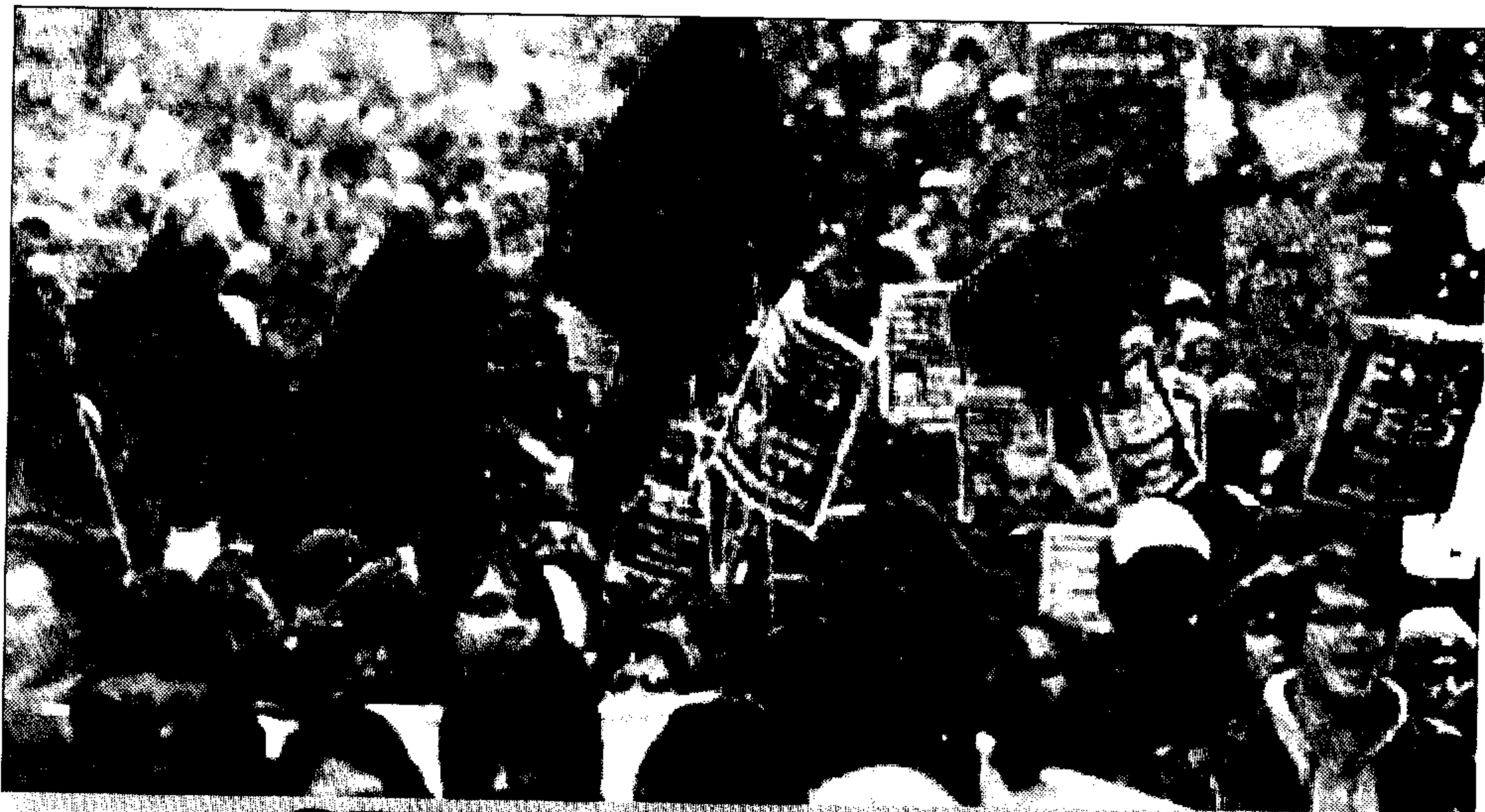


workers power 5

Winter 2010-11 ★ Price £1 / 1.50 Issue 350

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



STUDENTS AND WORKERS UNITE!

IN A WAVE of brilliant, angry protests, students across the UK have shown that direct action is the way to stand up to Tory cuts. The majority of British people did not vote for college fees to rise, just like we didn't vote for the rest of the £83 billion cuts. So why should we put up with them for five years until the next bunch of politicians put themselves up for re-election?

The students have shown the way. They marched in London in their tens of thousands, stormed the Tory headquarters and lit a fire of resistance across the country.

The Tories, their Liberal lap dogs, the millionaire press and the police chiefs all railed against the students for daring to stand up for their future.

Teenagers as young as 14 were kettled – forcibly contained – in the freezing cold. Students were beaten with batons, charged with horses and even dragged out of wheelchairs. Parents were warned not to let their children go on the marches – with a not-

so-veiled threat of violence to their children if they did.

The students stood up to all this and their movement is still growing. What an inspiration!

The thing that frightens the Tories most is that this is just the beginning. Half a million workers and countless services face cuts in the New Year. Railworkers, firefighters, refuse collectors and civil servants are all preparing for action.

The Tories are attacking the whole working class and the whole welfare state. We cannot let them get away with it – and the students have shown we don't have to.

Let's follow their lead by marching, striking, occupying every workplace and service threatened with closure.

We need to build up a giant wave of strikes coming together in a united general strike to break the cuts, bring down the Tories and open a challenge to their whole system.

TURN TO PAGES 3, 4, 5 and 6

STOP POLICE BRUTALITY



A whole new generation is learning that the real role of the police in capitalist society is to defend the rich and repress the poor – and young people are showing that self-defence is no offence.

