

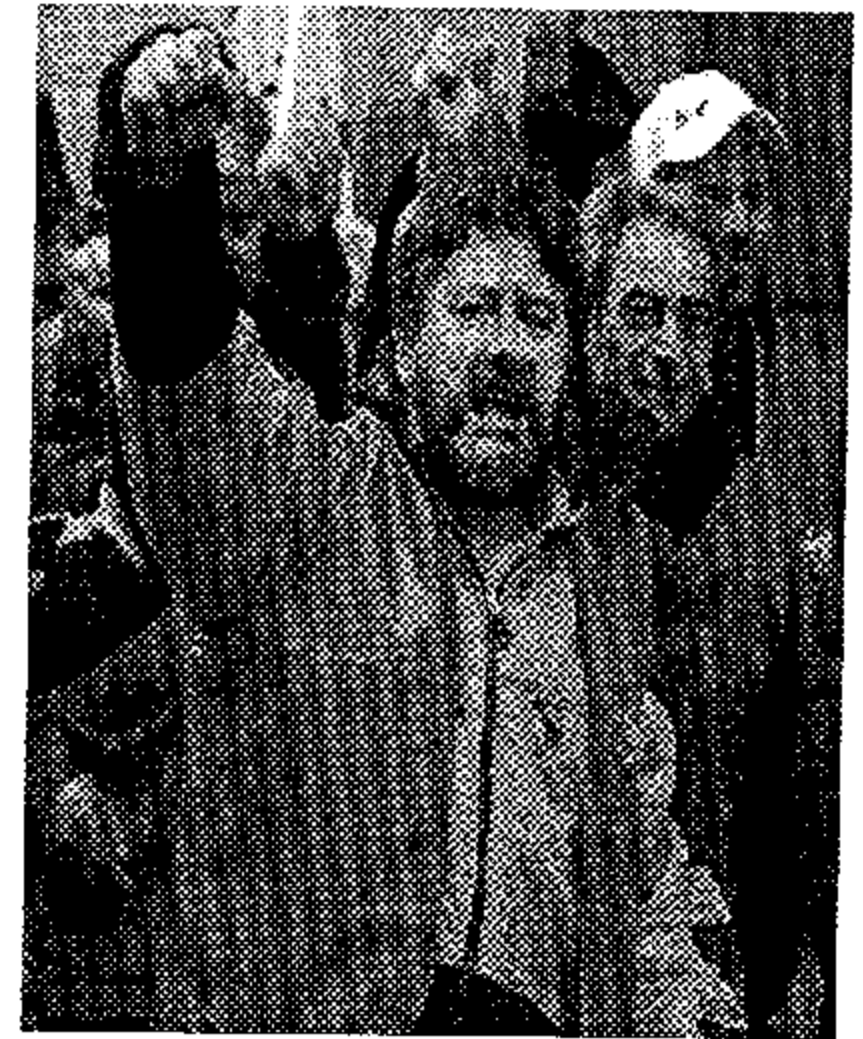
# workers power

September 2009 ★ Price £1 / €1.50 Issue 338

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

Strike wave in post, rail, construction, colleges...

## UNITE THE RESISTANCE!



- ★ Link the strikes together
- ★ No cuts to jobs or pay
- ★ Form local action committees
- ★ Build a new anti-capitalist party

## WE WON'T PAY FOR THEIR CRISIS

### INSIDE:

- Afghan elections expose hypocrisy
- For a new anti-capitalist party
- Nationalise Vestas wind power
- Obama's broken promises
- London Met activist condemns cuts
- Form an anti-fascist defence league

**PLUS WORLD ECONOMY...  
THE RECOVERY: A MARXIST  
ANALYSIS - RICHARD BRENNER**



League for the  
Fifth International

**NEWS IN BRIEF****Is Latin America sliding into war?**

The conflict over US bases in Colombia is threatening to foment a bloody regional war. In a state-sponsored protest 5,000 people marched in Colombia's capital against Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, with smaller protests in other countries.

The protests against Chavez came after he denounced the recent deal by the right-wing government in Columbia to allow the US to double its number of military bases in the country to 10. The US is arming Colombia in order to threaten the regimes opposed to US dominance of the region: Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador.

Pro-Chavez supporters marched in Venezuela proclaiming the defence of the revolution. Chavez announced on TV that: "The threat against us is growing. I call on the people and the armed forces, let's go, ready for combat!".

We need to build a mass campaign to defend Venezuela and its allies if they come under attack. Workers across the world must defend all those in Latin America resisting imperialist aggression whether directly or by proxy.

• For more on the tensions in Latin America read [www.fifthinternational.org/content/tensions-grow-between-venezuela-and-colombia](http://www.fifthinternational.org/content/tensions-grow-between-venezuela-and-colombia)

**Afghanistan: help for heroes?**

The media's patriotic campaign 'in support of our troops' is building to a crescendo this autumn. Images of fallen soldiers fill our screens.

The 'Help for Heroes' campaign is subtly used to suggest that bringing the troops home would somehow be showing disrespect for the dead soldiers and their families. Tearful relatives are quoted saying how proud they are and that the troops should be supported to 'get the job done'.

But there is one slogan you won't read in *The Sun* – and it's the one thing that would really stop any more pointless deaths: 'Bring the Troops Home Now'.

The politicians and generals whipping up patriotic sentiment for the dead troops are the very same people who sent them off to die in this bloody war.

The media campaign will backfire. Revolted by the unending parade of the dead, people back here will start demanding an end to this slaughter, and to bring the imperialists responsible to justice.

• For more on the Afghanistan war abroad, and the recent elections, turn to page 16 of this magazine

**Ireland: vote no to Lisbon!**

The Irish referendum on the European Union's Lisbon treaty looks set for a nail-biting finish.

All four major parties in the Irish parliament are campaigning for a yes vote on 2 October. The treaty bans any state aid which might 'distort' the market. This did not stop the huge bank bailout but did block nationalising Waterford Crystal to save workers jobs.

But the "NO" campaign has been fighting hard. It has the support of the Socialist Party of Ireland, whose leader Joe Higgins was recently made and MEP, plus the Socialist Workers Party of Ireland and Éirígi, a breakaway from Sinn Féin, together with the Irish teachers union. They have linked the 'No vote' to the Treaty with the issue of the huge public spending cuts and mounting unemployment.

This is the second time the question has been put. On 12 June 2008 the Irish people rejected it by 53.4% to 46.6%. The capitalists' response? "Vote again; but this time get it right!"

Irish workers should again reject this constitution for a capitalist superstate. The positive alternative is international solidarity against the crisis and the struggle for a Socialist United States of Europe.

**DONATE****£4000****£3000****£2000****£1000****5****£0****FIGHTING FUND****Help us raise our flag higher!**

Over the past weeks and months Workers Power has received increased support for the call for a new anti-capitalist party on picket lines, amongst striking postal workers, with education workers resisting cuts to their colleges and universities and amongst youth who have beaten back the fascist BNP in Birmingham and Derby. We are fighting for the formation of a new anti-capitalist party to strengthen and organise the working-class movement so it is in a position to challenge the government and the rule of the capitalists, to bring down the government and carry out a socialist revolution. To do this we need a stronger organisation, more full-timers, office space and more regular publications. To finance this last month we started a campaign to raise money for our organisation. If you support us or the call for a new anti-capitalist party; donate to our fighting fund to help the fight.

In the coming months we will prepare for the Istanbul European Social Forum 2010, participate in the New Anticapitalist Party in France. Our comrades in the Socialist Party of Sri Lanka are trying to build solidarity with the Tamils who have been herded in their thousands into what amounts to concentration camps. Through the Jhangara Joint Health Workers Union the comrades are trying to get medical aid into the camps. We have launched the Sri Lanka Trade Union Solidarity campaign to help provide them with the funds they need.

**A strong start – but keep it coming**

Well done to those people who donated to our fighting fund last month to bring it up to £950. This included supporters raising funds at Reading and Leeds Festivals. Many thanks to JA and DA in Coventry who generously donated £100 to support our work. Let's keep it coming!

**Send us your money**

If you want to help, and remember – every penny counts then please rush cheques and postal orders to Workers Power, BCM 7750, London, WC1N 3XX You can also donate online at [www.workerspower.com](http://www.workerspower.com) and <http://www.fifthinternational.org>

## EDITORIAL

# Strike wave grows – link the struggles

**G**ordon Brown and David Cameron agree on one thing. After handing hundreds of billions to the banks, now there will have to be cuts. Working class people will be made to pay the price, by cutting our public services, slashing our pensions, holding down our pay below inflation and letting bosses throw thousands upon thousands of us onto the dole every month.

We will be forced to pay for a crisis we never caused, while the bankers and the bosses get off scot free.

No wonder, up and down the country, workers are fighting back. There is a strike wave growing – one that has the power to beat the politicians and the bosses' plans if we can only unite our strength.

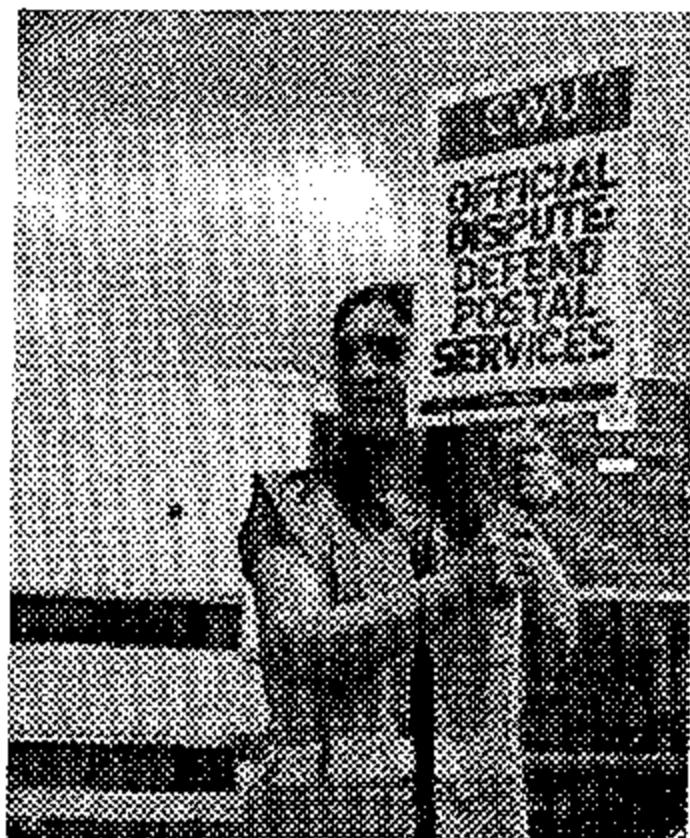
From Dundee to the Isle of Wight, workers have occupied factories earmarked for closure.

The Vestas wind turbine blade plant occupation won solidarity from workers the length and breadth of the country. Workers at Fujitsu have voted overwhelmingly for strike action. A fifth of all firefighters have taken industrial action in a dispute that could go national. And 30,000 construction workers at giant energy plants across the UK will walk out in defence of national pay rates and working conditions.

Over a thousand Unite members at Cadbury voted 8:1 for strike action after management reneged on a pay rise. At John Lennon Airport in Liverpool, 150 ServisAir staff look to have stopped 23 compulsory redundancies after nine days on strike. And 60 poultry workers occupied the Two Sisters food factory in Smethwick in early September, in defence of six union reps who had been suspended after calling on the company to discipline a racist security guard.

Most important of all, after more than 10 days of protest strikes this summer 130,000 postal workers are balloting for strike action in a struggle that could set the situation alight.

Before the economic crisis, almost all strikes in Britain were limited to a day or two. But the new strikes aren't all like that. We are seeing all-out indefinite strikes in



many places, like the Centrica gas terminal in Barrow, Leeds council refuse depot and Tower Hamlets College in London. By not setting a definite end to their action, the workers are seizing the initiative and saying: we will continue until we win!

## Solidarity action

These workers are no longer playing by the bosses' rules. Occupations, wildcat walkouts, flying pickets have all ignored the anti-union laws that skew industrial disputes in favour of the employers. Instead strikers have gone straight to fellow workers for support and held the bosses' property to ransom.

The Vestas workers risked all, even their redundancy money, by taking over their factory. But they have been kept going by donations from the local community, union branches and collections. Their supporters have formed local solidarity groups to spread the word.

In South London, the Vestas support group agreed to extend its solidarity to all workers fighting for their jobs and conditions.

That's the way! In every town and city we can set up Strike Support Committees – like the miners' support committees that criss-crossed the country in the great strike of 1984. We can bring workers from different strikes together from below. This will encourage workers coming into struggle to be bold, knowing there is a network of support they can count on.

And since many workers in dispute are finding that their own union officials limit their strikes to one day, stay within the law, or

accept rotten deals, these rank and file networks could deliver alternative sources of solidarity and leadership.

## Politics

We need to bring all the struggles into a mass movement that says, "We won't pay for the bosses' crisis!" and demands a series of emergency measures to stop the crisis wrecking more lives, to stop the jobs massacre, to stop unemployment reaching three million, to create jobs for school leavers.

We should demand the major unions call a one-day General Strike as a first big united protest against job losses, and that the government take over all firms declaring redundancies to save jobs and spend billions made by taxing the rich on creating new jobs for youth.

In one big sector comes out on strike this autumn, like the postal workers or the railway workers, the whole labour movement should come to their support, with mass pickets, refusal to handle scab deliveries, and solidarity strikes.

If the government or the bosses dare to use the anti-union laws against a striking union, then we should all walk out together, bring the country to a standstill and show Brown who's boss.

We need to build a mass movement that forces the government's hand. The first step is the demonstrations outside the TUC on 13 September and the Labour Party conference on 27 September. Let's make these huge shows of strength.

In the meantime, why are our unions paying millions to Labour, when it's the very party that is attacking working class people? With millions of workers disgusted at Brown, Mandelson and his cronies, with the postal workers set to vote against paying another penny to labour, with the firefighters and railworkers already outside the Labour Party, isn't it time for the unions to set up a new party, a party of our own?

That's why Workers Power has launched a Call for a New Anticapitalist Party. Read it, pass it round your workmates, sign it and build up the forces that can make it happen.

## IN THIS ISSUE

**4** Joy Macready and Jeremy Dewar update on the campaign for wind energy

**5** A CWU rep reports on what could be a decisive struggle in this recession – the post strike of 2009

**6** A worker from London Met talks about their fight against university cutbacks

**7** Jeremy Dewar reports on a looming national construction strike

**8** Marcus Hallaby investigates the controversy surrounding the Lockerbie bombing

**9** John Bowman looks at what politicians are planning for the NHS behind closed doors

**10** We need to form a New Anticapitalist Party argues Luke Cooper

**12** Are we seeing the "green shoots" of recovery? Richard Brenner explains

**14** Keith Spencer takes a look at Obama's record so far

**16** The Afghan elections fell a long way short of democracy argues Dave Stockton

**18** The repression of Sri Lankan Tamils is being stepped up and must be stopped

**19** Simon Hardy looks at the changing political landscape of Japan

**20** How the Great Miners' Strike was led to defeat from the jaws of victory

**24** Spotlight on the need for an Antifascist Defence League

# Vestas: the fight for nationalisation goes on

By Joy Macready & Jeremy Dewar

As we go to press, Vestas workers and their supporters are trying desperately to stop the last turbine blades leaving the Isle of Wight factory. Pitching tents in front of a giant mechanical arm to obstruct the removal of 44ft blades onto a river barge is a risky business but also testament to the passion these workers attach to the plant.

The three-week occupation was brought to a close by police enforcing a court injunction. Vestas has now moved its business to more profitable zones: the USA and China. The only real hope to save the 625 jobs – vital, skilled positions for a community with high unemployment – now lies with the Labour government.

Energy and climate change minister Ed Miliband has given a series of bogus arguments against state ownership.

**1. Vestas was making blades for the USA and it doesn't make sense to ship them over from the UK.** Neither does it make sense to ship blades from abroad to the UK for our turbines, so keep factories and skilled workers to build them.

**2. The blades are the wrong size for UK use.** Vestas drew up a plan to convert the factory to produce north European size blades last year, so let the workers take control and implement it.

