uation in the two countries is very different.

Syria's domestic opposition has near-unanimously rejected foreign intervention, even as the regime continues to accuse them of paving the way for it, while the few figures in exile that have called for it have very little influence on the ground.

## Resistance needs co-ordination

It is crucial that the movement against the regime remains united, co-ordinated, and free from religious sectarianism. While most protesters have, quite naturally, been drawn from the country's Sunni Muslim majority, the protests have drawn in people from all of Syria's minorities, despite the regime's attempts to hold the Christian, Alawi and other minorities hostage to its continued rule.

On the other hand, the Assad regime's leading figures are largely drawn from the Alawi minority to which Assad also belongs, and many ordinary Alawis fear retribution and bloodletting if he is toppled.

# "Split talk" amongst Nepalese Maoists

Rajesh Thapa reports from Kathmandu on the growing divisions in the Maoists over the post civil war settlements

SERIOUS DIFFERENCES between a Maoist senior vice-chairman Mohan Baidya (Kiran) and the Party Chairman Puspha Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) has led to talk of a split in the party by some senior leaders.

The United Communist Party Nepal - Maoist is the currently the largest party of the Nepalese Constitution Assembly and recently had one of its leaders, Dr Baburam Bhattarai, elected as Prime Minister. However, in one of his first moves as Prime Minister, Dr Bhattarai caused anger within his party by signing a Bilateral Investment Promotion Agreement (BIPA) with India. This caused a lot of anger amongst many of the party faithful, principally because they are anti-Indian and they think Bhattarai is being far too friendly with the men in New Delhi. Other critics fear that the agreed provisions will make Nepal bankrupt.

Chairman Prachanda has tried to contain the growing factional feud in the party by promoting Bhattarai and by allocating limited power sharing among the top heads, but these measures have only made the problem worse. The growing division now runs right through the central committee, the party cadre and the members in the Constitutional Assembly.

Kiran's faction, which has the support of more than 40 percent of the party's lawmakers, has been strongly opposing a number of decisions taken by Bhattarai's faction and the government, including the handover of the keys to the guerrilla fighters weapons containers to the state. Con-

talist politicians, desperate to prevent the Maoists from rearming. Bhattarai, at that time supported by the party chairman Prachanda, handed over the keys unilaterally with no agreement from the party, another sign of how undemocratic the Maoists are when they are in government.

Now the opposition forces in the UCPN-M have taken to the streets demanding the agreement with India be scrapped. They have termed the deal as "anti-national" - a sure sign that they feel that this is a matter of political principle. The deal was again signed without any consultation within the Maoist party. The 16 member Standing Committee referred it to the upcoming Central Committee meeting slated for 3 November. But everyone knows there are already sharp differences over the 'integration' and 'rehabilitation' of the former fighters from the Peoples Liberation Army.

## Constituent Assembly stalled

The internal dispute within the UCPN-Maoist has stalled both this integration process and constitution drafting. In fact the Maoists have proved incapable of taking a united stance on any single issue. The major hurdle towards completing the constitutional draft has been the attitude taken by the opposition Nepali Congress and the CPN-United Marxist Leninists, a reformist working class party. Neither party is willing to budge on the question of PLA integration, and they argue that this must be settled first, before a constitution can be agreed. But no compromise has been reached among the parties



Prachanda and Kiran, now leading different factions

ranks should be.

Bhattarai set a self imposed deadline of forty five to complete the major tasks of the combatants' integration and rehabilitation. He has utterly failed. Above all, he has not been able to put the final touches to his cabinet; one major obstacle being the manoeuvres of his party's senior vice chairman, comrade Kiran. The main opposition parties - the Congress and the CPN-UML have proposed retaining the separate identity of the ex-fighters after the integration into the Nepal Army. Likewise, Congress wants to limit the number of Maoists to be integrated into the army to 5,000 while the Maoists demand 7,000 of them.

Similarly, there is no agreement on the so called 'rehabilitation package' related to ex-guerrillas looking for voluntary retirement. Congress wants to limit the amount to 303,000 Rupees (£2,400) at most, whilst the Maoists are demanding at least 700,000 Rs (£5,500). Not wanting to be undone by the current leadership, the Baidya faction of the

not less than 8,000 combatants should be integrated and around Rs. 1 million (£8,000) be given to those who wish to 'retire'.

## The Maoists move to the right

It is important to note that the parliamentary parties NC and the UML have now actually successfully disarmed the Maoist combatants. In the name of ending the rule of few feudal lords and bourgeois the UCPN (Maoist) has changed itself into a parliamentary party and is trying hard to strengthen the rule of capital - both national and multinational!

Lately, the Maoist secretary has accused Prachanda and Bhattarai of violating the party's revolutionary path and asked them to quit the party. He added that the revolution cannot succeed under the leadership of the chairman and the vice-chairman because their talk of revolution is just to maintain their power and policies. Moreover, he accused them of deviating from the revolutionary path in favour of mere 'peace and constitution'. The General Secretary, Ram Bahadur Thapa (Badal), has also

accused a faction of his own party of working under the direction of India. He said that the political parties have shown a submissive attitude towards India whilst shouting nationalist slogans. Moreover, he added that there is no point in preserving unity in the party while putting national independence in danger. Recently, amidst strong pressure from the opposition and his own party, Bhattarai fired two ministers from his cabinet: the Defence Minister for secessionist remarks that he made, and the Minister for Land Reform for being suspected of involvement in a murder. The parliament was subsequently disrupted by the opposition for a week over this issue.