TURN TO PAGE 7

Where we stand

Workers Power is a revolutionary communist organisation formed in 1976 in the tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky and applying their ideas to the fight against capitalism today.

We are the British Section of an international tendency formed in 1989, which in 2003 adopted the name League for the Fifth International to express our fight for a new world party of social revolution.

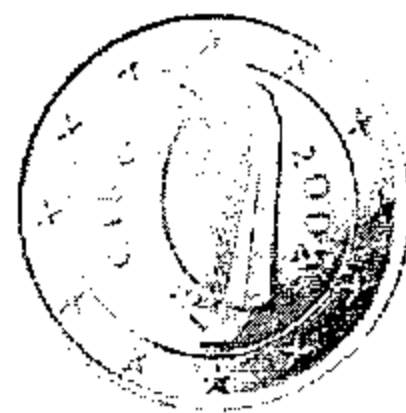
Capitalism is a crisis-ridden social system that repeatedly plunges the world into destructive phases of economic downturn, instability and war. Private ownership of the means of production obstructs the development of human potential and leaves billions in poverty while a handful of oligarchs monopolise wealth and resources.

The alternative to capitalism is generated by the class struggle of the modern working class which repeatedly organises resistance to the ruling capitalist class. Today, with global capitalism again entering an historic crisis, working class resistance is springing up everywhere against the capitalists' attempts to make the workers pay for a crisis we never caused.

By developing a new revolutionary leadership, the working class can unify its resistance to the capitalist offensive and convert it into a challenge to the rule of capital itself. This means overthrowing the capitalist class in an armed revolution, breaking up the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state and replacing it with the rule of councils of recallable delegates from workplaces and working class communities, guarded and defended by a workers' militia.

The principal obstacle to the victory of working class resistance is the leadership of the working class movement itself. From social-democrats and Labourites through to the mainstream Communist parties with their Stalinist ideology, the mass political parties of the working class movement have long since abandoned the road of revolution. Their reformist ideology not only obscures the road to working class power, but systematically disorganises resistance to the cuts and the capitalist offensive today.

The Fourth International was founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938 to challenge the misleadership of social democracy and Stalinism, but since 1951 has abandoned this task and everywhere adapts to their leadership. For this reason, we everywhere raise the call for the formation of a new world party of social revolution, a Fifth International.



Irish bailout spells misery for millions

Anger mounts in Ireland as 100,000 workers marched in Dublin last month to protest against the government attacks.

The 90 billion euro bailout from the European Union and the IMF is conditional on 15 billion euros of cuts:

- Services and benefits cut by 2.2 billion euros
- The minimum wage cut by one euro
- A home tax and a water tax will begin next year adding more misery.

Again the living standards of workers are sacrificed in order to enrich the bankers and the bond markets. International solidarity is a vital task here in Britain.



NEWS IN BRIEF

NUJ members at Newsquest in Blackburn, Bradford, Bolton and York have voted decisively for strike action. Southampton have already been on strike.

The ballots are over Newsquest's (one of the top regional paper owners) attacks on pay, pensions, and jobs. The strikes are due to take place in January.



After students occupied Tory party HQ, Sally Hunt, Universities and Colleges Union general secretary, criticised the action.

But hundreds of lecturers across the country signed a statement in support of the protesters. A UCU conference later backed the demo on the day of the tuition fees vote. This shows the UCU left needs to organise a stronger rank and file network to fight the coming battles over job losses and pensions.



The Right To Work campaign has called a Peoples' Convention on 12 February to discuss and organise resistance to the cuts.

This could be a real springboard to the week of action on 14-20 February, called by the Coalition of Resistance.¶

NCAFC

national campaign against fees & cuts

The vote might have gone through, but this is not the end! Students in the NCAFC, which called the magnificent days of action against the tuition fee rises, the 80 per cent cuts in university funding and the abolition of the Educational Maintenance Allowance, have called for the struggle to continue.

- Go to www.anticuts.com for more information

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workers power 5

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★ EDITORIAL

Students shake the ConDems: now workers can break them

2010 WAS A year of youth rebellion as the students from schools and colleges across the country took furious action against the Tories hike in fees and cuts in grants.

Let no one speak of the apathetic, playstation generation again. The cry of 'Tory scum' went up in every town and city across Britain.

Voiced by young people in their tens of thousands – marching with incredible frequency, occupying at remarkable length – their determination succeeded in shaking the foundations of the Con-Dem government.

Clegg and Cable's Lib Dems were exposed as hypocrites and traitors in the eyes of millions. The Tory party that had all too quickly showed its true colours found its headquarters occupied.

If the nasty party was back – so too was resistance.

Hope

This was a wakeup call – not simply to the reality of a system that serves the rich and privileged but also to the power we have when we stand up together and fight. The great youth rebellion of 2010 rekindled the spirit of 1968. Suddenly and almost without warning it gave hope to millions.

It marked the end of the 'phoney war' when the Tories and the mass media bombarded us with talk of 'savage' but 'inevitable' cuts. Until the students protested, marched and struck in their thousands, our side in the battle had barely raised its voice.

Now all that has changed. Yes, the Liberal Democrats did not back down – they voted it through like the traitors they are. But the fight is still on. This wasn't just a battle over fees.

It's about the kind of society we want to live in. There is an alternative to the nightmare of Con-Dem Britain – where the rich live ever more ostentatious lifestyles at the expense of the poor, where services are slashed and sold off, and millions are condemned to poverty.

That vision has been challenged – now we need our own vision and a *strategy to win*.

The student movement will encourage militant action in the rest of the working class against the 500,000 job losses in the public sector against the 30 per cent cuts in funding for council services, against the housing benefit cap that will drive scores of thousands out of their homes, against the Tories' plans to slash pensions, limit

legal aid and tear up basic welfare for working people just to pay for the crisis of their system.