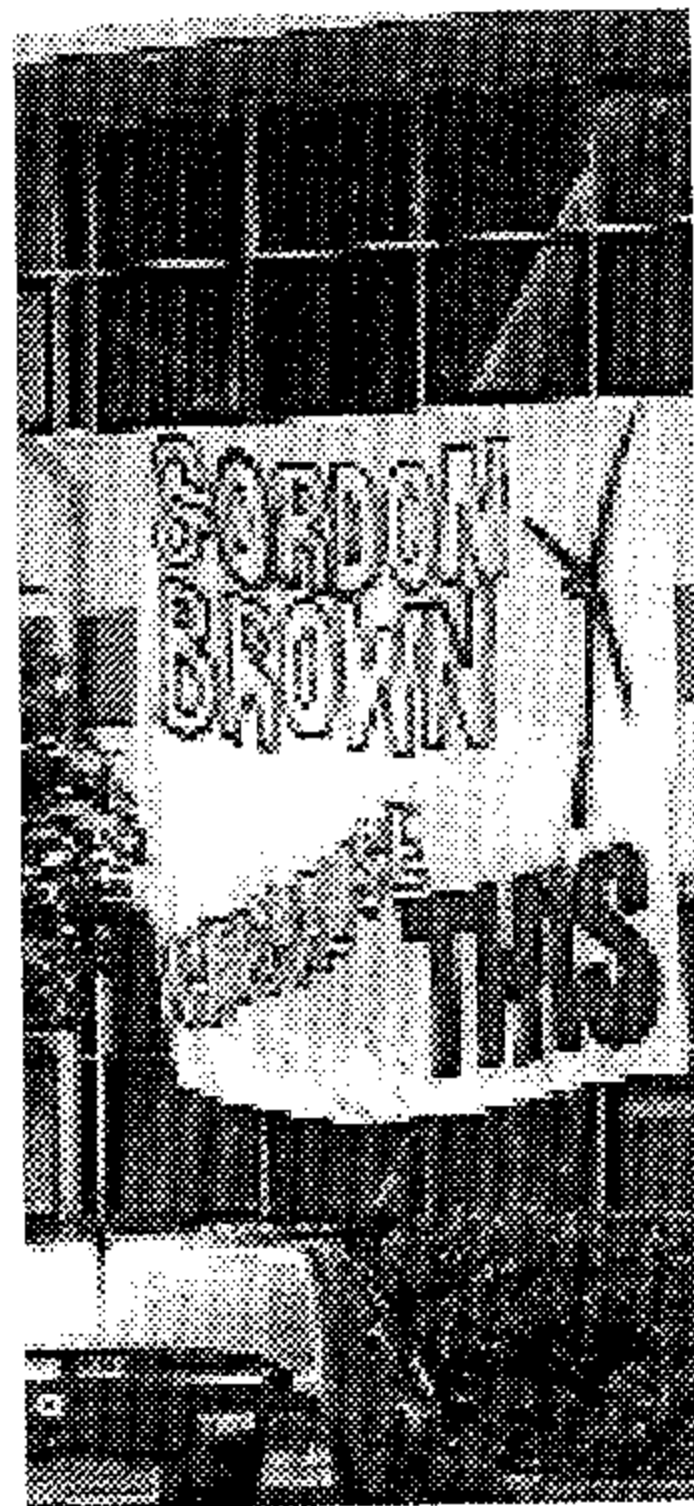
**3. Landowners are refusing permission to develop onshore wind farms.** Override them or nationalise their land, starting with that of Tory MP for the Isle of Wight Andrew Turner, who has turned down more applications for wind turbines than any other person in the UK.

**4. The government offered to buy the plant but Vestas would not sell.** Then confiscate it, since the workers made enough profit for Vestas over the past 12 years to pay for it many times over.

We must now force Labour to nationalise the plant, without compensation to the company, and under the control of the workers. The national day of action on 17 September is a start. Organise workplace meetings. Pull stunts, like dropping banners or occupying government buildings.

Labour's White Paper on climate change promises 1.2 million green jobs by 2015 and to provide 40 per cent of Britain's energy from renewables by 2020. Yet these people have closed a renewable energy plant while giving the green light to coal-fired power stations! Why should we believe a word they say?

Labour MPs who posture green should put their money where their mouth is and propose an amendment for the nationalisation of Vestas UK. Outside parliament, we need a mass campaign, backed up by industrial action, to force Labour to act and nationalise Vestas, saving jobs and the environment.



# 10:10 – saving the planet or corporate greenwash?

By Kam Kumar

A huge corporate campaign to reduce climate change has been launched this month. The new campaign, 10:10, describes itself as a "movement" aiming to get thousands of individuals, businesses and organisations in the UK to cut their carbon emissions by a tenth in 2010.

Britain has committed to an 80 per cent cut by 2050. But scientists believe that governments are using these long-term targets as an excuse to avoid taking decisions today that could impact on companies' short-term profits. They also point out that the later the big cuts in emissions, the more carbon there is in the atmosphere and therefore the more climate catastrophes.

In short, environmentalists are saying that, without the 10:10 target, other climate goals will be unattainable.

## Giant polluters' support

Within days of the launch, top Tory, Labour and Lib Dem MPs all signed up, each of them promising to reduce their personal carbon footprint by 10 per cent. Clearly they want to show voters they take climate change seriously with the general election around the corner.

More than 200 businesses and organisations have also signed up, including corporate energy polluters EDF and British Gas. But here the campaign starts to show its capitalist bias. First, companies only have to make a 3 per cent cut – although it is not explained what this means for the collective

target. Second, they are urged to make these cuts by "eliminating waste, increasing efficiency, that sort of thing".

But EDF and British Gas own gas and coal-fired power stations across the UK. EDF is building the controversial Kingsnorth station despite huge opposition from the Climate Camp and Greenpeace. Despite its claims for the still untried carbon capture and storage technology, EDF has refused to be legally bound to make Kingsnorth or any of its plants low carbon.

Yet the 10:10 campaign fails to address the problem of fossil fuels and the urgent need to switch to renewable energy production. Instead it encourages individuals to take holidays in Britain rather than flying abroad, turn the heating down and grow their own fruit and veg.

While 10:10 has focused attention on the need for urgent action, it has in fact offered politicians and businesses an easy way out. Already campaigners have complained that it could have a negative effect by focusing on short-term solutions over 12 months when a long-term commitment to change is needed.

Even if the campaign succeeded in cutting emissions by 10 per cent, this will be cancelled out if the government continues to support a new generation of gas and coal stations.

We can't win in an alliance with EDF and British Gas. Instead, we need to fight for the nationalisation of the energy companies and a democratic plan of production, so that we can make a massive shift away from fossil fuels for profit, towards sustainable energy and saving the planet.

**FIGHTBACK**

# Royal Mail out to bust union – build support for postal strike

By a CWU postal rep

One hundred and thirty thousand postal workers are set to vote in a ballot for strike action against Royal Mail's plan for sweeping office closures and job cuts.

This follows a string of one day strikes this summer by tens of thousands of workers – including 10 days of action in London alone.

Royal Mail condemns the strikes as “irresponsible” and in August Business Secretary Peter Mandelson slammed the strikes. “It is time for the union to wake up to the need for change to stop the Mail's further decline.”

What a hypocrite! It is the company and the government who are trying to break the post union and restructure Royal Mail, to make it profitable and ready for privatisation.

Labour's had a grudge against the postal workers for years. In 2006 they opened it up to private profiteers like TNT. Then this year Brown and Mandelson made their move – a bid to privatise Royal Mail earlier this year. But a CWU-led campaign forced them to back down... for the time being.

The company claims it is in a “very tight financial position” and



in May imposed a pay freeze on postal workers.

But Royal Mail has just doubled its profits to £321 million and awarded its managers bonuses worth thousands apiece. Its chief executive Adam Crozier trousered a £1.3 million package.

### “Reforms” for private profit

Royal Mail talks of modernisation as if anyone standing in their way is some kind of dinosaur. But managers aim to install 500 new sorting machines in 2010... and cut tens of thousands of full-time jobs, breaking their previous commitment to issue only voluntary redundancies. Half of Royal Mail's sorting and delivery offices are marked for closure. These “reforms” will

make the service worse – with later delivery times and a poorly trained and paid workforce. But the objective is not a more modern service to meet the needs of the public, it's raising profits to attract privatisers.

The company has started the cuts already, demanding 10 per cent savings in April, and imposing flexibility and speedups. Managers have bullied workers into accepting them, sacking those opposing them and sparking unofficial walkouts in Dundee, Woolwich, and Stoke. Many postal workers are now coming to the conclusion that one-day strikes are not enough. They know that management then has the chance to clear backlogs before the next action. So we need a national strike to deliver a decisive blow to

Crozier and Mandelson's plans. If industrial action escalates to an all-out strike it would not only smash Royal Mail's plans but also inspire others to fight for their jobs.

But CWU leaders Billy Hayes and Dave Ward have sat on their hands while mail centres closed. They have delayed the national ballot and put huge pressure on mail centre workers in Stoke to call off their indefinite strike against compulsory cuts in hours and pay.

So postal workers need rank and file control of the dispute and negotiations, to ensure the strike quickly and effectively hits home and to stop any attempt by union leaders to sell it short. Other workers can support them by building solidarity committees like in the days of the Miners' Strike. And if Royal Mail use TNT or others to try to break a postal workers strike the whole trade union movement should walk out, join the picket lines and send the scabs packing.

If the postal workers are beaten, it's a blow to every worker. But if we win, it will be a victory for everyone fighting for jobs, pay, pensions and public services.

That's why every worker should rally to support the postal workers now.

# Victory to Tower Hamlets strike

Keith Spencer reports

An all-out indefinite strike has hit Tower Hamlets College. Management wants to cut 13 lecturers and 1,000 places from the English for Speakers of Other Languages (Esol) course.

Yet Tower Hamlets is one of the poorest boroughs in the country with thousands of inhabitants whose first language isn't English. These cuts will prevent migrants from applying for jobs or citizenship.

Staff started the action on 27 August after their union, the University and College Union, failed to persuade the college bosses to drop the cuts. The cuts are part

of Labour's plans to turn colleges into profit making businesses rather than community services.

The all-out action is the best response to the cuts. Staff and students have supported the picket line in large numbers and the UCU has recruited new members who have enthusiastically thrown themselves into the strike. Students have also set up a solidarity Facebook group, which has started an e-mail campaign aimed at management and councillors.

Strikers have also visited workplaces in the borough, such as fire station in Poplar, where cuts are also being proposed.

Local teachers, lecturers and council workers have raised money

for the strikers.

The staff's all-out indefinite strike can be an inspiration to us all and a good example to other workers considering action. Furthermore, the strikes at London Met university, and Haggerston and Norlington schools offer an opportunity for education workers to link up and strike together, drawing others into struggle.

The Tower Hamlets strikers could – by collecting money, organising meetings, demonstrations and pickets, and fighting for solidarity – become a real focus for united action across the borough. It could link up with the posties and other workers in struggle.

The union's head of further edu-

cation Barry Lovejoy said that, despite last minute negotiations failing, “We will continue to press for further talks, because we want to get this situation resolved as soon as possible.” Striking workers should demand that they are in charge of talks with college bosses and decide on any deal.

The workers have taken a brave and decisive stand and should be supported by all of us.

• **Send urgent messages of support to Richard McEwan (branch secretary) on 07532 364 638. Take a collection at work and send money to the strike fund, c/o Keith Priddle, Tower Hamlets College, Arbour Square Site, E1 0PT**

## LONDON METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

# “The electric feeling of solidarity and determination”

Workers at one of London's biggest universities are fighting vicious cuts to jobs which will throw hundreds on the dole and close the door to thousands of working class students. *Max Watson*, Unison assistant branch secretary at London Met, speaks to *Workers Power*

### Tell us about the crisis at London Metropolitan?

London Met is in an unprecedented financial crisis due to long-term over payments from the funding body HEFCE. Now they want their money back – £36 million – and will reduce our annual core grant by £15 million. The over-payments are due to dodgy “student completion rates” from which HEFCE calculates their allocation of core funding for universities. Basically, management were misleading HEFCE over how many students were completing their first year.

The government have since capped our grant to allow for a maximum of 10,600 students, so we cannot plan for growth and have to turn away students who, at a time of spiralling youth unemployment, have nowhere else to turn but education.

So the problem is twofold: the government funding system for universities penalises places like London Met. Our predominantly working class, local, mature students take longer to get a degree, for many reasons, but the state rewards the Russell Group universities whose privately schooled students breeze through the first year.

Second, management at London met insist on making as many job cuts as possible – initially planning to cut 550 full-time equivalents (or about 800 actual jobs) when they could make savings elsewhere – like selling mothballed buildings or scrapping performance-related pay for managers.

### You had a successful strike in July. What's the mood like now?

The successful strike in July was the culmination of a long campaign before that: letter writing, demonstrations, rallies, petitions, regular protests and leafleting; hundreds of us marched alongside other trade union campaigns under the slogan “Defend jobs and education” in Holloway Road in May; we held numerous public ral-



University and College Union members demonstrating at London Metropolitan University – the mood is growing for united fight

lies outside the meetings of the Board of Governors; UCU held a one day strike in May; and there was a week-long student occupation of one of the departments (John Cass Art Media and Design); we'd forced an adjournment debate about London Met in Parliament – and gained the support of 42 MPs.

All of this helped to increase media attention and piled the pressure on management and government to resolve the crisis without making staff and students pay the price. So by the time we coordinated a day of strike action in July (both Unison and lecturers' union UCU), we had already come a long way.

The feeling now is fairly positive. Through our campaign so far we've stopped management from making as many redundancies as they had planned and almost all of them through voluntary schemes or “natural wastage”. Add to that the apparent backing down of the threatened outsourcing of IT provision; the fact that the VC had to resign, as did the

head of IT who wanted to outsource; the opening of an inquiry that could force the rest of management out – we're on the verge of victory and it's clear that this is through a sustained campaign that has included co-ordinated strike action.

But not quite: there are still more job cuts on the table and we aren't celebrating yet by any means. Some compulsory notices were issued at the end of July and August and more are in the pipeline (management threatened 52). So our branch meetings in the beginning of September, for both UCU and Unison members, voted to escalate our action, calling for an end to the job cuts and for management to pay the price.

### Tower Hamlets is on indefinite strike. Is that necessary at London Met?

Our campaign's unity between staff, students and between the UCU and Unison has been its key strength, and we hold regular joint members meetings. We invited

four comrades from Tower Hamlets College to speak about their struggle and a collection immediately raised £600.

But the call for an all-out strike at London Met has not yet been taken up – for a number of reasons. It was agreed to escalate our action and threaten maximum disruption during the first week of term if the redundancies aren't lifted. In addition to this, the UCU has called for a boycott of LMC, which will also increase the pressure.

### Haggerston school in Hackney and Norlington school in Leyton are on strike this month. Is the time right for a fightback across education?

It's clear that the cut backs in education have already begun – and so have the beginnings of a fight back. Tower Hamlets are obviously leading the way, and we should all now be focusing on practical solidarity for their fight.

This is the first indefinite strike in education in many years and the strikers cannot be starved back in to work. London Met strikers have visited Tower Hamlets and they've also supported us in our campaign. Solidarity works both ways and of course there is a lot of potential to co-ordinate. There are large hurdles ahead of us for that to happen, but the electric feeling of solidarity and determination to win at Tower Hamlets does indicate that the mood is there, for certain.

A victory at London Met, Tower Hamlets, Haggerston or Norlington would add to the good example set by the successful occupation that saved Lewisham Bridge School. This is only the beginning we're bound to see dozens more campaigns like it throughout the next year and beyond, so we need to pull out all the stops to support these campaigns, setting a good example on how to fight back and win.

• More about the campaign at: [savelondonmetuni.blogspot.com](http://savelondonmetuni.blogspot.com)

**FIGHTBACK**

# Construction workers have the power to take on energy bosses

Wildcat strikes have been a regular feature at refineries and power stations this year. Now they are ready for a national official strike. *Jeremy Dewar* says it's make or break time

The vast majority of GMB's 7,000 members working on construction sites at Britain's oil refineries and power stations have voted for strike action. There is no doubt that Unite, the union which organises the other 23,000 workers, will deliver a similar resounding mandate for action.

The stage is set for a decisive encounter. Either the employers will frustrate an increasingly militant and well organised group of workers, or the power workers will score a victory that will resonate across the labour movement.

The unions' demands centre around the Blue Book (NAECI), an

industry-wide agreement covering pay and conditions. The sites affected include Grangemouth, Sellafield, Stanlow, Staythorpe, Aberthaw, Pembroke.

While workers are aggrieved not to have been offered a pay rise for 2010, despite high profits for the employers, the main issue for many of them is fairness.

They want: to be able to inspect company records to make sure they are not underpaying workers, especially those recruited abroad; a register of skills and of unemployed workers; 12 paid trips home for all workers, no matter where they come from; and union rights to take up grievances on site.