As the political crisis looms, the economy too has become a victim. According to the latest government statistics almost 26 per cent of Nepalis earn less than one dollar a day. The Maoist government has refused to expropriate the feudal lords and the rich whilst submitting Nepal to the rule of capital. It wants foreign investment to flow into the economy in an unprecedented scale. But this can only make rich richer and the poor poorer. The underlying problems of the oppressed and exploited masses can only be addressed by moving from resistance to revolution. Now it has become all too clear that the Maoists have abandoned the revolutionary struggle; now the failure of the guerrilla strategy has been exposed; a space can open up for the development of a real revolutionary party in the country. Revolutionary socialists in Nepal must now launch a fight for a 'workers and peasants' government.



# #Occupy Movement hits Pakistan

THE OCCUPY LAHORE Camp started on 22 October at noon in Nasir Bagh park, a regular site for political rallies.

More than 500 participated, largely peasant women, factory workers, students and left activists.

The camp began with speeches from various participants to show solidarity with international "Occupy" movement, and also bring to the fore the issues facing Pakistan's workers and poor. They all said there is a need to build a resistance movement in Pakistan.

Some speakers gave solidarity messages to women health workers who have been waging a campaign of direct action, including road occupations.

Overall the atmosphere is very lively and energetic, people are discussing their various issues their solutions, and how we can develop a fight against capitalism.

Many workers came with their own banners and placards. Sacked workers from telecoms company PTCL and journalists from the Daily Times chanted demands for their wages, which they have not received for months. There was also revolutionary poetry; and the Laal Band, socialist musicians who became famous during the lawyers' movement against general Musharraf, gave a performance dedicated to the movement against capitalism.

At 3pm there was a rally against capitalism through Mall road and Anarkali bazaar.

Participants were chanting militant slogans "Red salute to Occupy Wall Street and resistance to world



capitalism", "We want freedom", "Let's build the struggle and speed them up", "From the blood of workers and peasants Asia is red", "One solution socialist revolution" and "End the military operation in Baluchistan."

After the end of the march, a general assembly was held to discuss

future plans and how to continue the occupation overnight and on Sunday, and also to invite more movements and youth to discuss how to fight against the misery of capitalism. A number of people decided to stay overnight to show solidarity.

There were other protests in solidarity with the occupation movement

in Karachi, Islamabad, Hyderabad and also in Sargodha and Faisalabad.

Important sections of the country's workforce, including railworkers, are protesting at failures to pay wages or pensions and the Occupy movement can help bring a focus to all these struggles and identify the capitalist system as the target.

## Strike against electricity privatisation in Pakistan

Electricity supply workers took to the streets in Lahore on 1 November to protest at government plans to dissolve the Pakistan Electric Power Company (PEPCO), the privatisation of power distribution companies and the appointment of a private sector Chief Executive in the Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO).

Mass demonstrations, marches and rallies organised by the Hydro Electric Labour Union brought out 140,000 workers in the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA), in Lahore, Peshawar, Mardan, Abbottabad, Bannu, Rawalpindi, Gujranwala, Multan, Faisalabad, Sukker, Hayerabad and Quetta.

Strikers condemned the proposed privatisation of utilities and the latest price hike in the power tariff. In Lahore, workers gathered in front of WAPDA House, angry and determined to fight the proposed privatisation. One protester, Rizwan, told *RESISTANCE* (*Workers Power's* sister-paper in Pakistan) that "our struggle is to save the WAPDA from privatisation, but we need to build class wide unity as the government is attacking the workers in many departments".

Addressing the rally in Lahore, union leader Khurshid Ahmed said "these are the false policies of the Government which bowed to pressure from the IMF and World Bank and did not allow WAPDA to build a new power station in time. They also kept generating companies without gas supplies. In addition, the Karachi Electric Supply Company and other Government agencies failed to make a payment of Rs 1 trillion. This was what left the country without power repeatedly.