General strike

And industrial resistance is key to stopping these attacks. We need to launch indefinite strikes and stoppages to force real concessions, coming together in a general strike to bring down the Con-Dem government once and for all.

The TUC congress called for "coordinated action" – but TUC boss Brendan Barber has donee nothing to make it happen. The outgoing leaders of Unite, and the current leadership of Unison and the GMB have stood in the way of united militant action. New Labour leader "red" Ed Miliband has condemned "irresponsible" strikes...as if fighting these vicious cuts was somehow an irresponsible thing to do.

It's time to say loud and clear to every single leader of the trade unions and Labour Party, "If not now, when?"

But how? Well, teachers, lecturers and civil servants are already planning to ballot for coordinated strike action against pensions. We need similar ballots against every cut and bring them forward so we strike at the same time.

In local government the scale of the cuts could be catastrophic – now is the time for a militant defence of jobs, conditions and services.

Anticuts committees

A series of actions have already been called (see page 2). We need to link them up.

Anticuts committees have sprung up across the country. There have been angry demos against council cuts in Lewisham and Coventry. Labour councils that have carried out Tory cuts have rightly faced furious protests.

We need to build local action committees and link them up nationally – that way we can take action with the official leaderships wherever possible, but also without them wherever necessary. That's what the students did: their official leader Aaron Porter of NUS opposed the struggle, but rank and file networks of students organised despite him. That's the way workers can beat the cuts despite the TUC.

If we take this road, we can break the Con-Dem government once and for all. In 2010 the Con-Dems came to power and were shaken to their core within six months – now we must break them once and for all.

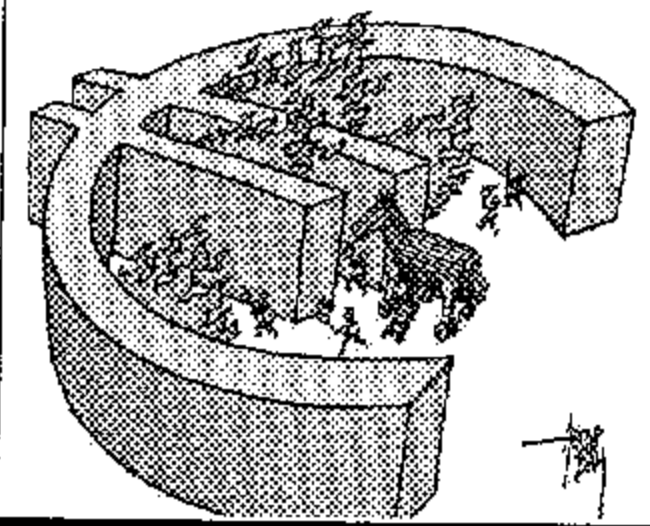
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women's perspective from **JOSEPHINE CASSIDY**

Riot girls – or thinking women

The day after the mass student walkout on 24 November, the *Daily Mail* ran the headline, “The Rage of the Girl Rioters”, supposedly exposing a new generation of mindless female thugs.

Although the *Mail* described the images as “disturbing”, I think it was an inspiration to see so many young women protesting. Ninety years on from the Suffragettes, it seems parts of the establishment are still not happy for women to have a political voice. The thousands of schoolgirls who have protested over the last few weeks do not fit their image of women as passive and uninterested in politics.

We have a lot to protest about. In education, the cutting of state funding to arts and humanities will disproportionately affect female students. The huge debt burden will take longer for women graduates to pay off, as we continue to earn 17 per cent less than men – with a bigger gap for part-timers.



A study by the House of Commons Library revealed that women will shoulder nearly three-quarters of the cuts. One of the first things to be slashed was child benefit – an attack on women's financial independence. Furthermore, the public sector employs a high proportion of women, so the pay freeze and 600,000 job cuts will force more women into poverty and unemployment.