## Jobs and rights for all

In the industry, a maze of contractors and subcontractors has served to break up large workforces, obscure real pay and conditions and blacklist trade unionists. This resulted in a series of (mostly successful) unofficial strikes earlier this year.

But one negative feature also emerged: the slogan of "British jobs for British workers". Fuelled by some officials, notably Unite's Derek Simpson, and taken up by right-wing elements, it divided worker against worker and played into the employers' hands.

Fortunately, the goals of this strike are clear – even if some of the

material distributed by Unite is not. Militants can use the strike vote to go out and unionise migrant workers on the sites, explaining that they want to equalise wages and conditions up to the highest level for all.

In a recent campaign in Uskmouth, south Wales, activists drew up leaflets in Polish, Hungarian and German to get the message across.

If construction workers continue their traditions of mass picketing, solidarity action and rank and file control of the strike, they can win a tremendous victory not just for themselves but for the whole working class.

## Leeds bin workers throw out pay cut

By Michael Tate

Six hundred Leeds binmen and women from GMB, Unite and Unison are on indefinite strike against the council's plans to cut their pay. The action started on the 7 September is against a cut to their wages of a third or an incredible £6,000 a year from 2011; many could lose their homes.

In a new grading review, Leeds Council evaluated the pay of its employees by weighing up mental, physical and other requirements for each occupation. Two council reviews gave refuse collectors a figure of £18,000 a year, but then an independent company valued them at just £15,000. Council bosses just ran the reviews until they obtained the answer they wanted.

The council claims that these cuts will equalise the pay of men and women. So why not increase the pay of women, then? This is a

blatant attempt at divide and rule – pay for women should be levelled up to male wage levels.

This pay cut is about one thing only: to make the service cheaper, and therefore easier to sell off to a private bidder, leaving a second-rate service for the people of Leeds.

The council has refused to back down, leaving the workers with no alternative than to strike. They voted unanimously for a strike and are absolutely right to go all-out.

Increasingly workers are turning to all out, indefinite strikes – power construction workers, Liverpool airport, Vestas occupiers, the Stoke mail centre – in order to face down vicious attacks with an equally determined response.

Rather than one-day strikes, which give employers time to undermine the action, an all-out response affords them no respite and raises the stakes.

It is the best way to win public support and inspire solidarity from other unions.

## Massive vote in favour of strike at Fujitsu

By Andy Yorke

Unite and PCS union members at IT multinational Fujitsu have returned a massive "Yes" vote for strike action against attacks on their jobs, pays and pension.

Fujitsu announced a pay freeze and the intention to close its main final salary pension scheme. To ram this through, the company is dismissing 4,000 employees and forcing them to reapply for their jobs with new contracts and worse pensions.

The workers in both unions have demanded a fight, with consultative ballots returning an 87 per cent vote for strike action by Unite members, while the PCS result is also expected to be "overwhelmingly" in favour. The company retaliated on 26 August by announcing the 1,200 job

cuts (one out of 10 of its workers) despite a £200 million pre-tax profit last year. Now the company is setting up "consultative forums" to bypass the unions.

Unite and PCS leaders have dragged out a response, going through the roundabout route of a consultative ballot, fearful of looking militant in a recession.

But now that the workers have spoken, activists are in a position to demand a speedy ballot and sharply escalating action – up to an all-out strike if Fujitsu does not back down. Building cross-union workplace committees can give the strike solid roots and coordinate with other workers' action, while a rank and file network could push action forward if the leaders get cold feet.

## WAR ON TERROR

# Lockerbie: who really blew up Pan Am Flight 103?

By Marcus Halaby

The decision of the Scottish Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill to release Abdelbaset Ali Al-Megrahi on “compassionate grounds” has provoked a scandal in Britain and the United States, where President Obama has condemned the decision and relatives of the American victims of the bombing have called for a boycott of Britain.

In the UK (at least outside of Scotland), the decision has brought the predictable outrage at the release of a “terrorist” allegedly responsible for the deaths of 270 people. However, much of the media points out that the release was connected to a £546 million oil and gas deal signed by BP in 2007 following a visit to Libya by Tony Blair.

Gordon Brown, who apparently told the Libyans he did not want Megrahi to die in jail, has denied placing any pressure on the Scottish National Party (SNP) administration in Edinburgh to release Megrahi, while SNP First Minister Alex Salmond has defended the release as being “the right deci-

sion” for “the right reasons”. The Tories’ attempt to make political capital out of this has been limited by the revelation that a senior Tory peer and former minister, Lord Trefgarne, had lobbied MacAskill for Megrahi’s release.

### Guilty or innocent?

The one issue that the media furore has avoided has been whether or not Megrahi, the Libyan convicted of planting the bomb that destroyed Pan Am Flight 103 over the Scottish town of Lockerbie in December 1988, was actually guilty in the first place.

Megrahi, who has been diagnosed with terminal prostate cancer, and who has always previously maintained his innocence, dropped the second of two appeals against his conviction two weeks prior to his release, following a private meeting with MacAskill in Greenock prison.

Whatever deal may have taken place between the British government or the Scottish Executive with the Libyans over oil, the fact is that another deal quite plainly did place – one allowing Megrahi to go home in return for not making revelations that might expose his conviction as



Megrahi arrives in Tripoli

a frame-up – which the outraged journalists and politicians seem much less interested in.

### Western hypocrisy

He was, after all, convicted in a trial in which his co-accused, Lamin Khalifah Fhimah, was acquitted and a key witness was paid a £2 million bribe. In addition, the US Defence Intelligence Agency orig-

inally believed Libya was not involved in the Lockerbie bombing.

### US terrorists

The initial suspects for the bombing were two Syrian-based Palestinian factions, allegedly acting on behalf of Iran, in revenge for the shooting down of the Iran Air Flight 655 by a US warship in 1988, with 290 deaths. Where are the demands that the culprits of this terrorist outrage are brought to justice?

The Scottish Criminal Cases Review Commission even conducted a four-year investigation, referring Megrahi’s case to the Court of Criminal Appeal in June 2007 with the statement that there was “no reasonable basis” for the original trial court’s conclusion. Without this evidence, the murky role of the US and British intelligence agencies and the motivation behind their decision to blame Libya for the bombing instead, will go unexamined.

The real outrage here is the cover-up of this investigation. The families of the Lockerbie victims and all those interested in justice should demand the immediate publication of all documents relating to Megrahi’s case.

# If you want citizenship – don’t oppose the war

By Natalie Silverstein

Home Secretary Alan Johnson has unveiled proposals for an appalling and discriminatory new “points-based” system for gaining British citizenship. They include compulsory “orientation days” for applicants to learn “British cultural norms and values”. In addition to the compulsory citizenship test already established, a more difficult second test on British politics and history will follow.

The British government wants to pick and choose a certain

type of “citizen” – one with establishment values that fit with the mainstream centre ground of British politics.

Johnson told the *News of the World* “Bad behaviour will be penalised, and only those with enough points will earn the right to a British passport.” There has been some debate over what constitutes “bad behaviour”. Home Office sources have been reported as saying those who go on antiwar protests could be penalised. The consultation paper explicitly talks about penalising those who show “an active disregard for UK values”.

The Labour government claims this is a “carrot and stick” approach. Applicants could increase their chances by campaigning and canvassing for a political party or through trade union activities. A whole host of other criteria dependent on skills, education, work experience and so on are also proposed.

Trade union and political activity might sound progressive but it is no doubt a certain type of activity which will be encouraged. Showing dedication to capitalist politics by assisting the Labour or Tory parties’ election campaigns might earn points, but no doubt cam-

aigning for more radical alternatives will be viewed as a “disregarding UK values”.

Organising strikes and occupations against job losses and cuts won’t go down well either. Just look at how the Home Office recently deported trade union militancy fighting for a living wage at the University of London. The message from the government is clear: part of learning British cultural values is learning not to dissent from the British government. Don’t rock the boat and accept the status quo if you want to stand a chance of becoming a citizen!



**FIGHTBACK**

# Leaked plan targets one in 10 NHS jobs

**By John Bowman**

The NHS is facing the biggest programme of cuts ever known in its history. The McKinsey report, leaked to the *Health Service Journal* on 3 September recommends decimating staff numbers by cutting 137,000 posts. While the report commissioned by the Department of Health is an advisory document and not currently government policy, it has been circulated among senior NHS managers.

The McKinsey report offers an insight into the debate being had out among policy makers and politicians from both parties on how to reduce the UK budget deficit by making substantial public sector cuts.

David Cameron has tried to both be in favour of efficiency savings, while also maintaining existing spending targets and without threatening core services. But his own party has been more upfront about its plans. The *Evening Standard* reported that two-thirds of

his fellow Tory MPs rejected any increase in health service spending, while half supported tax breaks for the middle classes to help them fund private health insurance schemes – undermining the NHS as a universal provider.

It was the Labour government, of course, that commissioned the McKinsey report. So, though they formally rejected its findings, they are clearly thinking along similar lines of cuts to shore up the government budget.

Neither of the main parties wants to be seen attacking the NHS in an election year. But plans for cuts are still being made behind closed doors in Whitehall.

The impending NHS funding crisis has been caused by government marketisation policies first conceived of by Thatcher but only fully implemented by Blair and Brown. Private Finance Initiative schemes have resulted in big business sucking the health service dry. Across England, £70bn is being spent over the lifetime of contracts for new hospital buildings in return for a

mere £12.27bn of initial private investment.

Siphoning off operations to private treatment centres has cost hospitals in some cases 40 per cent more than if treatment was undertaken in-house.

At the same time a bloated bureaucracy of managers to administer the ever-growing number of public-private partnerships and contractual agreements with profit making firms has massively increased costs too. Never mind the billions more paid to pharmaceutical firms that sell overpriced drugs to hospitals to maintain a hefty profit margin.

Workers in healthcare are well organised and have the power to stop this shameful plan. The health unions should say right now, any cuts in jobs and healthcare will meet with a united strike, with emergency cover only, decided by the workers themselves.

A health strike may strike may sound drastic, but without one, lives would be lost. All workers should rally to the defence of the NHS!

## Round up: Education fightback

Schools in Britain are facing an acceleration of cut backs and privatisation as a result of the recession. But staff are fighting back.

In **Tamworth**, Staffordshire, the opening of a new city academy will be met with the closure of at least one community high school and the closure of all sixth forms in the council if the plans are not stopped. After a series of strikes by teachers, more action will be taken on September 16.

**Haggerston School for Girls** in Hackney, a city academy since 2004, saw the head teacher resign last month as a result of walk-outs by teachers in July, who are balloting for more action. Ex-head **Maggie Kalnins** claimed that a fall in the school budget made redundancies of experienced teachers was a necessity. But staff, students and parents led a struggle to save quality teaching and learning.

In nearby **Leyton**, a campaigning coalition, complemented by teaching strikes at **Normington** school have already made progress on preventing five borough schools from being merged into two "trusts" under the control of private organisations.

These are all inspiring local examples of how we can defend ourselves against the coming attacks on education. But with councils introducing spending cuts that could also see the closure of 200 rural primary schools in England, and huge cuts being announced at major universities and FE colleges, national co-ordination is absolutely essential.

Teachers need to build **joint committees** of action with all education workers, students and parents. We need to build a national demonstration against education cuts and privatisation.

# Jobs for youth!

**By Dan Tyler**

The scale of youth unemployment in Britain today is reaching crisis levels, as thousands are turned out of low-security and temporary jobs to join thousands more leaving education unable to find work.

While the slashing of university places and the preparation for huge cuts to public services will make the situation much, much worse.

Unemployment among the 16-25 age group climbed from 700,000 in 2008 to just under a million in June 2009 hauling with it the cold echo of the early 1990s and a "lost generation" of young people thrown straight on the dole when they should be starting their working lives.

Ironically, it was in

opposition during the 1990s that Gordon Brown said Prime Minister John Major had created a "lost generation" of teenagers with a recession "made in Downing Street".

But typically, Labour's approach to solving the problem has been marked by a turn to the market along with empty spin.

The **Backing Young Britain** campaign launched in July aimed to create a partnership between large businesses and Job Centre Plus. It has pledged 85,000 new jobs for youth, but the campaign has been criticised as many of these jobs will be allocated to those already in work, or for very short periods of time – some for just a few hours.

With the number of Job Seekers Allowance claimants among 18-24 year olds having

risen to 472,000 in June compared with 201,500 a year ago, it is obvious that there is no market solution to youth unemployment.

The key task now is for youth and the trade unions to organise to fight for a huge programme of public works and expansion of education and training facilities, paid for by taxing the rich.

## Demonstrate at the Labour Party Conference

**Sunday 27 September****Assemble 12.30pm****Madeira Road, Brighton****Supporters include NUT, UCU, PCS and NUJ**

## THE LEFT DEBATES ITS FUTURE

# THE CASE FOR A NEW ANT

Since the European elections, a discussion has begun on building a powerful alternative to the Labour Party. **Luke Cooper** argues for a new party to have a class struggle policy against capitalism

On the postal workers' picket lines there is an argument that, more than any other gets wholehearted agreement: the Labour Party does not defend the interests of working class and an alternative to it is urgently needed.

This month the London region of the Communication Workers Union will ballot its members - in open defiance of the union's rules - on whether the region should continue to fund the Labour Party. The results will be announced one week before the Labour Party conference. A resounding rejection of the Labour link is expected.

This is not surprising. The postal workers for years have been on the frontline of resistance to this government's capitalist policies.

So many sections of workers have had the same experience of this Labour government: no improvement in working conditions, trade union rights and quality of life combined with historic attacks on working class gains that the Tories never even dared to touch.

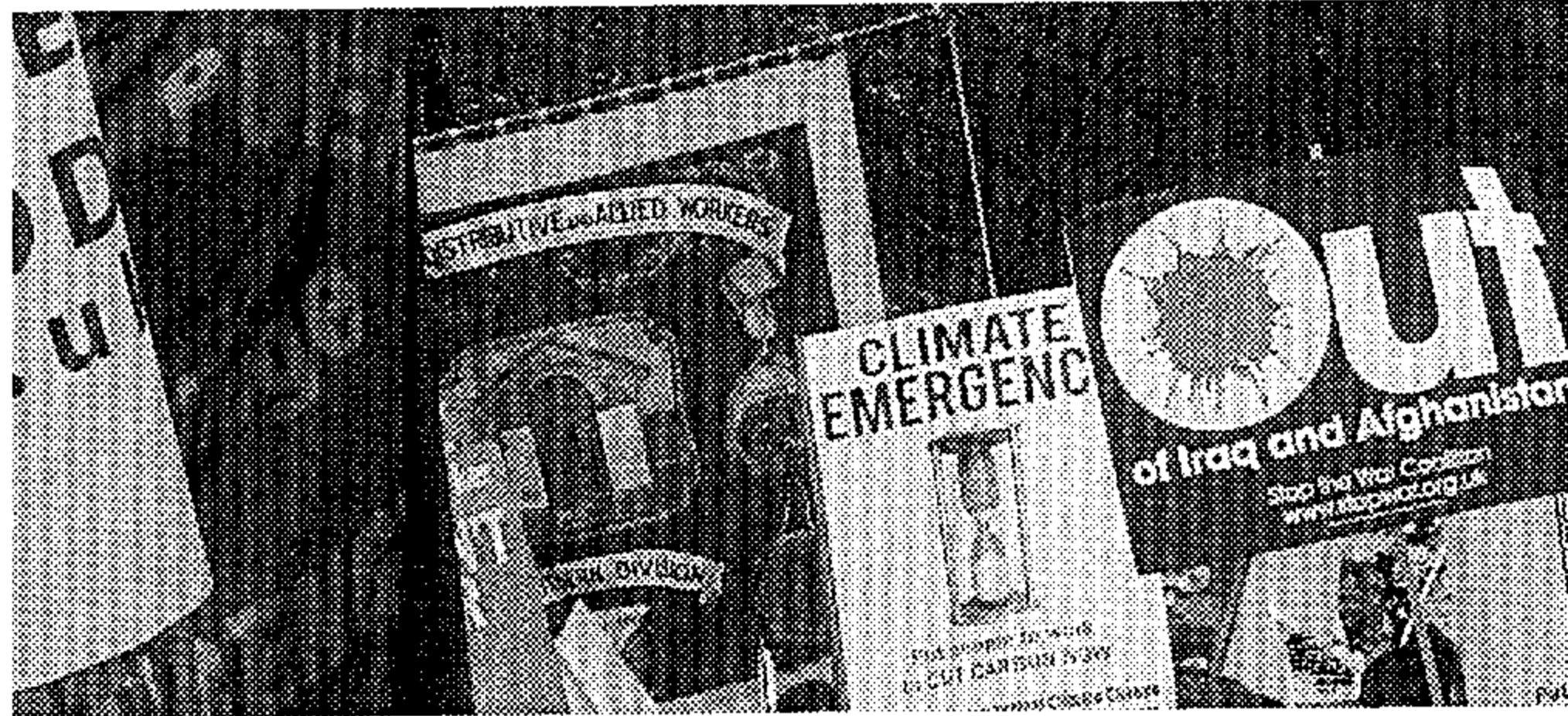
Though spending on the public sector rose sharply under Labour, billions of this was wasted on business consultants, top-level managers' salaries and a huge programme of privatisation, which brought the profit motive into the heart of the welfare system.