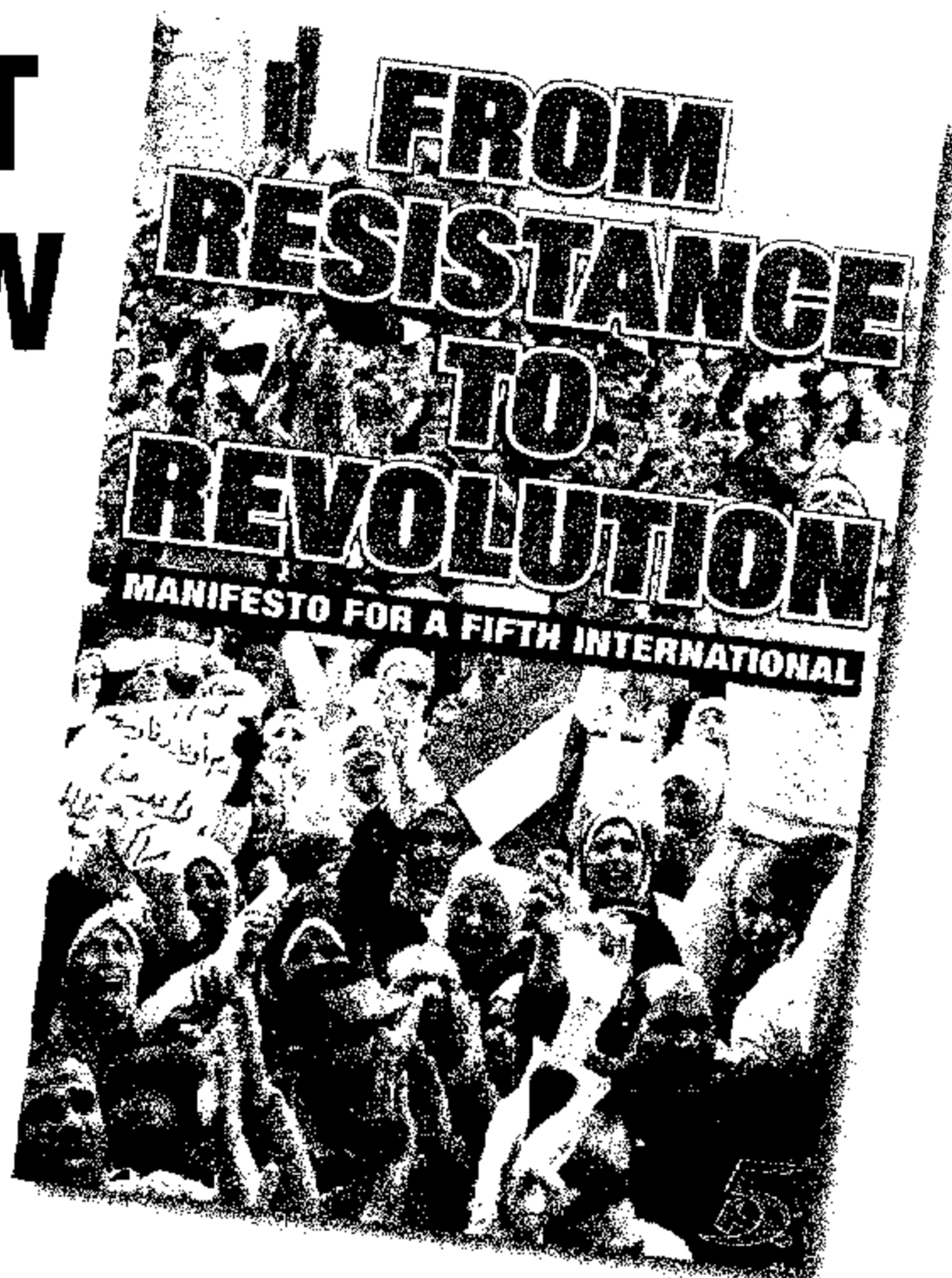
Now the Government is using the loss as a pretext to privatise all generation companies, along with transmission and distribution network. Thousands of workers have laid down their lives to build these systems. Workers will not allow the government to oblige its cronies with these companies."

The struggle of 140,000 WAPDA workers is to force the Government to develop cheaper electricity for the people, overcome serious power cuts and defeat the proposed privatisation. They also raised slogans against the IMF and World Bank.

Other union leaders said the working class of WAPDA would not allow privatisation of public utilities and pointed out that the privatisation of Karachi Electric Supply Company had failed miserably. They warned that the workers would cut power supplies to VIPs if the government continued with its privatisation policy.

## A new manifesto for world revolution

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The working class movement urgently needs a new strategy. This manifesto outlines a programme to turn resistance into revolution – to unite the fight against austerity and social oppression into a direct challenge to the crisis-ridden system of capitalism itself.

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## US threatens war against Iran

Joana Ramiro

With the publication of the International Atomic Energy Agency report on the Iranian nuclear programme this week, it is no surprise we are seeing images of Israeli soldiers preparing for nuclear attacks. Warfare rhetoric is already in place, political commentators are prepared for their interviews and the question that will be replayed across the media is: will there be a war with Iran?

The United States Congress, greatly pressured by AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee), was quick to follow suit and issue a set of sanctions on Iran. The bill, passed by the House Foreign Affairs Committee, proposes the criminalisation of any individual employed by the United States Government who communicates with any representative of the Iranian authorities without congressional approval. Not only a threat to diplomacy, the bill reflects the States' scaremongering policies – a blatant attempt to deflect attention from home affairs, namely the wave of dis-

sent fuelled by the Occupy movement. President Obama came to office promising dialogue with Iran, but now the channels of communication are being closed down.

Far from being a 'left wing' President, Obama's pro-assassination and pro militarist line for dealing with 'America's enemies' shows his true colours – he is already being nicknamed 'Obomber' in several media outlets. But this recent round of Iran-bashing from the US, the country with the most nuclear weapons in the world is considered by many to be an attempt at distraction from the dire situation at home.