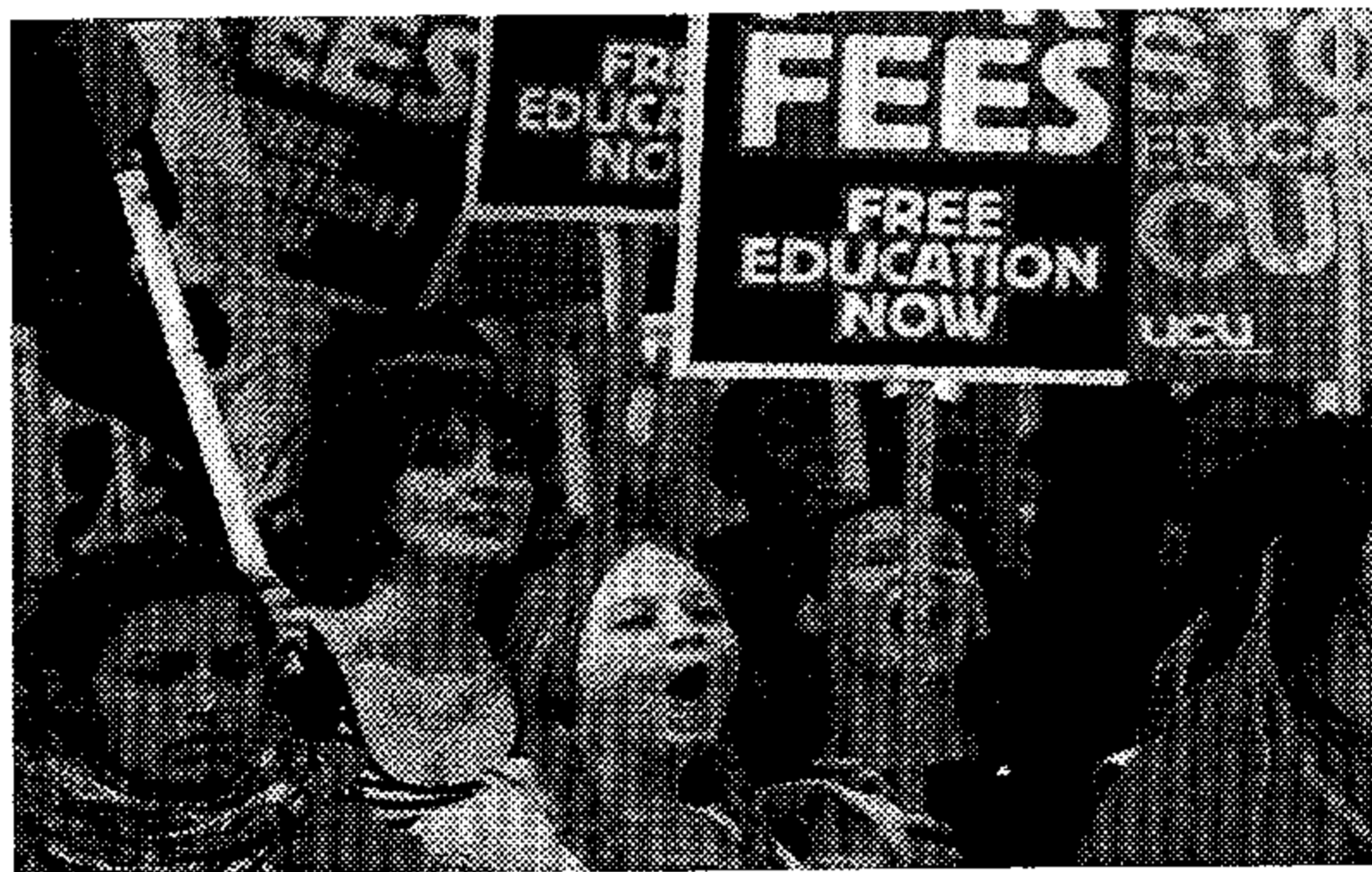
Over the last few weeks a whole generation of young women have been politicised. Being radical and militant is not something “masculine”. We have a proud history of struggle.

In the student occupations across the country, women have taken a leading role, with female activists often becoming “spokesmen” of the movement. Camden school student Sophie Burge wiped the floor with Lib Dem MP, Norman Baxter in a Channel 4 News interview. We are proving that young women have better grasp of politics and what is at stake than the politicians themselves.

So, if images of radical young women on the streets makes *Daily Mail* journalists uncomfortable – then tough, we are here to stay!

★ HOME FRONT

Camden girls proud to fight!



Tasha Bell, Camden School for Girls

We staged a 24-hour “teach-in” on Wednesday 8 December in a form of protest against this coalition Government, which has now voted for the raising of tuition fees up to £9,000. The main reason for the occupation was to raise awareness through media coverage about this rise in tuition fees, and we feel we were really successful in doing just this. Also we gained a phenomenal amount of support, by MPs (Caroline Lucas and Jeremy Corbyn), local residents, ex-students, teachers and many others.

It was the first occupation of a sixth form and we hope that many more will follow, as it will be both current years in colleges and sixth forms that will be targeted and deeply affected by these attacks on education.

People in their last year of sixth form are being forced to choose between having a gap year (an experience that helps people learn more about the society we live in) and paying £9,000 per year, or going straight to University to escape this rise. People in their first year will be the first to be hit.

During the occupation students still attended their lessons, coming

to the sixth form hall, where the occupation was staged, during their free time. Between 50 and 80 of us stayed overnight.

We held meetings in a circle and based them on consensus, meaning everyone had a voice. Although I can't talk for everyone there, from what we have talked about, the occupation was a highly educational experience.

We learnt that – contrary to what the Government has led us to believe – we do, as individuals and under-18s, have our own voice and have every right to be heard. Also as a community, we all treated each other, our teachers and the occupied space with respect and understood that, although we were with our friends, this wasn't a party but a political statement.

Furthermore, within the 24-hour occupation, people found their own political voice and opinions – not that of their parents, but their own – and in turn found that many more of us shared those opinions.

Although the teachers were perhaps a little frustrated with the occupation, I am so proud of my school – especially everyone who attended the occupation. We (including the boys) are all proud to be known as the Camden Girls.

Student struggle inspires UK-wide fight against cuts

John Bowman

Youth and students in Britain have run an astonishing campaign against cuts to education funding, tuition fee increases and the withdrawal of central government funding for the Education Maintenance Allowance.

The month of high-intensity protest saw public opinion sway in favour of the student demonstrators, a political crisis in the Liberal Democrats, and most importantly, the dawn of a new era where cuts are not seen as inevitable, the coalition government's weaknesses have been exposed to all, and millions of people have been inspired to fight back.

24 November

The occupation of Tory Party HQ on 10 November by thousands of students really kick started the movement, in fact it was the opening salvo in the battle against the cuts. The 24 November day of action, called by the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts and REVOLUTION, unsupported by the NUS, showed the full anger of school, college and university students together, with 130,000 estimated to have

“These are not acts of violence, these are acts of resistance.”

Simon Hardy, REVOLUTION

taken part in protests all over the country. Activist networks and groups were established across the country as the apathetic label peeled away with a new generation of people struggling against injustice.