For years as chancellor and then prime minister Brown flattered the "wealth creators" in the City, so it was scarcely surprising he then bailed them out to the tune of trillions of pounds when their financial house of cards came crashing down. Then as the world economy plunged into its most serious economic crisis since the 1930s, Labour refused to nationalise a single firm to halt the jobs massacre.

Now the talk from all parties is that, after the next election, swingeing cuts in public spending will be necessary to pay for Labour's bail out to the City of London. Add to this, Labour's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, its maintenance of the worst anti-union laws in western Europe, its racist scapegoating of asylum seekers and immigrants, then it is little wonder there is mass disillusionment with the party.

### Resistance

A wave of resistance is growing to Labour's attacks and the capitalist crisis.



We need a new workers' party to fight against job cuts, climate change and war

Workplace occupations from Visteon to Vestas have sent a message to the whole working class. We don't have to troop quietly to the dole offices: we can unite and fight back. Indefinite strikes at Tower Hamlets College, Liverpool Airport, Leeds refuge workers, all show a growing determination to fight.

In one of the most important struggles, postal workers are fighting a vicious programme of 'modernisation' - worker harder, longer, for less - with a series of growing strikes building towards a national walkout.

The recent struggles mark a turnaround from the first six months after the recession hit, when hundreds of thousands of workers were laid off with little resistance.

The problem wasn't that workers couldn't be won to a fight back - it was that their official union leadership told them nothing could be done to resist closures.

Many of them urged their members to offer "givebacks" to their bosses - pay cuts, "holidays" and mass redundancies as an alternative to closures. When Woolworth's went bust sacking its 30,000 workforce, officials from the retail workers' union USDAW simply said job losses were "tragic" - without lifting a finger to stop them.

Even in the CWU it was only massive pressure from rank and file post workers that forced the union leaders to take up the fight.

### Politics

It is an age-old problem that union leaders, who earn salaries several times those of the members they represent, often sit on their hands rather than fight.

But there is also a specific problem right now.

Many of the unions, particularly the big ones like Unison and Unite, have very strong links to the Labour Party. With Labour facing an election next year they don't want to rock the boat by leading struggles.

But the struggle of the postal workers - has given millions to Labour over the years - shows the forward for everyone.

If it's a choice between fighting for your livelihood and industry or propping up an anti-working class Labour government then it's the Labour link that has to go.

We should link building resistance to the economic crisis to organising a powerful and united challenge to the Labour Party. After all, it isn't hard to make the links between the fightback and the need for a new kind of radical politics.

Just look at the situation in the postal union then sell Royal Mail on to a private investor. This policy is not mad or insane: it is a perfectly rational thing to do if you stand for the interests of capitalist profit not the working class.

Militant struggle can defeat the attacks but it will then pose the question - what kind of postal service do we need? We will need to go on the political offensive fighting for a return to a state monopoly on postal services and the running of the industry under workers' control as public service.

The case can be made on every front of resistance. We can't stop at defending our immediate conditions - we need to link the struggles up politically.

Since the European Elections, a debate

# CAPITALIST PARTY

has opened up in the trade unions and among the socialist organisations about challenging Labour at the general election. It has been spurred on by an open letter to the left from the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) published shortly after the elections calling for a united electoral challenge.

The debate since has centred on two key questions.

What kind of organisation should be formed - a party, an alliance, or an electoral bloc? And what sort of politics it should unite around?

## Programme

At the Euroelections, Bob Crow of the RMT headed the No2EU list. A relatively militant trade union leader, Crow is clearly on the left of the unions. But the No2EU campaign did not put forward any radical answers to the crisis. Instead it focused its criticism on the European bosses when we should be fighting all the capitalists - but especially the British ones.

The background to the campaign was the first Lindsey oil workers' construction strikes, which raised the dangerous and divisive slogan "British jobs, for British workers".

Reformists, because they don't see the nation state as a weapon of the capitalists against us but as something that can be taken over bit by bit, often try to outdo the bosses' media the Tories and the BNP in nationalist flag waving. Rather than recognising and acting on the basis of solidarity between workers of all countries they try to prove that they, not the bosses, are the real British patriots.

There is a clearly a danger that the nationalist outlook of the No2EU bloc and the first Lindsey strike are taken as the basis for a new political formation. It would play right into the hands of the BNP, despite its supporters' belief that their defence of British workers is an alternative to these fascists. Internationalism must be a starting point for our challenge to the Labour Party at the next election.

But nationalism is not the only danger facing a united left challenge. The other is making the mistake of trying to rebuild a reformist party, founded on the principles of the old Labour Party.

Particularly during a capitalist crisis, it is no good searching for a compromise that will bridge the interests of the bosses and the working class.

When a company goes bankrupt, the question is sharply posed: the creditors break up the company, and sell off the assets to recover their money - leaving the workers, their pension entitlements, and so on, thrown to one side.

There is only one alternative to this; the firm must be nationalised to save the jobs and run for social need, not profit. The millionaires

Smith and Alex Callinicos, of the Socialist Workers Party, have both been prominent promoters of restricting it to being an electoral alliance, not a party fighting on the whole range of issues.

But there are many problems with this approach.

First, the broad mass of the working class votes for parties, not here-today-gone-tomorrow alliances. The tragedy is that the far right have been winning support for their party- the BNP- for ten years while the left floundered.

Second, an alliance would be

ical outlook.

The organisations of the socialist left have deeply ingrained politics and traditions, which we should not expect to change without real pressure from a working class.

That's why it is really imperative that from the outset we have a perspective of building a party, which has the roots in the working class and consequently the size and authority to be a real challenger for political power.

Anything less will not be able to rise to the tasks posed by the capitalist crisis.

In France, a campaign for a new anticapitalist party over eighteen months won support from thousands of people. In January of this the New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) was founded with over ten thousand members.

If the left organisations had the courage of their socialist and anticapitalist convictions and confidence in the working class leading today's struggles, then they would do the same here.

Even if a new anticapitalist party cannot be formed in the short time before the next election, we should form a slate of anticapitalist candidates and use election to rally wider layers of the working class around a perspective for founding it.

Such a campaign could rally several times the number of members that the present left groups have. In the short time to the general election it would not be able to complete a programme embodying its full strategy. But it could adopt an action programme of anticapitalist demands to make the bosses pay the cost of the crisis.

Only a party and not an electoral alliance could be really rooted in the struggles developing against the bosses' attacks. By building fighting unity in the class struggle we will develop the best possible environment for an open and democratic debate on the party's full programme.

Just as revolutionaries can win respect and support in the forefront of the battles against the government, so too can they win the arguments for a revolutionary politics and not a reformist programme, or some sort attempt at a fudge between the two.

## The collapse of the Labour vote and the rise of the BNP give a powerful objective imperative to a new political formation

who milked the company for decades should not be given a penny more.

There has never been a better time for exposing and rejecting of the politics of profit and the market that are intrinsic to the capitalist system.

We need to advocate democratic planning of the economy as a whole, as an alternative to the market. We should make a realistic assessment of the bosses and their state's capacity to resist and sabotage any serious socialist measures. In short, we should not be afraid to make the case for revolutionary overthrow of the system.

Of course, this will mean an argument and debate in a new left alternative between reformists and revolutionaries. But the alternative is to come up with a programme that no one is really happy with.

If we succeed in drawing significant sections of the working class into a new political formation - and there is clearly the potential for this - then it will be up the working class to decide between the competing strategies of the existing left organisations.

### Party or alliance

Another issue raised in the present discussion is whether our goal should be a new political party or just an electoral alliance. Martin

more likely to simply draw the existing left groups together rather than draw in broader layer of working class fighters into a new, mass political organisation, i.e. a party.

And, third, an alliance would inevitably be focused on elections, when we need an organisation that gives a fighting lead to workers' struggles in the here and now and is not just focused on elections which just come round every few years.

Last of all, the question of what form a new political alternative takes is not separate from the questions of its politics. An alliance of the existing organisations is far more likely to succumb to the mistaken notion that we should unite around a very minimal reformist set of demands, which doesn't offer a fighting anticapitalist alternative.

### Prospects

The collapse of the Labour vote and the rise of the BNP give a powerful objective imperative to left unity and a new political formation. But there are lots of political problems that still need to be resolved if we are to succeed.

We have to break with opportunism, the pursuit of short term electoral gains by abandoning fundamental principles, and sectarianism, the refusal to unite in action with those who don't share our polit-

## WORLD ECONOMY

# The recovery: a Marxist analysis

The leaders of the world's biggest economies met at the G20 summit and declared that the world economy was improving. *Richard Brenner* analyses the evidence for their claims

The newspapers are filled with talk of economic recovery. But at the same time economists, bankers and politicians are gripped with uncertainty. Are we heading for an upturn that will bring back jobs, boost profits, and restore the prestige of the capitalist system? Or will the recovery be weak and racked with instability?

On the one hand facts and figures are coming through showing that the industrial cycle is nearing the bottom and that an upturn is on the horizon. Yet at the same time a wide range of indicators suggest that the recovery will be slow and sluggish, with strong risks both of inflation and even of a collapse into a second downturn (what they call or "double dip" or "W" shaped recession.) So who is right, and what is going to happen?

### Signs of stabilisation?

There is no doubt that capitalists are drawing confidence from the signs of stabilisation that have been seen in the system since April this year. In March 2009, figures showed that the world had entered the most synchronised global downturn since the 1930s at least, with huge economic contractions in every major country. But since then, between April and July, capitalists saw the value of their stocks and shares recover sharply (though they have started falling again over the past four weeks). In the first three months of 2009 monthly job losses averaged 691,000. But by August "only" 298,000 people lost their jobs in the private sector (the lowest figure for nearly a year), and this followed July when "just" 360,000 were thrown out of work so far this year.

So while unemployment in the US continues to rise, draw-

ing ever closer to 10 per cent of the workforce, the speed at which jobs are being lost is slowing. Good news for bosses trying to attract investment by pointing to better times ahead – not so good for the million people who lost their livelihood since June, or the four and a half million Americans thrown out of their jobs this year.

In the housing market, price falls have levelled off in the USA and prices in the UK have shown signs of rising again. The National Association of Realtors reported that pending US home sales surged by 12 per cent in July when compared to July 2008, and 3.2 per cent compared to June. In the UK there was a similar picture; in July mortgage approvals rose 7.8 per cent compared to June, a 17-month high.

It's not only the USA where the pace of decline is slowing and glimmers of recovery can be seen. Pro-capitalist newspapers announced triumphantly that France, Germany and Japan had all "come out of recession" this summer, as each recorded two successive months of overall growth in their Gross Domestic Product. And in China, where soaraway economic growth of 11-12 per cent in 2006 and 2007 declined sharply last year as more than 20 million workers were sacked under the impact of the global recession, GDP growth is estimated to return this month to the 8 per cent level needed to keep pace with population growth.

### Crisis continues

Given these signs of recovery, why are the capitalists so nervous about the prospects for their system returning to sustainable growth and profitability? The answer is that the effects of the great financial crisis are far from over and threaten to

### SIGNS OF RECOVERY

- Slowing rate of job losses
- House prices rising
- Growth returns in France, Germany, Japan
- Bosses' confidence growing

### SIGNS OF STAGNATION

- Signs of stagnation
- Unemployment high and rising
- Slump in investment and lending
- Government debt soars
- Living standards falling

drag the recovery down.

The global credit crunch paralysed lending from banks to companies. Although credit lines have recovered slightly since the financial heart attack of 2007-8, whole swathes of credit products and complex derivatives have disappeared and are unlikely to return. Despite governments handing vast sums to insolvent banks in last year's historically unprecedented trillion dollar bailout schemes, banks are still not lending to businesses. Why? Because those businesses are showing very low rates of profitability so the banks don't think they can rely on them to pay back loans.

That is why, despite the Institute of Chartered Accountants' August report claiming the recession in the UK is "at an end", in fact UK business spending is at its lowest for 43 years. With a famine of bank lending to companies, the companies slashed their own spending at the fastest rate since 1966 warned Home Office figures in August. David Kern, chief economist of the British Chamber of Commerce, told the BBC that the sharp fall in investment means the country will "lack the necessary capital stock to sus-

tain a recovery".

With companies cutting spending and going bust, joblessness looks set to carry on growing for some time. In the US official unemployment rates may be below 10 per cent but George Magnus, chief economist of Swiss bank UBS, explains that "discouraged workers and those forced to accept part-time work continued to rise to 10 per cent and 16.5 per cent" reflecting what he calls "hidden unemployment and under-employment". And of course, with fewer people having cash to spend, sales of food and other consumer goods will decline, having a further negative knock on effect on the economy, leading to a further spiral of stagnation.

Even in Japan, the world's second biggest economy which was reported to have come out of recession with growth of 0.8 per cent, unemployment has now reached 5.7 percent with a million more workers out of work since this time last year.

### State debt soars

Another critical factor suggesting that the recovery will be painful and slow is the crisis of public finances. The downturn means far less money going in to the state's coffers through taxes, and more being paid out in unemployment benefits. At the same time of course, the US, British, EU and Japanese governments are all massively in debt themselves, especially as a result of the trillions they wasted bailing out the bankers. Stimulus packages to try to get the economy going again have also pushed up government debt.

In short, governments everywhere agreed to take on the losses made by banks on bad loans. Now they expect working class taxpayers to pay the price.

What does this mean? If governments try to balance their books and control the soaring state debt, it will mean raising taxes on the mass of the people, or savage cuts in state spending on essential services like health and education and on benefits for the millions of extra unemployed. Of course, if millions of people are made poorer in this way, they will have less to spend, which will also aggravate the trend towards economic stagnation.

### Inflation, deflation, stagnation

On the other hand, if governments don't make enough of these vicious cuts – or if they are stopped from doing so by resistance from the working class around the world, on the streets and at the ballot box – then the crisis of public finances will force the value of their currencies down. There could be a run on their currencies in the international foreign exchange markets. More likely still, the bond markets – where governments borrow money from investors who buy promises from governments of guaranteed repayment plus interest further down the line – would punish governments, causing inflation.

As Professor of Economics at New York University Nouriel Roubini has predicted, “policy makers are damned if they do and damned if they don't. If they take large fiscal deficits seriously and raise taxes, cut spending...they would undermine recovery and tip the economy back into stag-deflation (recession and deflation). But if they maintain large deficits, bond market vigilantes will punish policymakers. Then inflationary expectations will rise...and borrowing rates will go up sharply, leading to stagflation.”

What is more, once signs of recovery strengthen, as they show every sign of doing, the excess uninvested money currently sloshing around in the banks and finance houses could spot under priced assets and companies and rush towards them like air through the walls of a pierced vacuum. This would cause them to bid up asset prices, leading to even sharper inflation. Then we could get a repeat of last year's chaotic price rises in oil and food which sparked riots around the world.

So there are two scenarios – government cuts impoverishing the people and battering the ability of consumers to spend, or inflation driving down the value of money, impoverishing people and destabilising the world economy still further.

From this one thing is clear: the massive subsidy and stimulus pack-

ages promoted by the US, EU, China and Britain will have to come to an end. There is already a sharp dispute within the G20 between Germany and France on the one hand and the US/Britain on the other over how quickly the rescue packages should be cancelled. In the US, which is most cautious about ending the stimulus programme, the budget deficit is predicted to be \$2 trillion higher than anticipated, with the Congressional Budget Office warning of a 10-year deficit of \$7.2 trillion, and a cumulative 10-year deficit of \$9.05 trillion predicted by the White House itself. This year's budget deficit will be \$1.6 trillion, with debt as a percentage of US GDP set to rise to a staggering 69 per cent in 2019 – a figure that gives cause to wonder whether the foundations have been laid for an even more seismic economic crisis in the next decade.

It is therefore no surprise that the *Financial Times* reports that bond markets are working on the assumption not of a strong recovery, but of “a very weak recovery ahead”.