But what is more, "sabre rattling" could well turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy, unleashing the most savage conflict we have ever seen in the Middle East. With Israel already isolated the growing support for a Palestinian state, the need for the Israeli military and government to reassert themselves becomes more pressing, and Iran is a target that a lot of policy makers would support. We have to stand firm against any warmongering by Israel or the



# 7 billion people – don't panic, organise!

Kady Taft

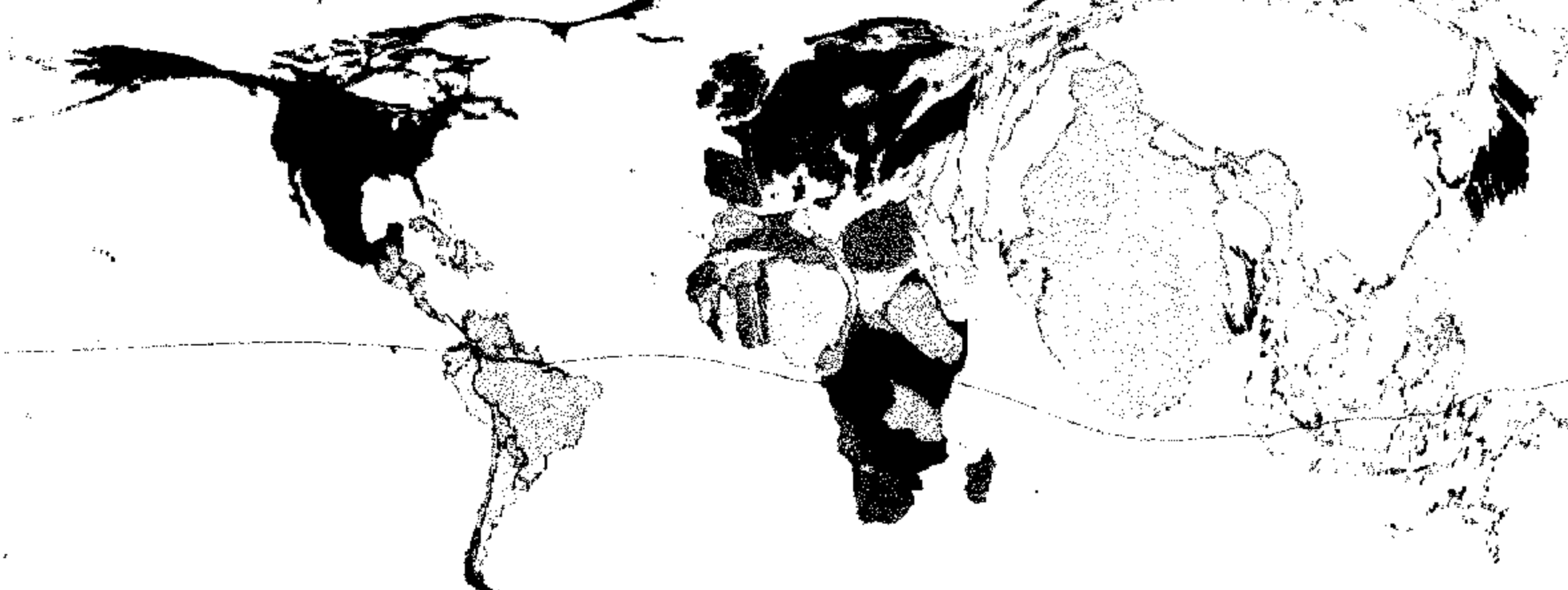
THE POPULATION of the world has reached 7 billion people (give or take a few). A landmark which has received mixed reactions in the world's media, ranging from predictions of a catastrophic decline in food security to saner reflections on the unequal consumption of resources between the Global north and south, between the 7 per cent who account for 50 per cent of energy usage and the majority existing hand-to-mouth in a world of abundance.

Since 1950 the world's population has more than doubled, increasing by 4.5 billion people, 1 billion of whom were born in the last decade alone. It is not surprising therefore that much of the coverage of the United Nation's announcement of the 7 billionth birth has concentrated on the consequences which such an explosion places on the world's ability to sustain an exponentially increasing population.

Any number of demographic studies have shown that population size is directly linked to poverty – the poorer the population, the higher the rate of births. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, despite the medical advances in the West which have eradicated most of the causes of childhood mortality, the overwhelming majority of the world's population continues to suffer from high infant mortality, mainly from preventable diseases and malnutrition. This leads to high birth rates to ensure a sufficient number of children reach adulthood, thus providing the extra family income and provision for old age.

The second factor is access to education. The destruction of universal education provision in developing countries as a result of the privatisation policies of international finance institutions, and the lack of access to

## The World of 7 Billion



Worldmapper Population Cartogram 2011 created by Benjamin D. Hennig, University of Sheffield - www.viewsoftheworld.net

### Countries of the world redrawn and scaled to reflect the size of their population

reproductive health and family planning services means that poor countries are mired in a high birth rate/high infant mortality cycle.

This vicious circle weighs most heavily on women. High unemployment and sexist values make it unprofitable for many families to educate their female children, even where such provision exists. This is often accompanied by bans on abortion and contraception, denying women control over their own bodies. These policies find their ultimate expression in the millions of aborted female foetuses in India where daughters carry a financial burden that poor families cannot afford.

Much of the writing surrounding this population explosion has focused on the question of "overpopulation", rooted in the 19th century ideas of Thomas Malthus who claimed that population size is determined by natural limits imposed by disease and resource scarcity.

Being an Anglican vicar, Malthus

saw it as his duty to promote "virtuous" lifestyles – knowing your place in society and not having too many children. And he was writing in the early 1800s, a period of failed harvests, European wars and protectionist laws which brought huge profits to Britain's capitalists, while pricing staple foods out of the reach of landless agricultural workers and the urban working class. Therefore a social theory which blamed the starvation and malnutrition provoked by capitalist production on the vices of the poor and above all, on a "natural" method of population control was eagerly adopted by Britain's new professional and ruling classes.