Tens of thousands of students walked out of schools and colleges, joined by passers-by and teachers. Many cities saw large demonstrations – 5,000 in Leeds, 4,000 in Manchester and Newcastle, with smaller towns such as Kingston and Bury also seeing thousands on the streets. Helen, a mem-



ber of REVOLUTION from Bury College said “the mood was so angry – everyone was up for taking direct action, we are not going away, and are going to fight this one.”

30 November

Then on 30 November, despite severe weather conditions, thousands marched again all over the country. In London, protesters ran all over the city to avoid riot police and avoid kettling to successfully reach Trafalgar Square for a rally, dominated by calls to bring down the government and shouts of “one solution, revolution!”

9 December

The 9 December demonstration saw more than 25,000 people march on Parliament and occupy the square in the face of extreme police brutality. While protesters learned to defend themselves from baton charges with foam placards, police used every means of violence available: cavalry charges and kettling, putting lives at risk, often refusing to allow the injured medical attention. Riot police were heard saying “if you didn’t want violence, why did you come here? You knew what this would be like.”

Simon Hardy, from Workers Power and the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts told a press conference, “These are not acts of violence, these are acts of resistance... As far as I’m concerned, self-defence is no offence.”

Whilst the tuition fees vote passed that day, it was hardly a victory for the coalition government. Fatima, a REVOLUTION member from the Camden School for Girls, who led an overnight sit-in against fees, said “Just because they vote for something, it doesn’t make it final. Look what happened to the Poll Tax – people kept on fighting.”

The next big step will be the 29 January protest in London and broadening and deepening our connections with the working class and trade union movement.

NUS President faces vote of ‘no confidence’

Aaron Porter, NUS President, is facing calls to go after prominent student activists in the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts put their name to a statement that condemned his lack of support for the 9 December march on Parliament.

They also criticised him over allegations in *the Telegraph* that he asked MPs to cut grants to poorer students.

Sean Rillo Raczka from Birkbeck College launched the statement, which was supported by Michael Chessum, of UCL and passed by the student union at the School of Oriental and African Studies.

Fees fight not over

John Bowman, national organiser, REVOLUTION

Now that parliament has voted to increase tuition fees and abolish the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), the student movement needs to force universities and councils to refuse to implement the policies.

The next stage is to demand that each local authority keeps funding and distributing EMA and campaigns for every university to freeze tuition fees at their current rate.

Just because parliament has scrapped its funding and raised the cap doesn't mean authorities have to do it.

The next big mobilisation is the national demonstration on 29 January. We should ask

all trade unions to support this demo – and demand the NUS does as well. At the same time, we should argue for an indefinite strike of students and education workers (who are also fighting cuts and attacks on their pensions), to keep the pressure on the coalition.

But the government will not fall on education issues alone, which affect only a minority. We need a movement that fights every cut – not just to higher education, colleges, schools and EMA, but also to benefits, jobs and public services. To accept some cuts and not others – as Labour councils are proposing – will divide and weaken the movement.

By uniting students, welfare claimants, migrants, the dis-

abled, the elderly, the youth and bringing into play the full might of seven million trade unionists, we can challenge the millionaires who run this country and bring down the government that rules in their favour.

Students and workers need to build education assemblies – or anti-cuts groups – in every town and city, bringing together and coordinating all the forces fighting the cuts.

Rebecca Allen, a PCS rep, told Workers Power: "We have held regular education assemblies in Leeds, which bring together hundreds of university, college and school students, and trade union activists. When we needed funding for the 9 December march on Parliament, the general assembly

asked trade unionists to help fund coaches to London.

"They went back to their branches and, because their members were so enthusiastic about the student militancy, raised hundreds of pounds."

Education assemblies/anti-cuts groups can do more than this: they give rise to bodies with delegates from workplaces and union branches, schools and colleges that can call action, and not have to wait for union leaders to call it.

They can mobilise the forces necessary to defeat the Tory-Lib Dem coalition – building towards a general strike with the muscle to bring down this bosses' government.