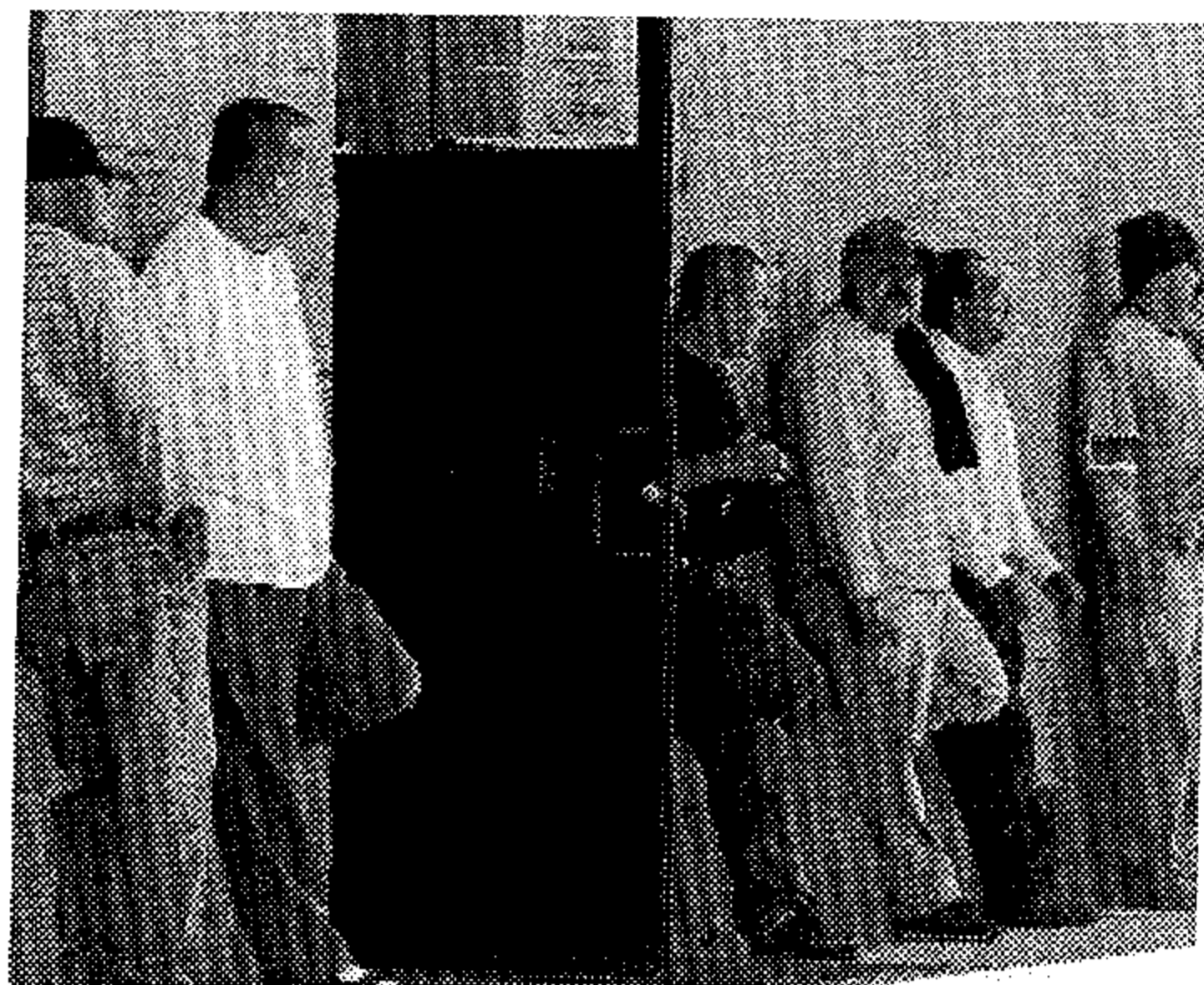
### China crisis looms

Finally, we have to take China into account. The Chinese economy has been hit hard by the world recession, with its exports slumping dramatically earlier this year. A strong recovery appeared to be setting in this summer, but now stock markets have taken fright at both a sharp decline in bank lending in China and at signs that the government's vast stimulus package has gone onto the pockets not of productive industries but of speculators in property and shares.

China's rmb 4 trillion stimulus and 7.4 trillion state bank loans this year represent 45 per cent of China's GDP – economists at French bank BNP Paribas say no country has done anything on this scale since World War Two. But the Royal Bank of Scotland reports that fifth of this money has gone to stock speculators and nearly a third into property and other financial assets, “helping to inflate unsustainable asset bubbles”, warns Jamil Anderlini in the FT on 24 August. So when the Chinese stock exchange dropped 14 per cent in just three weeks in August, many saw it as a sign of a coming bursting of the bubble. A China crisis would massively disrupt a recovery in world trade.

### Marxism and the recovery

In conclusion, we can see that the coming recovery is encumbered by continuing features of the world financial and economic crisis.



These US workers haven't seen any benefits of the bail-out

Marxists insist that the capitalist system follows a pattern of 7-10 year trade-industrial cycles in which crises and phases of sharp decline lead to periods of stagnation followed in turn by phases of recovery. Unlike capitalist economists, we do not believe that crises and periods of decline are a strange exception to a normal equilibrium of steady expansion, but are built in to the system itself and are unavoidable by-products of the way capitalism works.

The underlying cause of crisis is the tendency in capitalism for the rate of profit to fall. As returns on investment fall in the productive economy, capitalists pour their money into all manner of complex financial instruments.

Eventually however, the banks and financiers recognise that falling profit rates mean they will not get their loans back. The sums they were depending on and the financial instruments they were trading are revealed as fictitious values. A credit crunch ensues as lenders withdraw loans, credit lines break, stock markets plunge, banks go bust.

The existence of huge volumes of capital that can no longer secure sufficient return to warrant them being invested is what Marx called the “overaccumulation of capital”. It is this that the crisis attempts to correct – by destroying surplus capital. So it is that in a world of poverty, inequality and need, vast quantities of capital must be destroyed so that the capitalists can once again invest at a high enough profit to make it worthwhile for them. This is why the recession sees wholesale and wanton destruction of jobs, or workplaces, of communities and of lives. Eventually,

when sufficient has been destroyed capital can move in, buy up property cheaply, hire workers at low wages, use unemployment to drive down pay still further, and begin making huge rates of return again.

### Lessons

There are therefore two lessons to be drawn from today's economic crisis. The first is that it is no use sitting tight and just waiting for a recovery to save our jobs, our living standards, our communities and our futures. The recovery when it comes will be weak and unstable, with high unemployment. The Labour Party and the pro-Labour union leaders always point to the economic cycle as a reason not to fight, just to hold on and things will “things will only get better”. On the contrary, the path for capitalism to a strong recovery is years off and lies over the broken ruins of our existing jobs, services, pensions, and pay.

The second lesson is that the crisis didn't arise from a bad policy here or there, or bankers who got “too greedy” (a non-greedy banker would go out of business quickly). Nor was it some uncontrollable force of nature, like a catastrophic weather event, that humans can't do anything about. It is caused by the very nature of the system – and that system can be changed, can be brought to an end and replaced by a rational system based on a democratically planned economy.

The conclusion is simple. The working class needs to resist every attempt by the capitalists to make us pay for their crisis – and we need to convert our resistance into a political challenge to the whole system of capitalism itself.

For more on the world recession go to [www.fifthinternational.org](http://www.fifthinternational.org)

USA



# OBAMA'S BROKEN

*Mike Wilhelm and Jeff Albertson, from Workers Power USA, look at what Obama has done for the working class since coming to power*

The election of Barack Obama brought with it a renewed sense of hope and vigour to the hearts and minds of the American public.

Here we take a measured look at the status of his campaign promises, to see what, if anything, his actions and other policy initiatives have achieved for those suffering most from the capitalist crisis and the imperialist occupations of the Middle East and Central Asia. In light of such lofty promises, the public must consider whether President Obama is a true “champion” of the people – as his campaign team portrayed him – or just another capitalist politician in the pockets of big business. Of the many issues included in the expansive Obama platform, those relating to the “War on Terror”, economic recovery, the Employee Free Choice Act, and healthcare reform were central.

## Banks before people

As the global recession has unfolded, President Obama has frequently pledged to ease the plight of working-class Americans through a combination of far-reaching government intervention and massive deficit spending.

With the deficit expected to reach nearly \$9 trillion by 2019, according to the Congressional Budget Office, the administration has allocated a staggering amount of money – \$787 billion – for the sole purpose of “economic relief”, yet the working class has seen little benefit from such action.

Months have passed since more than \$200 billion in funds from the Troubled Asset Relief Programme was used to bail out insolvent banks, yet the unemployment rate is consistently on the increase, despite reports from financial institutions reporting

better-than-expected returns. It is evident that the administration is more concerned with shoring up bankrupt financial institutions, such as investment banks and mortgage lenders, at the expense of the working class, than doing anything to alleviate their present suffering.

If the latest official unemployment figures of 9.7 per cent are correct – the highest total for 26 years – the much-touted efforts by the administration to put the economy “back on track” haven’t helped workers or the overwhelming majority of the US population.

The measures show the true colours of the Obama administration: propping up crisis-ridden capitalism with government handouts and subsidies at the expense of workers and youth who have no interest in paying for and maintaining this system.

# Healthcare reform for the

The state of healthcare in the United States is abysmal. According to US Census Bureau data, as of 2007, 46 million Americans are without health insurance. For most Americans, the situation has worsened because most workers receive insurance through their employer. The tight coupling of employment and healthcare make an already unpleasant situation – unemployment – that much worse. Considering “official” measures of unemployment are nearing 10 per cent, more and more working class Americans are being thrown into the ranks of the uninsured.

More than ever, universal healthcare is on the minds of the people, yet Congress and the president are making little headway. Not only do working class Americans have to worry about trying to pay bills, pay the mortgage and find a new job, they also have the permanent fear of falling ill and having to pay

the extortionate medical bills.

Although President Obama has a majority of Democratic support in the House, this is not the case in the Senate. To win over Republicans, as well as opposition from within his own party, that is the Blue-Dog Democrats concerned over the cost of healthcare reform, Obama is willing to make serious concessions.

Already one of the most promising features to emerge from the effort, the availability of a public option – in his campaign’s words a “new public plan based on benefits, available to members of Congress, that will allow individuals and small businesses to buy affordable health coverage” – is unlikely to make the cut. With only private insurers providing coverage, any future reforms will serve to fill the coffers of the insurance giants.

If Obama was serious about providing universal coverage, he would

call for a tax on the wealthy to pay for it, yet he does nothing of the sort. This is because he is a politician of the bosses, so there are lines he is incapable of crossing due to his “association” with the ruling class. Public pressure, therefore, is crucial to getting the “change” the working class really needs. This includes stepping up political action: demonstrations, rallies, boycotts, work stoppages, etc. to force Obama and the Democrats to do what they said they would do once they got into office.

### REFORM MOVEMENT

At the same time, we cannot depend on the leaders of the healthcare reform movement, as they are in collusion with bourgeois politicians. They are unwilling to make the serious kind of demands necessary to realise healthcare for all workers in the US, citizens or otherwise, for fear of losing the

lucrative advocacy positions they occupy.

The reformist illusions they hold regarding the ability of Obama and the Democratic Party to enact real, meaningful change with regard to the healthcare structure of the United States necessitates a constant pressure on these misleaders to go further than their limited programmes outline.

Needless to say, if mobilisations do achieve – albeit limited – reforms on healthcare, why stop there? The working class, in such cases, should not limit itself solely to winning reforms that are – frankly speaking – acceptable to the capitalist class. Reforms may alleviate severe conditions affecting certain sections and strata of the working class, but if our goal is to ensure quality treatment for all, then a complete overhaul of the entire system is necessary.

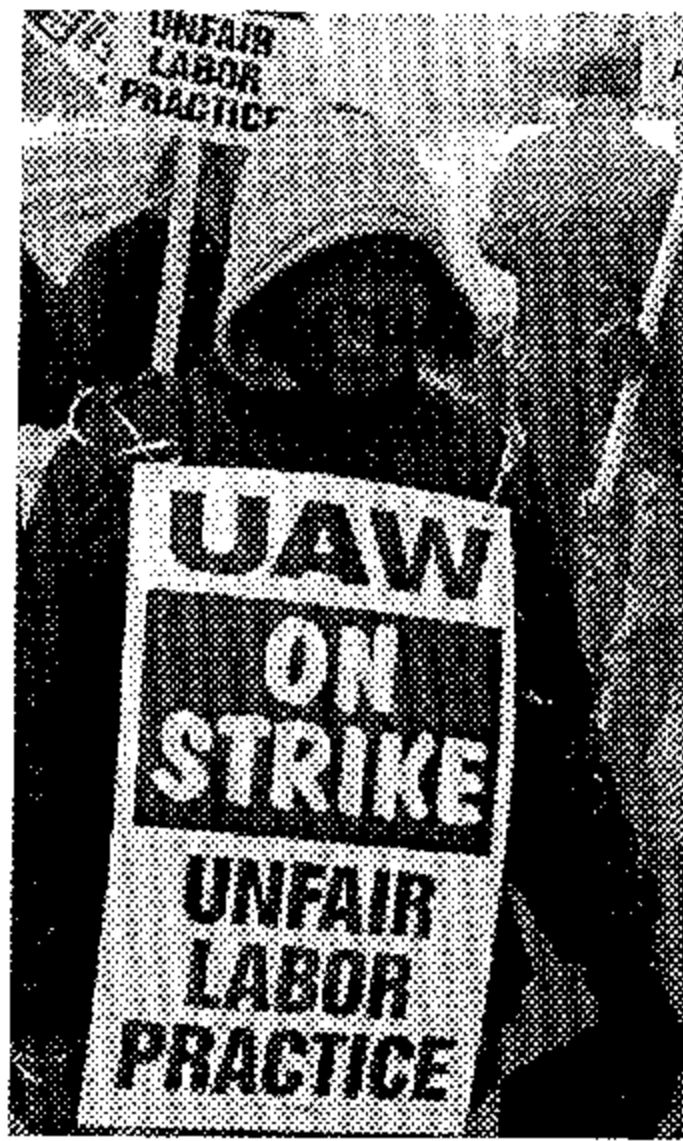
The working class and other forces currently working within the

# PROMISES

## Trade union rights stalled

When he was still campaigning for the presidency and trying to win the support of the trade union leadership and the rank and file, Obama promised union officials that the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) would be a major priority of his.

If the EFCA became law, the ability to decide on the use of a secret ballot for union recognition would fall solely in the hands of the employees, rather than employers, and thus greatly facilitate efforts to unionise workplaces. Additionally, it would penalise employers that violated provisions issued by the National Labor Relations Board. The benefits of such a move are obvious: so it made sense for the major labor unions in the US (grouped in the AFL-CIO and Change to Win confederations) to throw their collective weight – some \$80 million of campaign funds – behind the Democratic



ticket.

It is no surprise that the bill stalled in Congress. Any effort to empower the working class threat-

ens the interests of capital and, as such, the positions of power held by the bourgeois politicians tasked with “representing” the people. Rather than make a concerted effort on his part to push the bill through, Obama is content making promises and then conveniently shifting his attention to supposedly more pressing matters – such as economic recovery and health care reform – knowing that any effort to pass the EFCA at the current conjuncture is next to “impossible”.

This is the nature of a bourgeois party that leans directly on the mass organizations of the working class once it gets into a position of governmental power. Because Obama and the Democrats ultimately serve the capitalists, they will seek any compromise (especially with “Blue-Dog Democrats”) to remove all the meaningful content from the EFCA.

## Iraq and Afghanistan

While on the campaign trail, President Obama frequently cited his opposition to the war in Iraq, repeatedly pledging to reduce and eventually withdraw all US forces stationed within the country if elected. Taken from his list of promises related to Iraq, it is clearly stated in his election platform that American armed forces “will not build permanent bases in Iraq for the purposes of preventing ‘an occupation of undetermined length.’” Yet the construction of Bush-era permanent military bases continues unabated.

And while he is painted by some “progressive” democrats as anti-war, he is in no way committed to ending the imperialist wars initiated by the previous administration.

In line with his idea that the war in Afghanistan and in the surrounding regions (such as parts of Pakistan) is a “just” war, he pledged to “focus on the right battlefield in Afghanistan”. So far, he has stayed true to his promise; by the summer of 2009 an additional 21,000 troops had put their boots down in the region, increasing the number of US in-country forces to 62,000. In addition, drone attacks continue to kill both resistance forces and civilians in the South Waziristan tribal region, not to mention the previous military offensive by the Pakistani government supported by the United States in the Swat River Valley, further fostering resentment towards the US and facilitating the insurgency of tomorrow. For all of his platitudes about the debacle that was and remains the Iraq war, President Obama is setting the US up for an even bigger failure and more casualties in Afghanistan.