### Late capitalism

Yet 2011 is not 1811. The advances in production, fertilisation and transport have heralded a food revolution in the same way that they enabled a population explosion. Not least, the driving forces of capitalist expansion – mechanisation, specialisation and

modernisation – reduced the amount of the population necessary for food production from 70-80 per cent to less than 10 per cent in the West.

So why has this landmark been met with miles of newsprint forecasting a catastrophic slump in living standards (in the West), predictions of wars over resources and general wailing about an inexorable collapse of human civilisation?

Partly it is because it is true that conflicts over resources will intensify; the devastating consequences of super-exploitation of raw materials in Africa, or localised conflicts over access to water sources are well documented. But mainly it's because we live in a global system which is incapable of dealing with the situation it creates. The dynamism and progress of early capitalism has long been superseded by the rise of imperialism.

As the Credit Crunch of 2008, and the latest descent into chaos demonstrates, the capitalist economy is inca-

capable of self-regulation, and governments are powerless before the international bond markets and ratings agencies which dictate the limits of democracy to people whose countries are stripped bare of assets and material wealth.

So in a sense, those who argue that the world cannot sustain a population which is forecast to increase by one third again in the next decade or so are right. But they are wrong to say that it is because the resources of the world are finite. Obviously they are not; the natural wealth of the world is continuously replenished. The problem is one of unequal distribution.

A system based on profit, which is ruled by the iron logic of financial vehicles created to deliver the maximum profits in the minimum time, is incapable of planning sustainable production. This is why vast tracts of fertile farmland are destroyed in a few years – earning super-profits for the owners, but storing up disaster for the children of those working the land or forced off it into slum cities.

While we can be sure that the world we live in is not organised in a fit way to provide for all 7 billion people, we can be equally certain that the natural resources of the earth are more than capable of providing a decent quality of life for each of us.

Our struggle is to overcome the rule of the 1 per cent – the elite of capitalists who by virtue of their ownership of the world's natural resources derive obscene profits for themselves at the expense of poverty for billions. The natural wealth of the world is our common birthright; the division and competition amongst different people is an artificial construct which serves only to preserve the control over our food, energy and water by a parasitic minority.

## Review: The Ides of March

Joana Ramiro

*The Ides of March* could not come at a more politically appropriate time, for this is a story about the credibility of politics and the struggle between principled idealists and the realities of bourgeois democracy. Sitting in his director's chair, George Clooney delivers an albeit mild exposé of political campaigning, performing a sort of cinematographic version of Occupy Wall Street. One leaves the cinema questioning it all – the accountability of the political world, the validity of morals, the very notion of right and wrong.

Based on Beau Willimon's play *Faragut North*, *The Ides of March* follows the crumbling integrity of young press secretary Stephen Meyers (Ryan Gosling), as he develops from a scrupulous Democrat into an amoral careerist. This metamorphosis is set in the context of an Ohio primary, where presidential candidate Mike Morris (played by Clooney himself) is set to win or lose. With great dexterity