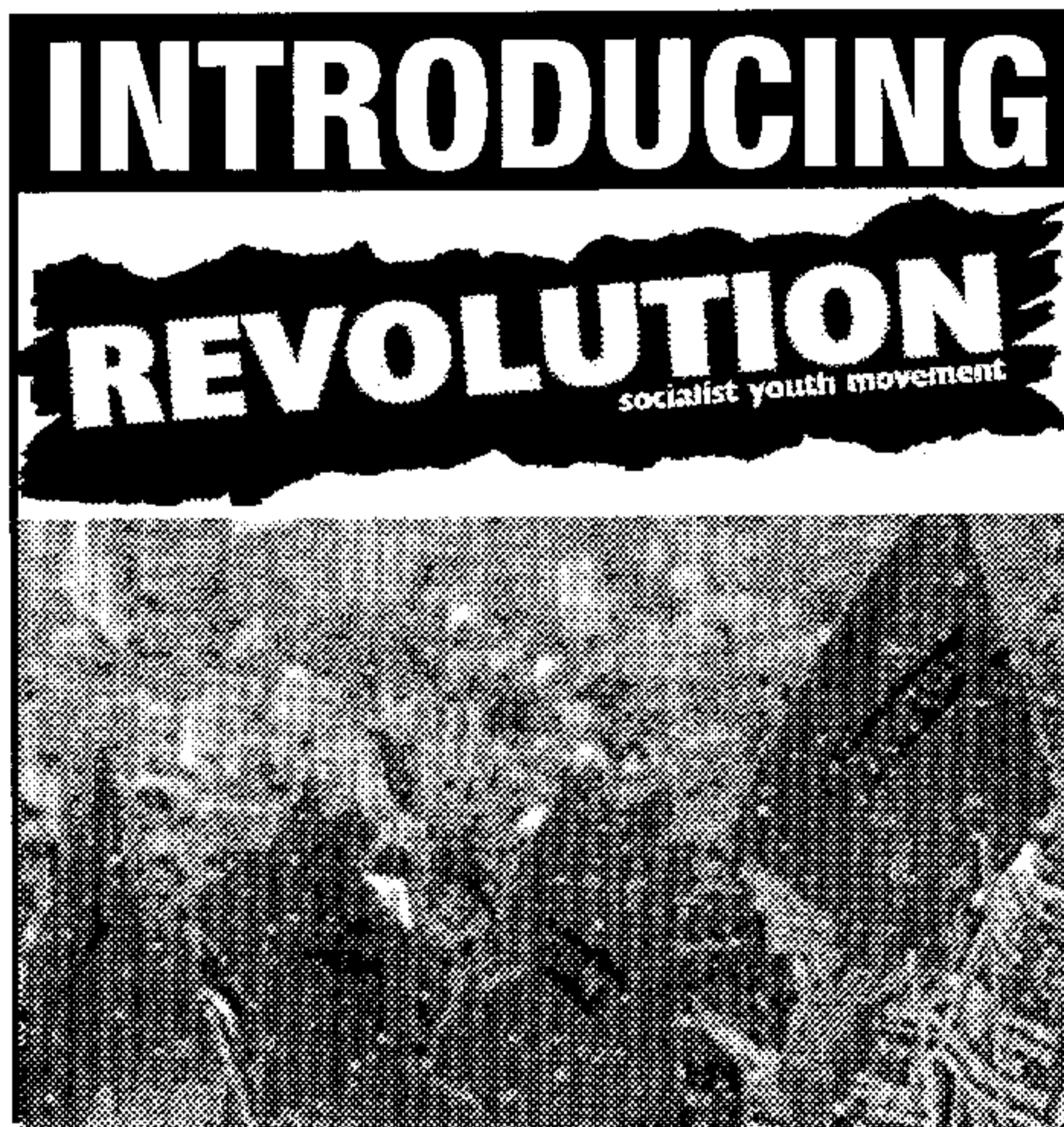
• **Now turn to page 17 to read how to fight for a general strike**

The youth movement REVOLUTION has played a leading role in the student protests by organising young people across the country to fight the Tory-Lib Dem cuts.

Members have helped to organise university occupations at University Collage London (UCL), London South Bank University (LSBU), and Leeds University. We have also taken part in sixth-form sit-ins at Camden School for Girls, and the mass walkouts of over one thousands students from Bury College and Holy Cross.

We proposed the massive 24 November school walkouts to the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts.

Our red flags and "One Solution – Revolution!" battle cry have attracted the venom of Tory rags such as the Daily Mail, Evening Standard, the Telegraph, and even the US's right-wing Fox News. But they also fuelled the enthusiasm and



fighting spirit of young people, many of whom have joined us.

REVOLUTION's website says: "We are a group of young activists who are fed up with unemployment, war, poverty,

cuts and capitalism. We want to bring down Cam and Clegg's millionaire coalition and replace it with socialism."

Many of the most radical protesters have been school stu-

dents - those not allowed to vote, but who will suffer greatly from the abolition of the EMA, further privatisation of the school system, cuts in teaching staff and the raising of tuition fees beyond the reach of most working class youth.

As the last weeks have shown, faced with oppression and injustice, young people are spontaneously radical. But police, school authorities, parents, and even trade union leaders restrict and restrain our involvement in politics.

Workers Power, in contrast, believes young people can build and lead their own revolutionary youth movement and we give them every assistance to do so. In solidarity with REVOLUTION, we believe that a mass youth movement can play a vital role in building a new revolutionary party.

• **For news, analysis, tactics, and reports of youth action, see www.socialistrevolution.org**

Stop police brutality

Defend our right to protest: support self-defence and organise protection of demonstrations

On 9 December thousands of students defied the law, passed by the last Labour government, to march into Parliament Square.

The police responded by “kettling” protesters for hours in the freezing cold without food, water, toilets, even denying the injured medical attention. This is a denial of our civil rights to assemble and march, and our human rights not to be detained without food, water or use of a toilet for six hours or more.

Police also used violence against protesters – both armoured cops with batons and shields and charging with horses.

Middlesex University student Alfie Meadows was hit by a baton when he peacefully tried to leave the kettle in Parliament Square and had to undergo emergency brain surgery. Journalist Jody MacIntyre was pulled from his wheelchair and dragged across the floor – twice. A Barnsley school student told the BBC that police had knocked her friends to the ground and beaten them till they coughed up blood. Others were hit, charged by horses, pushed and kettled.

The courts and the state however will not criticise the police – as we saw over the deaths of Ian Tomlinson at last year’s G20 or John Charles de Menezes at Stockwell tube in 2005. Instead there are cover-ups, lies about the victim, “accidental” poor inquiries, inexplicable lost documents and a “lack” of evidence.

Meanwhile, the same courts will back the police when it



Riot police try and fail to defend Tory HQ from student protesters

comes to charging protesters. We should campaign for all charges against tuition fees protesters to be dropped.

The kettling is illegal and is designed to frustrate and annoy people so that they will lose their composure, which gives the police opportunities to arrest them and frighten others from protesting again.

Police: part of the state

The violence of the police is not random – it is planned by the state in order to frighten people away from demonstrating, punish protesters with kettling despite them not breaking any law and eventually breaking the break resistance to the government.

Marxists argue that the state is not neutral but serves the ruling class. Frederick Engels said that “bodies of armed men” – the police and army and other military services – are the basis of the capitalist state. They are there to protect capitalism’s order and property, enforcing the laws against us while (as the

protests show) freely breaking it themselves, with the complicity of parliament and the courts.