# masses on hold

healthcare reform movement must prepare for an intensification of struggle once the Obama administration ultimately rejects our demands because of their impact on the profits of the drug and insurance companies. Only through sustained effort and greater organisation will it be possible to fight for and obtain the change we really need: a healthcare system that operates on the premise of need, not private greed.

### TAX THE RICH

If we really want a healthcare system that provides for all and reduces overhead expenses, then we must demand that Obama and other Democrats institute a national healthcare program paid for by taxing the multinationals and financial institutions, not working class people already struggling to make ends meet.

State bureaucrats, however, are

by no means the antidote to the insurance profiteers who, essentially, decide who gets treatment and who does not.

The bureaucrats of the capitalist state must not have authority over the running of the national plan. To make a national healthcare service truly effective and available to all, we must fight for democratic organisations of workers and professionals within the field to decide how to best organise and dispense medical care to all those living in the country.

It seems fitting, what with the mounting problems working class Americans currently face (recession, a healthcare crisis and all the battles it entails, the raging of imperialist wars in Central Asia and the Middle East, military build-ups in South America, and even support for a military coup in Central America), that the majority of the American government is current-

ly on “vacation”. Even with his brief time in office, we can clearly observe the class character of Obama’s presidency.

His promises to workers, to the youth, and to all progressive forces seeking a new direction for American politics now present themselves as what they really were from the beginning: disingenuous demagoguery masking carefully devised prevarication.

Time will tell how Obama and other Democrats plan to “represent” their constituents in the coming months and years, but if Obama’s first six months in office are any indication of how he will continue to conduct White House affairs, then he will be hard pressed to find the same electorate willing to give him a second term in 2012. A space will surely open over the intervening years for those arguing that US labour needs – at long last – an independent party of its own.

**WORKERS POWER USA**  
More from our US  
supporters can be found at  
<http://workerspower.net/>

## WAR

# Afghan elections: a farce within a tragedy

By David Stockton

The Afghan election – designed to stabilise the puppet government of President Hamid Karzai – has turned into total farce. Immediately after the election, an optimistic Barack Obama stepped onto the White House lawn to proclaim to the assembled press:

“This was an important step forward in the Afghan people’s effort to take control of their future, even as violent extremists are trying to stand in their way. I want to congratulate the Afghanistan people on carrying out this historic election.”

Yet a week later the mainstream media was full of reports of Karzai angrily shouting at US presidential special envoy Richard Holbrooke. Evidently he stormed out of a meeting, when the ambassador bluntly demanded that, come what may, he should hold a second round of voting. Why? The outcry, both in Afghanistan and in the domestic media of the occupying nations, indicates that no one believes the elections have been “free and fair”. The Afghan Electoral Complaints Commission has received thousands of fraud complaints, 270 of which it considers sufficiently serious to have changed the final result. A second round will be in effect a re-run of the elections.

Barely 30 to 35 per cent of the population voted overall, while in the south, meant to be a Karzai stronghold because of his Pashtun ethnicity, the turnout did not even reach 5 per cent. This is because huge parts of the area are *de facto* under the control of Taliban forces, and because the population is hostile to the American and British occupying forces, and therefore to Karzai as their puppet.

Despite the British forces seizing an insurgent stronghold in the Babaji area, “freeing” 80,000 potential voters from Taliban control, only 150 people turned up to vote, according to the BBC. Yet in Kabul the ballot boxes from the south turned up positively bursting with Karzai votes. Karzai’s chief rival, Abdullah Abdullah has released videos showing this was done by wholesale stuffing of the ballot boxes. Abdullah’s opponents point out that things were little better in his own strongholds.

Abdullah has refused to recognise the elections or to serve in a government under Karzai.

On top of this fiasco, the US is furious over the figures Karzai chose as his running mates. His two vice-presidents were the notorious warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum, guilty of mass executions of prisoners in 2002, and Muhammed Fahim, another former Northern Alliance commander (and reputed opium dealer). The Obama administration tried to block these candidates but Karzai absolutely depends on Fahim and Dostum to bring in the votes from the Tajik north.

So it is clear that this election – even if there is a second round – will not give the Afghan government the democratic credibility the US and its allies need at home to convince a wavering public that this is “the good war”, a war for democracy, women’s rights, economic development and nation building.

In fact the invasion and eight-year occupation have not made Afghanistan a democracy even in the most minimal sense. Virtually all powers under its constitution are vested in the presidency. In elections to parliament only individuals, not political parties, can run and candidates’ political opinions cannot be put on the ballot papers. It is illegal for any law or measure to contradict the “holy religion of Islam”.

## Collusion

This violation of democracy was carried out with the enthusiastic collusion of the Nato allies because they feared that any nationalist, secular parties that won an election would certainly oppose US and British imperialist plans for Afghanistan. But this policy of blocking the road to democracy came at a price that now proves an embarrassment to the democratic and feminist pretensions of Obama and Hilary Clinton: the rule of the war lords, laws that enshrine a man’s right to rape his wife and starve her if she refuses his advances, the rise to office of monsters such as Uzbek boss Dostum, the Hazara chief Muhammad Mohaqeq and in Herat Ismail Khan, infamous for imposing Taliban-style restrictions on women’s dress, denying women jobs and preventing their appearance in public and so on.

The courageous women’s rights activist Malalai Joya, elected to the Afghan parliament and then thrown out for denouncing the warlords and the Western occupiers to their faces, told the *Independent* on 28 July:

“Dust has been thrown into the eyes of the world by your governments. You have not been told the truth. The situation now is as catastrophic as it was under the Taliban for women. Your governments have replaced the fundamentalist rule of the Taliban with another fundamentalist regime of warlords. [That is] what your soldiers are dying for.”

She went on to describe what she discovered when she had been elected:

“I realised women’s rights had been sold out completely... Most people in the West have been led to believe that the intolerance and brutality towards women in Afghanistan began with the Taliban regime. But this is a lie. Many of the worst atrocities were committed by the fundamentalist mujahedin during the civil war between 1992 and 1996. They introduced the laws oppressing women followed by the Taliban – and now they were marching back to power, backed by the United States. They immediately went back to their old habit of using rape to punish their enemies and reward their fighters.”

Likewise she opposes the occupation and calls for the western troops to get out, rejecting the argument that they are preventing a civil war or at least preventing a Taliban victory.

“What about the civil war now? Today, people are being killed – many, many war crimes. The longer the foreign troops stay in Afghanistan doing what they are doing, the worse the eventual civil war will be for the Afghan people.”

Meanwhile the casualty rates for the Anglo-American “surge” in Helmand and Kandahar which began in early July are rocketing. In July alone, 45 US troops died, the highest monthly toll this year. In August already over 40 Americans have been killed, most in the south. In 2008 total coalition deaths numbered 294, 155 of them Americans. The 2009 total has already reached 301, 172 of them Americans. There are currently 63,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

The British too are taking heavy casualties. Between the launch of Operation

**The invasion and eight-year occupation have not made Afghanistan a democracy even in the most minimal sense**





Panther's Claw and polling day on 20 August UK forces suffered 38 dead and an estimated 150 wounded in action.

#### Civilian suffering

And this is just the occupation troops. The suffering of Afghan civilians is far worse in scale and more intense. Their faces do not appear on CNN or the BBC every night. Photographs of grieving Afghan families are never on the front page of *The Sun*. Official figures admit that more than 1,000 Afghan civilians have been killed so far this year, 24 per cent more than in 2008 and 50 per cent more than 2007. The real death toll is probably several times this figure.

The chair of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Michael Mullen, said that the situation on the main battle front in the south "is serious and it is deteriorating". General Stanley McChrystal, who took command of all US and Nato forces in Afghanistan in June, used the same terms adding, "The Taliban insurgency has gotten better and more sophisticated in their tactics."

He is expected to demand at least another three or four brigades. This will push troop levels higher than during the 1980s when Soviet armed forces got bogged down in fighting Islamist Afghan insurgents. Then the Western media asked if this was the USSR's "Vietnam". Now many are asking if this is the USA's "Afghanistan".

Already public opinion in the US is turning sharply against "the good war." Remember too it was first called the "good war" in comparison with the bad one in

**If the  
resistance  
movements  
were to drive  
out the  
imperialists  
this would  
be a  
progressive  
act**

Iraq, at a time when casualties in the central Asian theatre of the War on Terror were very low. Things have changed with a vengeance. The latest polls show 54 per cent against the war. Barely one in four believes it is worth sending any more US soldiers to die in Afghanistan.

While Britain – under the wretched Gordon Brown – is talking of sending more troops, some previously staunch US allies are planning their exit strategy: Canada (so far 21 Canadians have been killed in 2009) and the Netherlands have both set dates for withdrawal because public opinion has turned massively against the war.

Currently there are some 63,000 US and 32,000 Nato personnel in the country, with some 8,000 more on the way. And General McChrystal's draft plan warns that by 2012 the number of Afghan government troops must rise from 88,000 to 250,000, and the police force from 82,000 to 160,000.

During the Iraq surge by US troops in 2007, McChrystal concentrated on counter-insurgency tactics including the use of death squads that murdered thousands of civilians suspected of participation in either the Sunni insurgency or the Shiite anti-occupation movement of Moqtada al Sadr. He is expected to carry out the same murderous tactics now in Afghanistan.

In Britain, as the number of British soldiers killed in Afghanistan shot past the 200 mark, the media has launched a frantic attempt to justify the war and bolster support at home for the occupation. Aware that a clear majority of the

people have opposed this war since its beginning in 2002, the generals and politicians did not dare to launch an openly pro-war campaign. Instead they are trying to manipulate the emotions of the people, with reports of the fallen soldiers: their names and faces, their ages, their farewell letters, their parents' grief.

#### Propaganda

The government, media and military plan to fuel support for the war with this propaganda campaign at home. The promotion of the charity Help for Heroes, the decision to allow the police to wear badges expressing support for the troops (they are not allowed to wear Stop the War badges of course), all aim to distract attention away from the basic questions: why are the troops dying? For what?

The plan will backfire. While some will rally to the flag, as the occupation drags into its eighth year, the parade of faces of these dead men – often very young – will fuel anger and disgust at the senselessness of their deaths.

All of this indicates that in the countries with troops in Afghanistan it is vital to relaunch a powerful antiwar movement for the withdrawal of the troops immediately and an end to the bombing and all forms of occupation. The people of Afghanistan alone have the right to determine their future.

We in the West must reject all those who point to the reactionary politics of the Taliban as a reason to support the occupation. Instead we must listen to the voices of Afghan women's liberationists and socialists who are opposing the occupation. As Afghan democrats like Malalai Joya have said the occupying forces must get out. And Afghan socialists – now organising their forces once more – have called for support for all acts of resistance to the Western occupiers. In a recent statement Afghan socialists said:

"We do not in any way seek to aid the political Islamist forces presently leading the resistance to come to power – such a regime has been and would be again as reactionary as Karzai's, repressive against workers, women, students and youth. We do on the other hand believe that, if the resistance movements were to drive out the imperialists, this would be a progressive act, which will show the world, as happened after the Vietnam war in 1975, that the most powerful army in the world could be beaten." (see <http://tinyurl.com/mfo244>)

If the Afghan socialists can come to the head of the resistance, they can ensure that the regime that replaces Karzai, the warlords and the occupiers will not be another Islamist government persecuting women and the poor, but a workers' and peasants' government that makes the Afghan people masters of their destiny at last.

**SRI LANKA**

# Free the political prisoners!

The League for the Fifth International and its Sri Lankan section, the Socialist Party of Sri Lanka, condemns the jailing of JS Tissainayagam, the first journalist to be prosecuted under Sri Lanka's Prevention of Terrorism Act. Tissainayagam was accused by the state prosecutor of publishing articles "designed to create agitation between the Tamil minority and the Sinhala majority", breaking the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) and violating emergency regulations.

In 2007, far from trying to create tensions between the two communities, he reported that government forces were bombing towns in the northeast of the island in order to drive out their Tamil populations and that troops were withholding food supplies to civilians as part of their campaign to re-conquer the districts controlled by the LTTE (Tamil Tigers). It was for these accusations, which have since been widely confirmed from other sources, that he has now been jailed for 20 years' "rigorous imprisonment".

After his arrest in May 2008, it was reported that he had confessed to the crimes of which he was accused and much was made of this during his trial. However, as soon as he was allowed access to a lawyer,



**JS Tissainayagam sentenced for 20 years for criticising the government over its war on Tamil Tiger rebels**

months after his detention, he renounced this confession and explained that it had been obtained under duress. The whole case against Tissainayagam also reveals the hypocrisy of Sri Lanka's President, Mahinda Rajapakse, who, when he was opposing the previous UNP government, condemned the denial of civil rights before the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva.

Since 2006, according to Amnesty International, 14 journalists who sought to expose the reality of the government's war against the Tamils have been assassinated and many more driven into exile. Amnesty, which refuses to defend any prisoner unless it can

be shown that they have supported only non-violent forms of protest, has now adopted J.S. Tissainayagam as a "prisoner of conscience".

The conviction and sentencing of J.S. Tissainayagam proves that the silencing of government critics has now become institutionalised. The ruling by Judge Deepali Wijesundara that criticism of the Prevention of Terrorism Act is itself a violation of that act is the clearest evidence of this.

Proposals to create a "Press Council" that will have the power to imprison journalists shows that the increasingly authoritarian government of Mahinda Rajapakse is intending to dispense with even

the formality of court hearings.

Quite apart from trying to hide evidence of war crimes, the government will still not allow reporters open access to the war areas. Rajapakse is also preparing for the future. On top of the enormous expenditure on the war, Sri Lanka has recently negotiated a huge loan from the IMF and the repayment of government debt is sure to result in attacks on living standards of workers and farmers. Public-sector workers in health and education are likely to be in the front line and Rajapakse intends to use the whole range of repressive legislation against any attempt to resist cuts in wages and jobs.

That is why it is necessary to campaign widely for the repeal of the PTA and the emergency powers legislation in particular. It is in the interests of the overwhelming majority of the population of Sri Lanka, Tamil or Sinhalese, Buddhist, Hindu or Muslim, to get rid of these laws and, in the process, build fighting organisations and, above all, a political party, committed to the overthrow of this repressive regime and the capitalist system of exploitation that it defends.

- **Release JS Tissainayagam**
- **Repeal the PTA and the Emergency Powers Act**

## Campaign launched against repression

The first steps in building a campaign against the increasing authoritarian rule of President Mahinda Rajapakse have been taken in Sri Lanka.

On August 16, 135 delegates from a range of organisations including the Left Front, the People's March, Democracy for People, the Media trade union and the Socialist Party of Sri Lanka, met in Colombo to establish the Broad Front against Repression.

The main business of conference was to agree a statement of its aims and to identify its priorities on the basis of proposals made by the delegating bodies at a series of pre-conference discussions. It was unanimously agreed that the highest priority should be a campaign in defence of the hundreds of thousands of Tamils displaced from their homes by the civil war.

They are currently held behind barbed wire in what are effectively concentration camps in inhumane conditions where their lives and health are at risk.

The camps are administered by military personnel who severely restrict access not only to the media but also to the relatives of the inmates. Conference demanded an end to this military control and its replacement by a civilian administration and the right of freedom of movement for displaced people.

Denial of human and civil rights is not only a feature of the war-torn north of the island. Since Rajapakse unleashed the military offensive last year, Emergency Regulations and a Prevention of Terrorism Act have been used to control the media and to limit free speech and political mobilisation throughout the coun-

try. In response to this, conference demanded the immediate repeal of these laws and regulations as well as the dismantling of the Executive Presidency.

Recognising that systematic discrimination against Tamil-speaking communities has always been at the heart of political conflicts virtually since Independence, conference demanded the full implementation of the 17 constitutional amendment that provides for a high degree of autonomy for the Tamil majority regions of the island. The Socialist Party of Sri Lanka proposed that the campaign should also demand recognition of the right to self-determination of the Tamils, including the right to separation, but, while many delegates expressed support for this in principle, a majority voted not to adopt this demand for the campaign.

Broader issues dealing with the impact of both the international economic crisis and the aftermath of the civil war were also raised. The campaign will also mobilise support for the struggles of workers, farmers and youth over living standards, employment and civil rights and against the corruption and malpractice in the public administration that was condemned by many delegates.

The conference also elected an Action Committee composed of leading representatives of the delegating organisations.

Since the conference, this has met and decided on the details of the first public demonstration by the campaign. This is a picket of the mainline station in Colombo on 9 September in support of the rights of the displaced people and those held in internment camps.