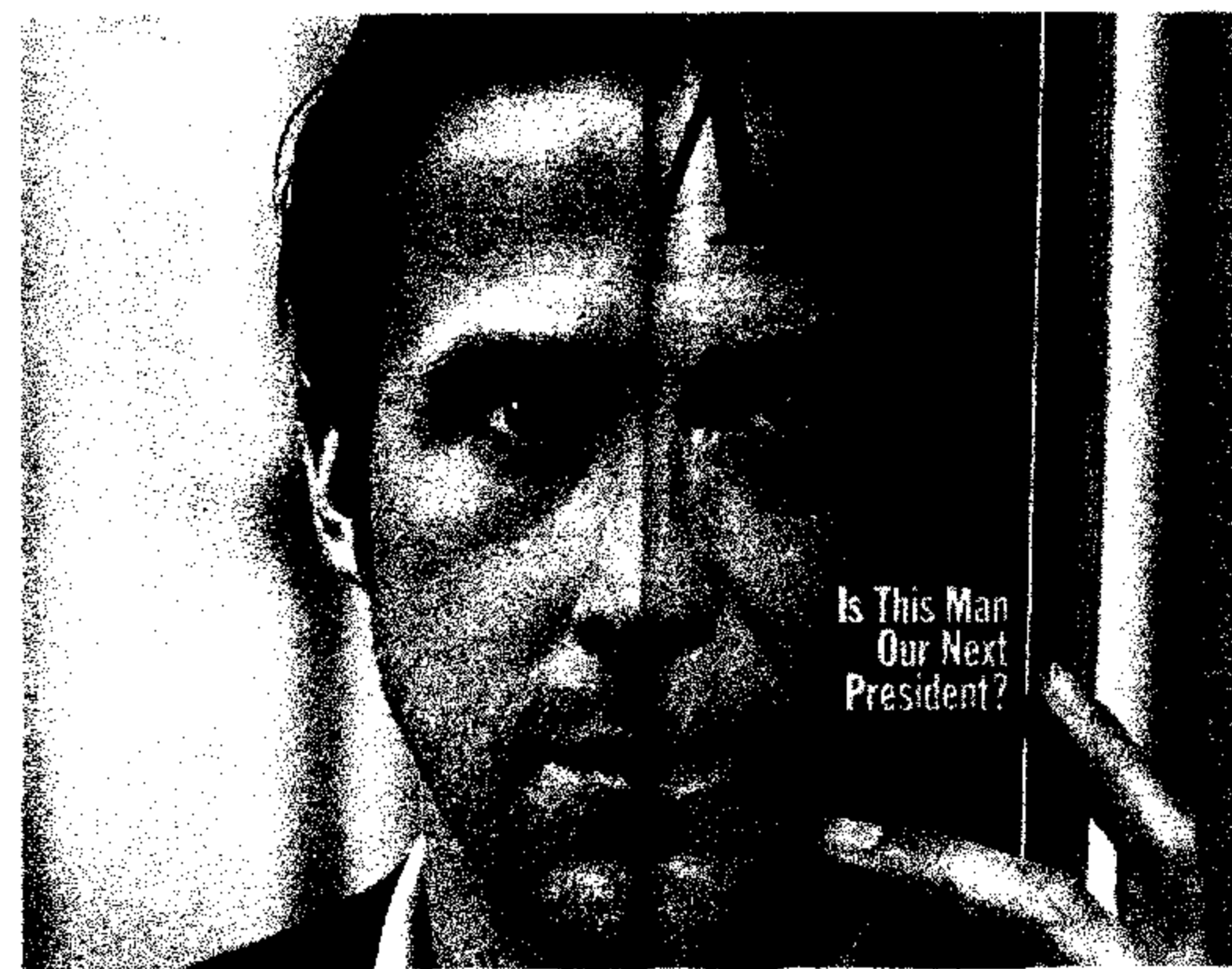
Clooney lets the story unfold, as every role – from Philip Seymour Hoffman's Paul Zara, to the not-so-innocent intern Molly (Evan Rachel Wood) – blooms into a deep and controversial character. The action is beautifully choreographed, adding in turns yet another element to the narrative and yet another twist to Meyer's story.

In a way, *The Ides of March* is the deconstruction of the modern American Dream. Here is a world with the perfect liberal democrat (the environmentally conscious, diplomacy-advocating Governor Mike Morris), surrounded by cynical older political minions (his campaign manager, Zara, and his adversary's campaign manager, Tom Duffy, brilliantly played by Paul Giamatti), and inspiring the younger generation (Stephen Meyer and Molly). It is a post-Obama world of politics, both in the ideological sense (the liberal versus neo-liberal conflict pervades the movie), as in the very nature of modern politics, with its blurred divisions between candidates and their teams, inevitable

transparency (think of Wikileaks and the success of tell-all biographies) and fast-paced media communications.

I guess it is the clash between the audience's acceptance of Morris' fall of grace and the shocking realisation this is for Meyer that the film really plays on. The dramatic consequences of a sexual affair between Mike Morris and Molly (as well as Meyer's own relationship with her) bring the conclusion of Stephen Meyer's transformation, which can be posited as both vendetta and moral collapse. After all, two wrongs don't make a right.

Clooney is establishing himself as a director with a particular eye for political dramas, and he does so with flair. *The Ides of March* reminded me a lot of *Good Night and Good Luck*, though with a more mature direction, specially in those close angle and chiaroscuro shots, which turn a play-adaptation into a titanic contestant at the next Oscar Awards. I also could not help but admire the way in which Clooney truthfully depicts what is still mainly a male-dominated world,



Ryan Gosling and George Clooney, from friends to enemies

while drawing in the peripheral, but essential female characters. Molly is effectively the victim of her own idealism, in harsh contrast with Gosling's character, who survives his "coming of age", albeit scarred. Morris' wife (Jennifer Ehle) is the First Lady to be, the bastion of uncorrupted principles, even if solely by ignorance.

Finally, we have Marisa Tomei's character, *New York Times* journalist Ida Horowitz, equal in mind and morals to her male counterparts, setting the very clear stance that this is not about gender or personality, but a system in which all participants ultimately seem to end as unscrupulous agents of individual interest.



# Discussing the future of the left in Britain

Luke Cooper

ANTICAPITALISM 2011 SAW three days of discussion and debate over the big questions facing the left and anti-austerity movements. Just short of a 100 people attended across the three days.

After the student movement, the wave of revolutions in the Middle East, and preparing for mass strikes later this month, a fighting spirit and confidence pervaded the event. But there was also a serious and critical discussion of the challenges we face.

John McDonnell MP set the tone for the weekend on Friday evening when he said, "We need to have a balanced discussion of where our movement is at, the problems and successes. But there is definitely something special coming together – the direct action that the students pioneered is fusing with the trade union, industrial resistance. And that's the combination we need to win."

A recurring theme of the conference is how we could translate the mass resistance against austerity into a political radicalisation, one that rebuilt faith amongst a new layer of class fighters in a fundamental, socialist alternative to the capitalist system. Indeed, a feature of the current situation is that there is an appetite for resistance amongst a new layer of students, young people and workers, but that this has not yet led to a stronger radical left.

The question that socialists face is how to we can make this bridge – from resistance to a new politics.