In Lewisham in south London recently a Labour council called in riot police to attack demonstrators against council cuts. This will happen all over the country unless we get organised.

We need to support self-defence against state violence.

But we also need well-organised demonstrations and protests that have sufficient and effective stewards to defend against police violence and reassert our right to protest. Teams of stewards, democratically accountable to student and workers’ assemblies, can ensure protests are defended from police attack, and also restrain excesses or even provocations from police, like leaving an unattended van on Whitehall on 24 November.

Media witch-hunt

The 24-hour news channels filmed the protests. The BBC actually showed police charg-

ing protesters; attacks on students from riot cops and experienced first hand the kettling.

But they only showed it once or refused to comment. Their reporters were there to exaggerate the violence of the protesters and downplay that of the police. Sky’s Kay Burley called protesters “insurgents” at one point. Then the newspapers followed with their lurid tales of mass violence and made up quotes in order to launch a witch-hunt against students.

The media’s role is to defend the police – as it did at the G20 when Ian Tomlinson was killed. It wasn’t until footage came through by the public from phones and cameras that the police story was challenged.

The media is owned by billionaires and staffed at the top by well-paid functionaries. Occasionally, they may do an expose of wrongdoing, such as MPs’ expenses, but in the main they aid the police and government.

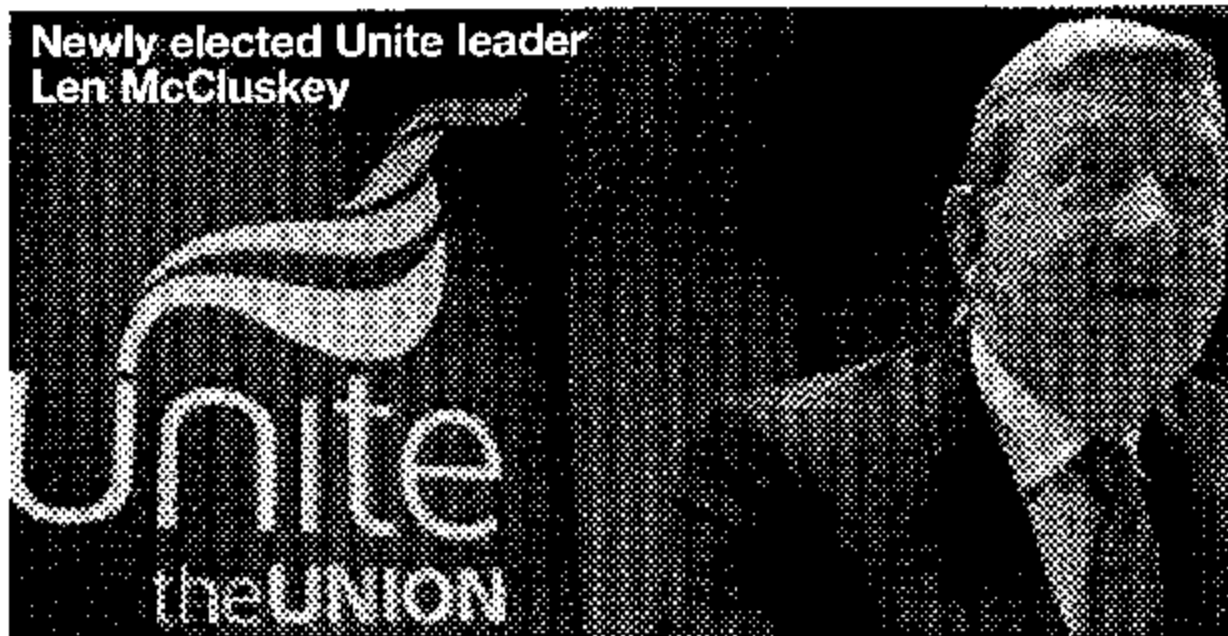
Self-defence is no offence!

The protests against fees have highlighted to millions that capitalism can’t go forward without stripping away our education, jobs, services and our political and social rights.

We must also build a mass anti-cuts movement and push the trade unions into a general strike to bring down the government, and a revolution to break up the capitalist state – including their police force – and take power into the hands of democratic councils of ordinary working class people.

industrial overview from **JEREMY DRINKALL**

Who is Len McCluskey – and will he fight?



In Unite's leadership election, left-wing candidate Len McCluskey won with over 100,000 votes. Over 50,000 members voted for second-placed Jerry Hicks, who campaigned on a rank and file ticket. As readers will know, I supported Hicks.

Just days after his election, McCluskey told the Coalition of Resistance (CoR) conference that we need "people power" on the scale of the anti-poll tax movement. He said "I will be instructing our area activists' committees to link up with local anti-cuts groups" and has reportedly pledged Unite's support for CoR.

So who is Len McCluskey, and will he lead a fight to stop the cuts?

The 60-year-old was a shop steward on the Liverpool docks for a decade before becoming a full-time official for the Transport and General Workers' Union (T&G) in 1979. Since 1990, McCluskey has been a national official, most recently in charge of industrial strategy and centrally involved in the British Airways cabin crew dispute. Here his shortcomings have been disastrous.

He buckled before the courts last Christmas, calling off a 12-day strike despite a 90 per cent vote for action. Then he caved in to media pressure, signalling that the union would not strike over Easter. Another court ruling saw him calling off action after more than 20 strike days had BA on the run. Since then, McCluskey has repeatedly (and unsuccessfully) tried to get members to accept BA's terms. Only the militancy of the shop stewards has stopped a sell-out.