## JAPAN

# Elections signal huge shift in mood of the people

*Simon Hardy* reports on the landslide election victory of the Democratic Party of Japan on 30 August, ending 50 years of almost unbroken rule by the Liberal Democratic Party

**A** new prime minister, Yukio Hatoyama, and a new party, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), will form the next government of Japan.

The Democrats won 308 of the 480 seats in the elections to the powerful lower house while the Liberal Democratic Party took just 119 seats, about a third of their previous vote. The result is a startling turnaround from the last election in 2005, when Junichiro Koizumi led the Liberal Democrats to victory. That was hailed as a tidal wave of support for conservatism and big business policies, the free market and increasing Japanese military activity abroad.

The Liberal Democrat Party has been living on borrowed time for years. In 2007, mired in a scandal over pensions, they suffered a serious defeat in the elections to the Upper House. For years, the Liberal Democrats have allowed big business to get away with not paying into pension funds, leaving many Japanese destitute or reliant on younger members of their families.

But the fundamental reason for the anti-LDP landslide this year

is the enormous crisis, which hit the economy in 2008-9, devastating jobs, livelihoods and people's hopes for the future. The Japanese economy had suffered nearly 20 years of stagnation with growing unemployment, then there were a few short years of recovery that made the more colourful premier, Junichiro Koizumi, popular. But his departure in 2006 led to a period of rapid changeovers of prime minister, with three new leaders in as many years. Clearly the ruling party was in a crisis, a sure sign that the old political representatives of the capitalist class had lost their way. The constitutional requirement to hold an election before September 2009 gave the capitalists a chance to renew their political leadership. Step forward the Democratic Party of Japan.

The vote for the DPJ, although it is an openly capitalist party, is a vote by most people for change, just as Obama's election was in the USA. The DPJ has secured victory by producing an election manifesto that deliberately appealed to peoples' desire for better welfare provision, stronger labour laws to protect contracted workers, a higher minimum wage and subsidies

## A NEW BOSSES' POLITICAN



**Hatoyama is a member of one of Japan's richest families (his family include former prime ministers, foreign ministers and founders of international companies such as Bridgestone). He even has a museum that people can visit to see the achievements of the Hatoyama family. No wonder he has been likened to a Japanese John F Kennedy.**

for small farmers. Under the slogan "Putting People's Lives First" it has promised to "rework the budget and focus the use of taxpayers' money on childrearing and education, on pensions and medical care, on employment and the economy."

In short DPJ leader Yukio Hatoyama's programme is a bourgeois populist one – it defends the capitalist system but promises a more humane version of it. Some has been openly critical of US-style free market policies. But like Obama, Hatoyama's strategic aim is to protect Japanese capitalism from a radical popular revolt by appearing to favour the workers and farmers over the big but now ailing corporations.

In reality the corporations will still pull his strings. If big business resists the higher taxation, or refuses to raise workers wages as they will be "asked" to do by the new government... what then?

The DPJ will not radically change the Japanese economy: quite the opposite. So as the months and years go by, illusions in the DPJ will be put under ever increasing strain.

## Japanese workers need their own party

**T**he election of the DPJ is not a victory for the workers. In the face of the global economic crisis, Japanese workers need a programme of class struggle to protect jobs and pensions through strikes and workplace occupations, building a mass fightback from below through direct action and linking it to a programme of demands to make the capitalists, not the workers, pay for the economic crisis.

For this a new party is urgently needed, one that can aim to lead the fightback and direct it towards a challenge to the capitalist system itself.

It is a sign of the increasing rad-

icalisation of workers and youth that the Japanese Communist Party is growing in the current crisis. But the JCP has a policy that only seeks to reform the more glaring evils of capitalism without in any way trying to overthrow it.

A revolutionary party in Japan would use the opportunity provided by the economic crisis to develop a programme of struggle that would seek to win the growing numbers of unemployed, youth and workers to a fight for a greatly expanded welfare state, better workers rights and more jobs.

The Japanese companies should be forced to open their accounts up to inspection by workers and

the trade unions should have control of hiring and firing. These kinds of policies would help to radically shift the balance of power into the hands of workers, away from the multinationals which have ruled Japan for so long.

Japan's workers and youth should replace a capitalist government tied to the bosses with a workers' government; one based on councils democratically elected in the workplaces and working class communities. Such a government would lead and encourage workers to counteract the destructive activities of the market, take over ownership of the big banks and corporations, and

introduce planning and workers' control of production.

A new revolutionary communist party and class struggle trade unions, controlled by the rank and file, are essential for the Japanese workers, who for too long now have suffered under the dictatorial impulses of unfettered market capitalism.

The present election shows that in such a period of social crisis the supposedly conservative population is yearning for change. This means that revolutionary forces in Japan can grow if they expose the failings of Hatoyama, the DPJ and the Japanese Communist Party.

## THE MINERS' STRIKE 1984-85

# How the union leaders

In the last part of this series, we looked at the crucial Battle of Orgreave, which the miners lost despite incredible heroism, due mainly to the failure of the labour movement to take action in their support. This issue loomed ever larger in the next phase of the struggle, in the summer and autumn of 1984.

In the fight for solidarity action with the miners, the key sections were the rail workers and lorry drivers who transported coal from the pitheads to the power stations and the steel mills. If scab coal from the working collieries in the Midlands could be stopped going to these places then the strike could have been won. But the workers in the power stations and steel mills were led by outspoken right wingers such as Eric Hammond of the electricians and Bill Sirs of the steel union, who had already said they would not support the miners.

The rail workers, however, were led by supposed left wingers, close allies of Arthur Scargill on the TUC General Council. During the Battle of Orgreave the rail workers leaders, Jimmy Knapp of the NUR and Ray Buckton of Aslef both promised the miners "100 per cent support". Already rank and file rail workers, such as those at Coalville in Leicestershire, were refusing to take trains past miners' picket lines.

Also the rail unions were discussing their annual pay claim. An elementary step would have been for them to refuse any settlement less than their full claim and the safeguarding of their industry from the massive cuts the Tories planned. Indeed, it was in the rail workers own direct interest to engage in a national strike, alongside the miners.

Yet both Knapp and Buckton proved broken reeds. They rushed to settle the pay dispute with the Tories for far less than the full claim. Knapp hailed as a great victory a 5.6 per cent pay settlement, only slightly above the going rate, and tied to "productivity increases". The government's threat of making 38,000 redundancies in the industry was not lifted. It was pushed through viciously once the miners' strike was over. The Ridley Plan – of buying off other sections while fighting the miners – had worked thanks to the left leaders of the rail unions.

Scargill said nothing about this sell out, even though rank and file rail workers were furious. He still regarded Buckton and Knapp as allies and told his members to trust them. This was a terrible mistake. It was proof that, despite his desire for victory, Scargill's strategy was not working. Orgreave and the actions of the rail union leaders showed that, if the miners and their hundreds of thousands of supporters in other unions placed their trust in the trade union officials, then disaster was sure to follow. The urgent task now was to fight the delays and betrayal of the union bureaucracy and shift control into the hands of the rank and file. The most militant miners were increasingly aware of this and set out to get the active support of other workers. On demonstrations throughout the summer calls for a general strike increased.

A whole layer of the most fervent pro-Scargill militants drew these conclusions. It led them to work more closely with revolutionary socialists,

who had been arguing for just such a strategy. At the start of the strike most miners angrily rejected any criticism of Scargill and his strategy. It was correct that the TUC must be prevented from seizing control over the dispute but wrong that miners and Scargill should not call on the TUC to mobilise solidarity action up to and including a general strike. This was a fatal error. Without calls on the leaders – the best way to expose treachery in the workers' struggle – it would not be possible to turn the huge sympathy for the miners into action and overcome the leaders' sabotage.

### THATCHER'S AGENDA: BREAK THE UNIONS

Workers Power, from early in the dispute, had argued that a general strike would prove necessary to ensure victory. The reason was simple. The attack on the miners was not fundamentally about the economics of coal mines: it was a deliberate attempt to break the spine of the entire organised working class. The Tories wanted to break the most powerful trade union in Britain. The NUM was, as Tory grandee Harold Macmillan said, the brigade of guards of the British workers, the one with the most militant rank and file and the most left wing leadership. Right across British industry this would decisively shift the balance of class forces in the bosses' favour. It would open the door to wholesale closures of industries judged to be unprofitable and to extensive privatisation of what was left. It would also prove that the anti-union laws could not be defied.

It would, in short, inflict a strategic defeat on the whole working class from which it would take decades to recover. Experience over the past 25 years has proved how correct this assessment of the Tories' agenda was. Today the unions still wear the heavy legal chains riveted on them by Thatcher. Every major dispute today is hemmed in by ballots, by court judgements invalidating them when they are for strike action, by threats to fine unions and individual militants for actions in defence of their jobs. Tony Blair, as prime minister, once said with satisfaction that Britain has "the most draconian union laws in Europe".

These political goals are now proudly acknowledged in the memoirs of the Tories who waged the fight. But all of this was obvious at the time. The problem was that only a few socialist organisations drew the logical conclusion that the attack required a class wide political response. A general strike was necessary if the miners were to win and had to be fought for in the working class. This could have been achieved by uniting wage claims and defence of jobs at a time of soaring unemployment of the whole labour movement linked to smashing the anti-union laws.

But some who called themselves revolutionaries – in particular the Socialist Workers Party – argued against such a perspective.

# betrayed the miners



Picketing miners battle police at the steel works in Port Talbot, South Wales

Tony Cliff, the founder of the SWP, claimed that such a generalised solidarity movement was simply a pipe dream, because workers had lost their confidence that had won the battles of 1972-74. In his subsequent analysis he justified this defeatism by citing the declining strike figures in the 1980s as compared to the previous decade and the defeats of the early Thatcher years. He commented: "Workers who lack the confidence to stand up to their own bosses cannot be expected to come out in support of other workers." (Tony Cliff *Patterns of mass strike*, part 3).

But this ignores the fact that the conditions of 1984 were not those of the later 1980s – the Tories were embroiled in a life or death struggle, there was enormous sympathy with the miners. Every section that was called on to strike came out for them. It was not the membership that retreated and broke ranks: it was their leaders, the treacherous union bureaucracy. These conditions created both objective and subjective conditions enormously favorable to solidarity. While sectional struggles might seem more difficult, the feeling that "all together" we could beat the Tories was widespread.

What was missing was not confidence: it was leadership.

For this reason Workers Power, against the opposition of the SWP, called for a general strike, and for the Miners Support Committees – which had sprung up in every city and town – to concentrate on winning solidarity action. This line was not a product of our genius but of our class standpoint. We recognised that nothing less than the strategic interests of the entire class were at stake. Others – including Scargill – said this rhetorically; but they drew no conclusions from it in terms of organisations to be built and demands to be raised in the here and now. Moreover we were clear this meant fighting against those who obstructed these goals, naming their names and calling on their members to fight them.

## THE DOCKERS COME OUT FOR THE MINERS

Many rank and file miners and pit-level leaderships came to similar conclusions by the summer. A leaflet put out by Kent miners read, "From rank and file miners, to rank and file dockers: Start the second front now." On 9 July the transport union, the TGWU, finally acted, under enormous pressure from rank and

file dockers. Ron Todd called a national dock strike. It lasted until 21 July. This came on the back of print workers shutting down production of *The Sun* when it refused to print replies by strikers to the lies being peddled by the paper. But unlike the printers' action, it was an all out strike, not a one-day protest. It had the potential to change the course of the whole struggle.

It was sparked by the refusal of TGWU dockers at Immingham to handle iron ore that engine drivers had refused to touch. The ore was bound for the giant steel works at Scunthorpe, which the miners were still seeking to shut down. The TGWU called a national strike. The Tories were also gunning for the Dock Labour Scheme, which they finally abolished with huge job losses in 1989. The dockers recognised that they had common cause with the miners if the jobs of both industries were to be saved.

The dock strike came just before the NUM's national conference on 12-13 July. It enabled Scargill to win a rejection of the Coal Board's "compromise" settlement backed by sections of the NUM bureaucracy. But on 21 July Todd and the TGWU leadership caved in and negotiated a deal to end the strike.

Militant dockers were outraged. The second front had been opened and the bosses were thrown into blind panic. How could they cope with both a dock strike and a miners' strike?

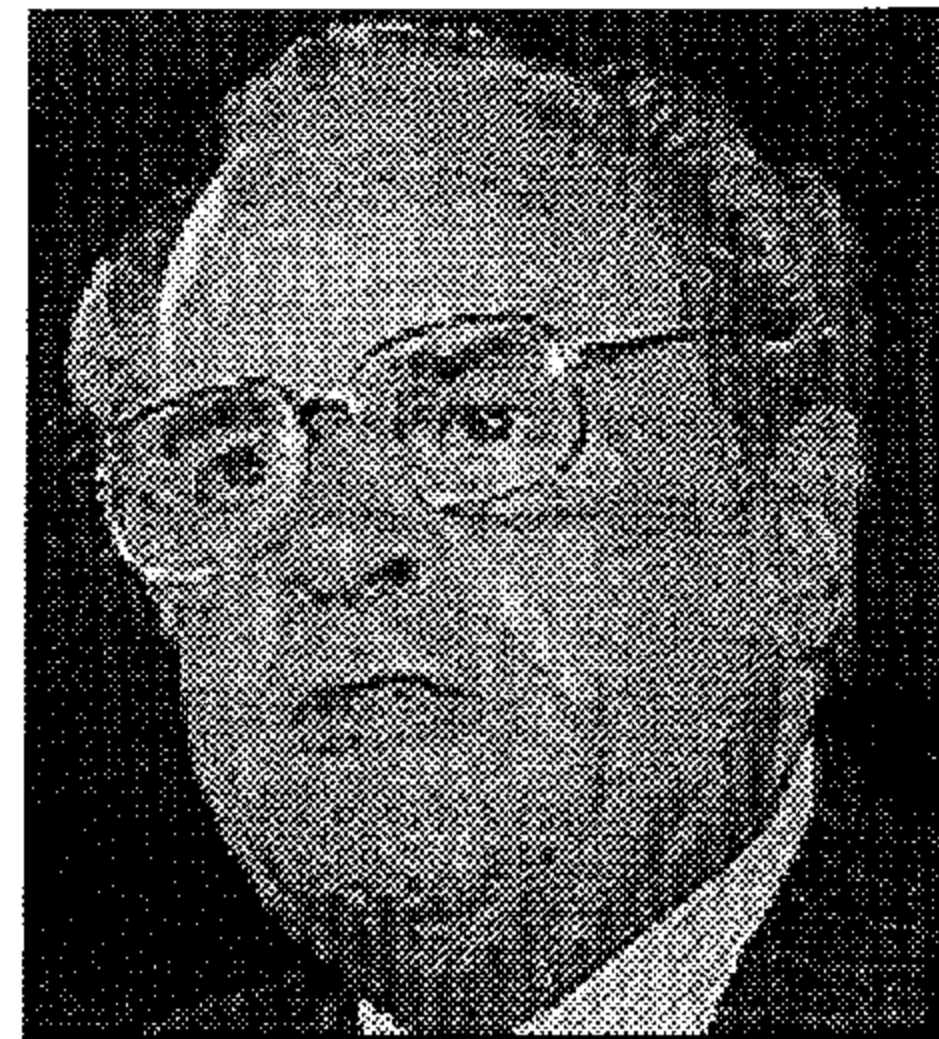
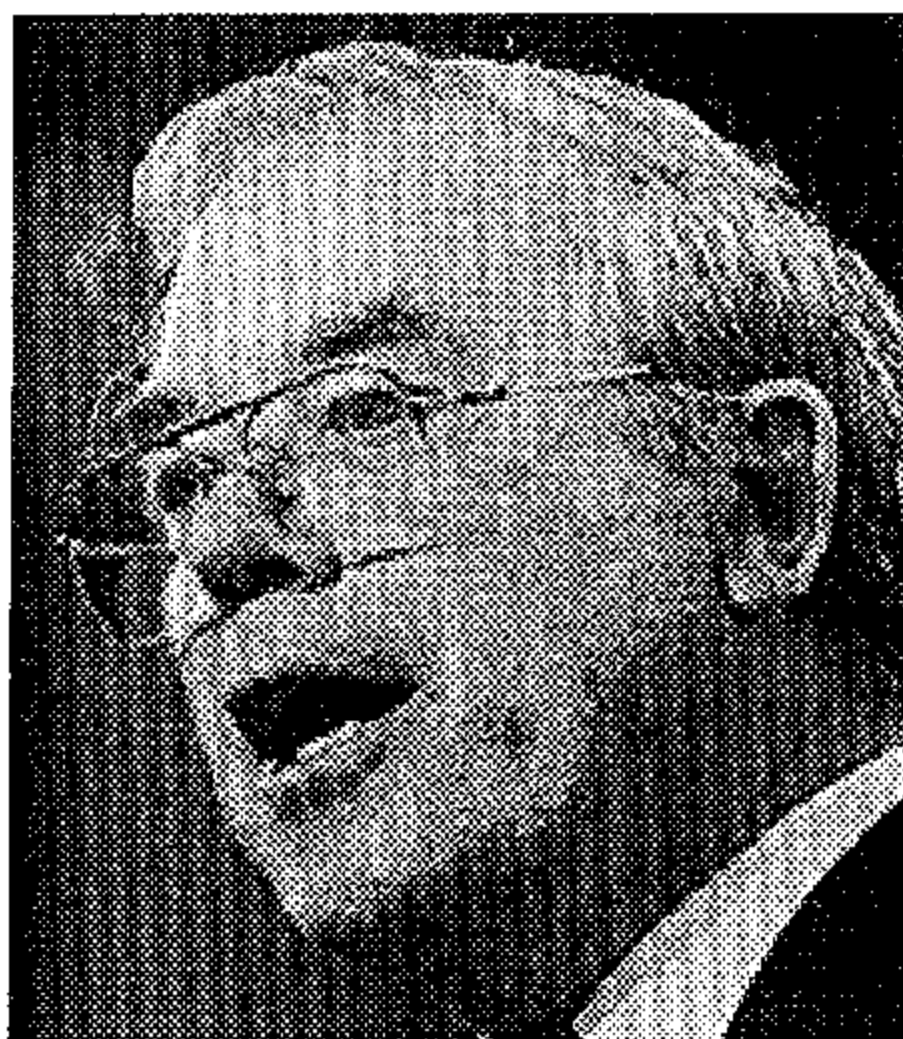
Cabinet ministers' memoirs recall that Thatcher wept in her office and she confessed to aides that the game was up. *The Economist*, so long a Thatcher fan, published a front page cartoon of her slipping on the banana skin of taking on two powerful sections of workers at once. It wrote: "The City, already growing edgy about the miners' strike, had taken fright on Monday when dockers said they would join them."