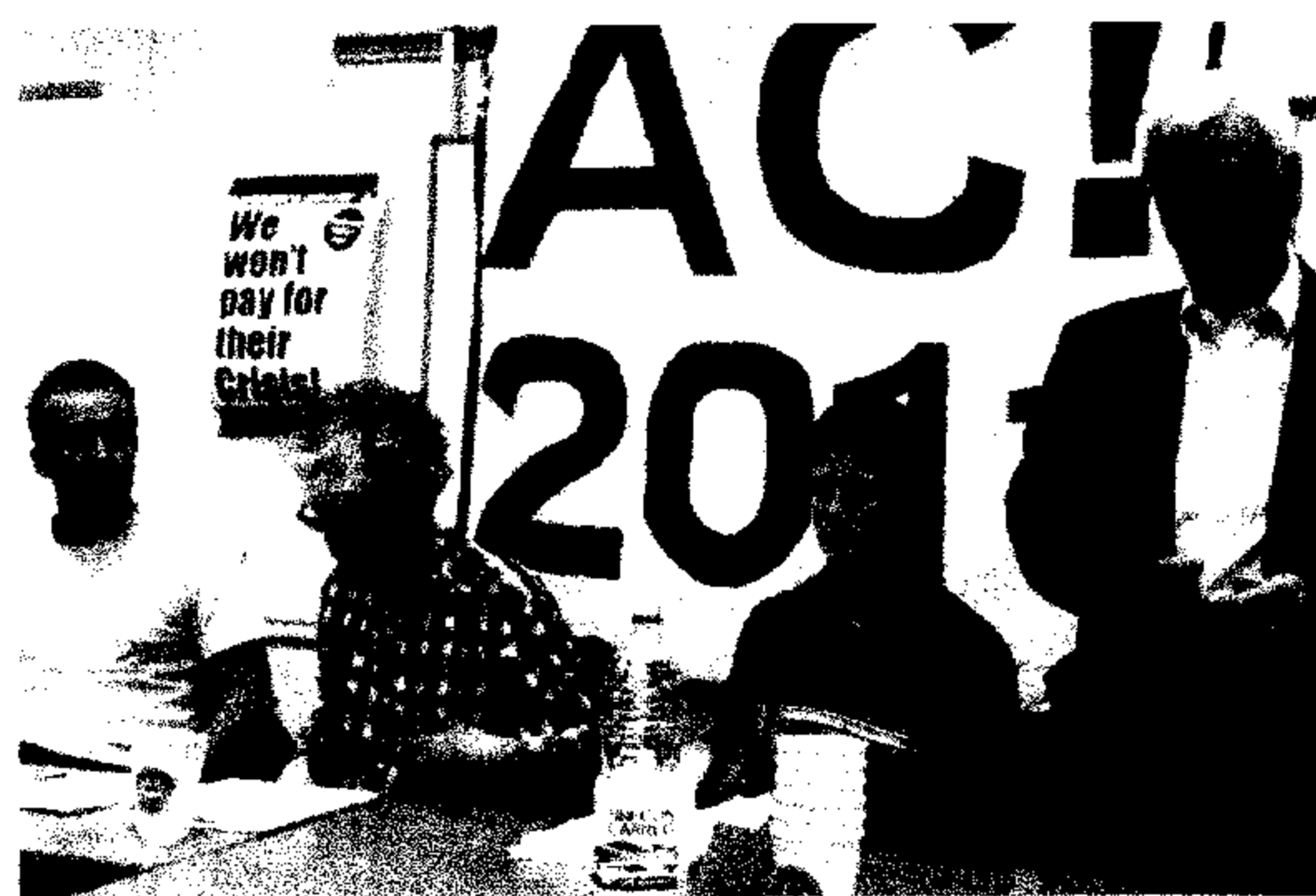
## A new left

The Saturday evening saw a discussion of what kind of left we need to build today – how do we move from resisting austerity to a fundamentally different society? It was a diverse platform with speakers each approaching the question from different perspectives.

Mick Dooley, who is standing for general secretary of construction union UCATT, complained that "people feel scared of talking about socialism today. But that's exactly what we need to be doing. We have to see the fight back in the unions as part of a struggle for a socialist society".

A number of speakers spoke of the need to involve activists from the movements in a discussion around the formation of a new, organised anticapitalist left. Mark Fisher, author of the book *Capitalist Realism*, said he hoped we had "established a sufficient basis of agreement to move forward". And we needed to think about "how to achieve authority and leadership without authoritarianism, how to get effective organisation without bureaucracy". Maeve McKeown, from New Left Project, similarly presented strengths and weaknesses of horizontal and hierarchical organisation, arguing that "both sides pose problems and solutions for the left".

In a provocative contribution, Owen Jones, author of *Chavs* and a member of the Labour Representation Committee, said "I'm here as an unrecon-



structed member of the old left". He later added, that we needed "to be clear that a class and political answer to the crisis is needed", and "given that no attempts to found alternative parties to Labour have succeeded, this means working in the Labour Party".

Simon Hardy, editor of *Workers Power*, proposed that we continue the discussion around a new type of left, towards a new anticapitalist organisation. He continued, "we need to revive the democratic spirit of the Bolshevik tradition. After all, Lenin once said that at its core Bolshevism united that part of the movement that was most consistent on the need for working people to take power into their own hands."

The discussion was positive because it brought together people who saw the need to change the existing outlook, mindset and practice of the far left left. No one was saying, "just join us", but rather that we needed to involve wide layers of people in a debate about what kind of left we need, how it should be organised, and how it can win.

The new organisation we want to build has to be the property of the activists at the base leading today's struggles and combating the official leaderships.

Part of the answer is organisational as well as political. Many of the sessions across the weekend raised the idea of transforming the labour movement at a rank and file level. Billy McKean, in the session on socialists and the unions, spoke of the work the Grass Roots Left in Unite had done in co-ordinating resistance from below, helping to bring electricians into struggle this autumn. The reality is that too often the far left is very conservative when it comes to developing these types of new rank and file organisations at the base of the unions.

Another recurring theme of the weekend was criticising the damaging divisions in the anti-cuts movement.

George Binette, convener of Camden Unison, spoke of how the unions from top to bottom were preparing for the mass strikes on 30 November and how positive this was. But he added that sectarian splits in the anti-cuts movement were undermining attempts to organise a radical, grassroots wing of the movement independently of the official leaderships. A sup-

porter of Permanent Revolution, he also said he welcomed a recent letter from Workers Power proposing unity discussions and collaboration in the movement.

There was agreement that the left was dominated by a sectarian opportunist ethos; sectarian in seeking organisational advantages over one another instead of principled unity and opportunistic in its willingness to tail the arguments to what is deemed acceptable, or realistic, by the TUC lefts.

In short, too many far left organisations are going on "in the same old way", without exploring new avenues for unity and the new organisations, politics and methods we need to win.

On the Sunday of the event we looked to the past to draw out the lessons for today. Socialists regularly confront the argument that an alternative to capitalism isn't possible, because it was shown to fail in the Soviet Union. Launching our new book, *The Degenerated Revolution; the Rise and Fall of Stalinism*, Dave Stockton looked at how the Soviet Union collapsed into bureaucratism and Trotsky's struggle against it, and Andy Yorke went on to analyse the revolutions of 1989.

Anticapitalism was the starting point for a discussion that will continue across the left and in many forums. What kind of organisations do we need to build? How do we combine seeking unity with moderate leaders of the labour movement without tailing their inadequate strategy? Many speakers spoke of the significance of #OccupyWallSt, because it had made a global critique of the neoliberal, rich-get-richer, poor-get-screwed policies of the last decades.

Inspired by the mass movements of the Arab World it also showed the desire for real democracy – the yearning to take power over our own lives and not be dictated to by capital. As Richard Brenner put it on Friday evening, the challenge for the left is "to combine the openness, transparency and participation of the popular assemblies with the social weight, power and discipline of the organised working class movement, less its bureaucracy". Going forward we need to think creatively about how we turn this perspective into a reality that can fundamentally change our society.

## WHERE WE STAND



**Capitalism** is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human need. Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

**The Labour Party** is not a socialist party. It is a bourgeois workers' party – bourgeois in its politics and its practice, but it gets its support from the working class through the trade unions and is supported by the mass of workers at the polls. Socialists work alongside Labour Party members in the workers movement and argue for our revolutionary positions within the struggles.



**The Trade Unions** must be transformed by a rank and file movement to oust the reformist bureaucrats, to democratise the unions and win them to a revolutionary action programme based on a system of transitional demands which serve as a bridge between today's struggles and the socialist revolution. Central to this is the fight for workers' control of production. We are for the building of fighting organisations of the working class – factory committees, industrial unions, councils of action, and workers' defence organisations.

**The Russian revolution** established a workers' state. But Stalin destroyed workers' democracy and set about the reactionary and utopian project of building "socialism in one country". In the USSR, and the other degenerate workers' states that were established from above, capitalism was destroyed but the bureaucracy excluded the working class from power, blocking the road to democratic planning and socialism. The parasitic bureaucratic caste led these states to crisis and eventual destruction. We were for the smashing of bureaucratic tyranny through political revolution and the establishment of workers' democracy. We opposed the restoration of capitalism and recognised that only workers' revolution can defend post-capitalist property relations. In times of war we unconditionally defend workers' states against imperialism.

**Stalinism** has consistently betrayed the working class. The Stalinist Communist Parties' strategy of alliances between workers and capitalists (in popular fronts) and their stages theory of revolution have inflicted terrible defeats on the working class world-wide. These parties are reformist.

**Social Oppression** is an integral feature of capitalism, systematically oppressing people on the basis of race, age, sex or sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of all of the oppressed. We fight racism and fascism. We oppose all immigration controls. We fight for labour movement support for black self-defence against racist and state attacks. We are for no platform for fascists and for driving them out of the unions.



**Imperialism** is a world system which oppresses nations and prevents economic development in the vast majority of third world countries. We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland. But against the politics of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois nationalists, we fight for permanent revolution – working class leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle under the banner of socialism and internationalism. In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of the imperialist army and the victory of the country oppressed and exploited by imperialism. We are for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. We fight imperialist war not with pacifist pleas but with militant class struggle methods including the forcible disarmament of "our own" bosses.

**Workers Power** is a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the revolutionary documents of the first four congresses of the Third International and the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International. Workers Power is the British Section of the League for the Fifth International. The last revolutionary International (the Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51. The LSI is fighting to refound a revolutionary International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist – join us! ★