The ruling class was splitting because the workers were uniting. Rail workers redoubled their call for a strike across the transport network. In every miners' support committee around the country talk turned towards how to spread the action. Total victory and a general strike that could have smashed the entire Tory offensive were on the cards. But Ron Todd and John Connolly (the national officer for the docks in the TGWU) rushed to settle the dispute and save Thatcher.

There were no undertakings that scab coal or ore would be refused loading at the ports registered with the scheme. Todd and Connolly did not get a firm

**The ruling class was splitting because the workers were uniting**

## THE MINERS' STRIKE 1984-85



Scargill (left) and the miners were betrayed by right wing union leaders, like Hammond (centre), and lefts, such as Todd (right)

pledge that the Dock Labour Scheme would be preserved. They settled because they were more afraid of the militancy of their own members than the threat of a Tory victory. Their members' action, unleashed by the joint pickets of miners and dockers, was beginning to close even the non-unionised ports. The fear of an all out and obviously political clash with the Tory government was more than they dare contemplate.

The militants in the TGWU did not, however, take this cowardice lying down. They regrouped and when scab labour was used at the Hunterston docks to unload coking coal bound for the huge Scottish steel plant at Ravenscraig, the leadership was forced to call a second strike on 23 August. It lasted until 18 September. Alan Clark, the maverick Tory right winger, in his memoirs records that when Thatcher heard the news that dockers were to take national strike action she broke down. But she need not have worried.

Once again the TGWU leadership stepped in, negotiated a local deal at Hunterston – which allowed scab coal to be unloaded – and called off the strike. John Connolly went so far as to threaten that the TGWU would scab if the miners put pickets on the dock: "If the miners put on a picket line the unions concerned will work their policy ... We will continue to operate the dock at Hunterston."

By this time the militants in the TGWU, outflanked by the leaders, were incapable of getting a third strike. The leaders of the TGWU had saved Thatcher from defeat. Scargill attacked the deal that settled the dock strike but stopped short of denouncing Todd and Connolly or appealing to TGWU dockers over their heads. Instead of linking the miners fight to the defence of the threatened the Dock Labour Scheme, he lamely claimed that Ron Todd "knew what he was doing". This failure to attack his fellow bureaucrats was to prove more and more fatal as the treachery of the union leaders grew.

### SCARGILL FINALLY GOES TO THE TUC

After the summer betrayals by his allies left his strategy in ruins, Scargill changed his line on calls on the TUC. After telling miners for six

months that the TUC should keep its nose out, when it became clear that the NUM were not going to win it alone and when the leaders of the main unions had either failed to strike – or failed to sustain strikes – alongside the miners, Scargill went to the TUC and did a deal with them.

But now – in return for empty promises – it did in fact place control of solidarity in the hands of the General Council and its new general secretary Norman Willis, a man firmly committed to what was called "New Realism", a policy of accepting the anti-union laws and weakened position of the unions. The New Realists produced a deceitful TUC statement promising "physical and financial support" to the miners. The outgoing general secretary Len Murray said he was "not over the moon" about the TUC statement supporting the miners, but it was better than "the alternative, which is to allow those amendments [which called for definite action] to stand". It was plain that such leaders would not honour their pledges. The TUC eventually passed the statement, with only scabs like Eric Hammond of the electricians voting against.

Scargill argued that "Congress has placed itself squarely behind our campaign". He didn't add, "the better to stab the miners in the back". He should have. With the TUC now in control over other unions' solidarity it was able to issue binding instructions. They boiled down to: "money for miners' welfare, yes; action for miners' victory no". As a journalist at the time commented, the TUC gave the miners a blank cheque, but conveniently omitted to sign it. It was no surprise then, when talks between the NCB and NUM resumed in September, the TUC was desperate to end the strike but not to win it.

The TUC refused to view the strike as a class battle. Scargill refused to criticise the TUC for this. Instead he praised them for supporting the miners. This sealed the fate of the strike. By September only a general strike could now win the miners' strike.

The burning necessity at Congress was a fight for a pledge to solidarity strike action at once, to call a general strike if the courts continued to fine the NUM and seek to sequester its funds. No such calls came from the miners' leaders. Instead union leaders mounted the platform to declare their undying loyalty to the miners'

cause, to praise the miners and their families and then depart from Brighton to sell them out. In Brighton the TUC were, once again, let off the hook.

### THE FINAL CHANCE?

However one last opportunity for closing down the scabbing pits presented itself in late September and October. This was a dispute that arose between the Coal Board and the supervisory union in the pits, Nacods. Belatedly the leadership of Nacods had called a strike ballot over the government's closure programme. The result of the ballot startled everyone, not least the TUC and Nacods leaders – 82.5 per cent were in favour of a strike. The significance of this decision was enormous. If Nacods struck, the scab coalfields would be closed down.

Once again Thatcher was staring defeat in the face as during the dock strikes. So, what did the TUC and Nacods leadership do? They postponed strike action and, at the end of October, agreed a deal under which the pit closure programme would still be carried out, but only after local tripartite negotiation between the unions, bosses and local representatives of Acas (the arbitration service). The first ever national strike by Nacods was called off before it started.

This deal that saved Thatcher from defeat was carried through with the full approval of the TUC. This treachery ensured that, from November, the NUM would be left to fight absolutely on its own. Secondly, it temporarily created the mirage that a Nacods-style deal was the on way for the NUM. Even Scargill allies like Peter Heathfield were deluded and argued for it. But this idea was soon scuppered. Thatcher intervened directly and ordered coal board chief Ian MacGregor to reject the conciliation approach. Now the prospects of defeating the NUM outright were much brighter.

For the miners and their supporters it now became a question of digging in. Tragically, this was to be the character of the strike in its final months.

• This article is expanded from an analysis by Mark Hoskisson, first published in *Fifth International* (May 2004) and available to read online at [www.fifthinternational.org](http://www.fifthinternational.org)

# WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

- Abolish capitalism and create a world without exploitation, class divisions and oppression
- Break the resistance of the exploiters by the force of millions acting together in a social revolution smashing the repressive capitalist state
- Place power in the hands of councils of delegates from the working class, the peasantry, the poor - elected and recallable by the masses
- Transform large-scale production and distribution, at present in the hands of a tiny elite, into a socially owned economy, democratically planned
- Plan the use of humanity's labour, materials and technology to eradicate social inequality and poverty. This is communism - a society without classes and without state repression. To achieve this, the working class must take power from the capitalists.

We fight imperialism: the handful of great capitalist powers and their corporations, who exploit billions and crush all states and peoples, who resist them. We support resistance to their blockades, sanctions, invasions and occupations by countries like Venezuela, Iraq or Iran. We demand an end to the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the Zionist occupation of Palestine. We support unconditionally the armed resistance.

We fight racism and national oppres-

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

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

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

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

We fight reformism: the policy of Labour, Socialist, Social-Democratic and the misnamed Communist parties. Capitalism cannot be reformed through peaceful parliamentary means; it must be overthrown by force.

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

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

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

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

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

## Revocamp 2009: a great success

By Alex in Bolton

A camp on the outskirts of North-West Berlin was taken by surprise on the 6 August '09 by floods of revolutionary youth attending the 2009 REVO camp.

Youth from Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Sweden and the UK attended. Also comrades from our newly formed section in the US were present.

The camp was especially important because REVO is an international Trotskyist youth organisation. The revolution can only succeed if there is a worldwide struggle for socialism and this struggle can only succeed through an international revolution.

The camp truly captured the spirit of internationalism and was

a great help in our efforts to coordinate the class struggle worldwide. It was inspiring to see so many people from across the globe, that are fighting for the same goal, discussing ideas and the way forward.

Each comrade had fresh ideas and practical insights to bring to the discussions in the workshops. The sessions were well delivered and gave way to stimulating discussion afterwards.

There was an abundance of knowledge to be absorbed and everyone's different perspectives made it all that more interesting. It was especially interesting to hear the charismatic reports of our new US comrades and the camp was of great help to them in learning more about building a section.

Unfortunately, comrades from

Pakistan and Sri Lanka were unable to attend, as their visas were refused by the German government, due to the racist immigration controls.

Along with the learning was the fun of having 100 young people in a campsite in Berlin. Campfires, beaches by the river and cheap beer added to the fun, with all profits going to REVO. It was a brilliant chance for us to socialise, make friends and party.

It was a brilliant experience to be surrounded by so many comrades and it's certain that everyone who attended will remember it.

Revocamp was a great place for everyone to learn, grow and make friends. It was an even better place for REVO as a whole to develop and we will all be able to put our experiences at the Revocamp to good use in the coming months!

## CONTACT

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

Workers Power  
BCM 7750  
London  
WC1N 3XX

020 7708 4331  
workerspower@  
btopenworld.com

### ON THE WEB

www.workerspower.com  
www.fifthinternational.org

## JOIN US!

- I would like to join the Workers Power group
- Please send more details about Workers Power

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel no.: \_\_\_\_\_

## FIGHTING FUND

Make cheques or postal orders out to 'Workers Power' and send to BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX

or donate online at [www.workerspower.com](http://www.workerspower.com) 'Make a donation' button

## SUBSCRIBE

Please send Workers Power direct to my door each month for the next 12 issues.

I enclose:

£13.50 UK

£19.50 Europe

£26.00 Rest of the world

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel no: \_\_\_\_\_

## For an Antifascist Defence League!

By Luke Cooper

A new group calling itself the English Defence League (EDL) is organising a series of marches trying to intimidate Muslim and Asian communities, under the guise of protests against "Islamic extremism".

Twice now, in recent weeks, Asian youth along with white antifascist campaigners have driven them off the streets in angry protests in Birmingham.

The EDL marches mark the far right's return to the streets, on the back of the British National Party's increasing electoral success.

The BNP, presenting themselves as a "respectable party", remains fascist to the core. Their election campaigns are just a cover for winning power through a campaign of street terror, culminating in a fascist dictatorship. Undercover investigations by journalists and infiltrators inside the BNP have consistently exposed this as the basic ambition of the BNP leadership.

The EDL, if it is allowed to grow, could become the streetfighting arm of Britain's resurgent fascist movement. That is why it must be stopped – by any means necessary.

Communists see fascist organisations as instruments of civil war against the working class. Their aim is to smash the workers' movement, both trade union and political, and to divide the working class through murderous campaigns against racial, religious and sexual minorities. In this sense the fascists are not a "normal" capitalist party, and so the methods necessary to defeat them cannot be those we use against the mainstream capitalist parties. Fascism is a weapon of last resort for the capitalists against the working class movement: when capitalism faces a major social crisis, the ruling class can turn to the fascist organisations.

### No platform

It is because we recognise the radically different character of fascist parties that we believe they have to be stopped from organising their forces. This is the policy of "no platform". Wherever fascists seek to grow and develop their influence and support, communists seek to organise united action of workers, youth and anti-racists to stop them. Experience shows that when, as with the National Front in the late 1970s, they are prevented from carrying out their inevitably violent street marches, their parties go into crisis, splinter and collapse.

For these reasons we do not accept the liberal argument that the fascists should be free to organise and make propaganda like any other party, because this would be to allow them to conduct a campaign of terror against Black and Asian communities, trade unions and socialist organisations.

The fascist EDL marches pose the question of self-defence quite sharply and immediately. Allowing the EDL to march – even in the small numbers they have been able to rally so far – would encourage their growth and the racist attacks that always follow their appearance. The EDL was formed following white nationalist riots in Luton – where racist thugs went on a rampage.

But it doesn't have to be like this. The heroic and courageous actions of Black and Asian youth in Birmingham show the way.

Not only did the youth have to face racist abuse and attacks from EDL thugs, but they have also faced a campaign of repression by the police, including a high profile campaign in the local media with photos of the antifascist youth who broke up the EDL demonstrations.

The police have collaborated closely with the EDL and sought throughout to protect their protests and their right to march. The police can never be relied upon to defend workers' interests or fight the fascists. That is why we oppose calls on the state or the police to ban their marches. State bans will simply rebound on the antifascist forces.

That's why we need independent workers' antifascist organisation.

### Antifascist movement

The most high profile antifascist campaign in Britain is Unite Against Fascism (UAF) – an alliance of MPs including Labour, Liberals and Tories, several trade unions, former London Mayor Ken Livingstone and the Socialist Workers Party.

Though UAF sees the need to protest against the BNP, it suffers from having to limit its arguments and tactics to what the capitalist politicians and figures on the right wing of the labour movement will accept.

The return of the fascists to the streets has created tensions in the alliance. In Birmingham the local UAF group, Birmingham United, refused to organise a protest against the second EDL march, fearing violence would break out between antifascist youth and the EDL.

In the run up to the march UAF had lob-

bied the council and police to ban the EDL march and planned to hold a rally with Asian community leaders, trade unions and councillors in the council chamber at the same time. But then the police allowed the EDL to march while the council banned the anti-racist rally from taking place.

It was a worked example of how the state will back far right groups against challenges from the workers' movement. Shamefully UAF then refused to organise a protest citing the danger of violence, leaving it to local antifascists, including to their credit the Socialist Workers Party, to organise a protest without them.

The split in UAF exposed the contradiction built into the coalition from the outset. In order to keep more right wing, pacifistic forces on board UAF has to present only a liberal opposition to the BNP, and not back physical "no platform".

But the Socialist Workers Party, which is a key component of UAF, does support physical "no platform". If the EDL continue to march while UAF refuse to organise counter-protests for fear of violence, then the contradictions within UAF between these wings can only widen further.

### For an antifascist defence league

The actions of Black and Asian youth in Birmingham are an example to the whole antifascist movement. But we shouldn't simply rely on spontaneous acts of courage. We need to take steps towards organised defence squads – a national Antifascist Defence League that can rout the EDL wherever they appear. This is particularly important if we are to draw all other sections of the working class, white as well as black and Asian youth, into the struggle, and not just leave it to minority communities to defend themselves.

The Socialist Workers Party, while supporting physical "no platform" where it happens, has not been willing to develop the struggle in Birmingham to a higher level of organisation, an antifascist defence league, as it would force a rupture in UAF.

This is a mistake. We need to learn from the experience in Birmingham and generalise the policy of physically confronting the EDL elsewhere, if we are to make sure no community has to endure their campaign of racist and fascist terror.

**For an eyewitness report of the latest shutdown of the EDL in Birmingham go to [www.workerspower.com](http://www.workerspower.com)**