But for most Unite members, particularly the 101,000 who voted for him, McCluskey comes across as a fighter. If he is to prove his worth, he should ballot all members in the public services to strike alongside teachers in defence of pensions, call for strikes and occupations to defend jobs and services, and mobilise for the TUC demo on 26 March, laying on trains and buses to get members there.

As for the 53,000 who voted for Hicks, we have an additional task: organise a rank and file movement across Unite, which can take on the government and the bosses – with McCluskey where possible, without him where necessary.

★ ANTI-CUTS

Coalition of Resistance sets stage for fightback

Jeremy Dewar

The sheer breadth and depth of the cuts has angered hundreds of thousands. Activists across the country have responded with local anti-cuts alliances, organising demos, lobbies and sit-ins, targeting universities, councils and tax-dodgers. The student rebellion catapulted this resistance onto the national stage.

The successful Coalition of Resistance (CoR) conference on 27 November could not have been better timed. The question of the day for the 1,300 who attended was: how can we turn local resistance into a mass movement that can chal-

a call for strikes and coordinated action by unions in the public sector, and that the conference should have the right to amend it.

The Socialist Party (SP) did not get involved, claiming CoR was "undemocratic" and "imposed" on the movement. The SP is now trying to get the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) to initiate another "all-Britain anti-cuts campaign", the only difference being that the SP would be in charge. This is nothing more than a criminal act of disunity and is recognised as such across the movement. Only the SP denies it.

The Socialist Workers Party, on the other hand, after initially resist-



lenge the government nationally?

Two left MPs and three union general secretaries spoke from the platform, along with socialists and anti-war leaders. John McDonnell MP drew warm applause when he called on the TUC to organise "generalised strike action". New Unite leader Len McCluskey pledged support for local anti-cuts groups and the CoR.

National strategy

The importance of CoR is based on the need to coordinate the efforts of local committees, campaigns and the unions. Only with a national strategy can we stop the cuts completely.

Workers Power is proud of the role we played on the CoR planning committee. Despite resistance from those who saw the Stop the War Coalition as the model, we argued that the declaration should include

ing CoR in favour of its own Right To Work campaign, has now been forced to recognise the huge pressure for unity that exists across the movement and will hopefully now stop sectarian jockeying for leadership, and throw their weight into building a united democratic resistance, within which the different strategies of the various political organisations can be freely debated and above all tested in struggle.

We have a great opportunity to organise mass, coordinated action against the cuts. Local anti-cuts groups and unions at the local, regional and national level should affiliate to CoR. For our part, Workers Power with several members elected to its national committee, will fight to commit CoR to organising action with or without the say-so of the official union and labour leaders.



Teachers and students protest on 10 November education march, London

Education about discipline and values, not learning, says Gove

Rachel Brooks, NUT
(personal capacity)

Teachers need on-the-job training, not proper education, according to the latest government white paper, *The Importance of Teaching*.

Put forward by Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education, the document outlines plans to ditch the one-year postgraduate course for new teachers – mostly university based education and training – and to carry out training at schools almost immediately.

Christine Blower from the National Union of Teachers

said: “The critical job for schools is to teach children, not to train teachers.”

Gove also wants to fast track ex-soldiers – with or without degrees in the subject they might teach – into the classroom in order to deal with what he considers are discipline problems. He also wants to make it easier for schools to expel students despite expulsions being used disproportionately more against black, Asian and working class youth.

The school student campaigners that walked out against fees are really the target for Gove’s discipline drive. It is

another attack on those who wish to protest against the cuts.

There are plans to encourage schools to publish teacher’s pay, their qualifications, the amount of sick time they have taken off as well as public access to school results already in place. This is announced just as the PISA (the OECD thinktank’s programme for international student assessment) reports that competition and marketisation lower educational standards.

According to PISA, Finland has the best education, with a completely state run system and no competition between schools, while Britain comes far

below, as do Sweden’s “Free School” and the USA’s “Charter School” models that Gove wants to copy.

Gove’s plans must be stopped. The function of state education is to provide high quality, free, respectful learning for every single young person. To do that we need well qualified teachers who have decent classrooms, equipment, smaller and fewer class sizes, not the competitive, examination-obsessed system we have.

Uniting students with teachers and staff in a fight against Gove’s cuts is the way forward.

Unions set for strike over pensions

Unions are gearing up to defend public sector pensions in what could be a key battle with the Con-Dems in 2011.

The government has condemned the “gold plated” final salary pensions of public sector workers.

Several unions are already planning to strike in defence of pensions. Mark Serwotka leader of the Civil servants union PCS announced at the Coalition of Resistance conference that the PCS, UCU and

NUT were in talks over joint action on pensions. Members of the UCU lecturers’ union delivered a resounding “yes” for industrial action on pensions and jobs.

Across our unions we need to push for the earliest possible ballots and start preparing members for action now. Workplace, local and regional rallies can get the membership behind the campaign, building for a massive yes vote. Activists in other public sector unions fac-

ing pension attacks – Unite, Unison, GMB and the CWU – should join in.

Turn words into action

We need to turn the pledge by union leaders for coordinated strike action at last year’s TUC into real action so we can deliver a powerful wave of united strike action in February and March next year.

We should join anti-cuts committees and fight alongside students, other trade

unionists and anti-cuts campaigners. Pensions can be a springboard for wholesale resistance and a mass strike in the public sector.

Finally, we should combine the energy and determination of the student movement with the power we have as workers to paralyse the system, prepare the way for a general strike against all aspects of austerity – student fees, job losses, and bring down the government.

EU debt crisis: bond

Keith Spencer

The European debt crisis is expanding, pitching country against country, with the major economies attempting to push recession onto the working class of economically weaker nations. With the system itself in crisis, governments aim to shift their debt burden by attacking jobs, pay and services at home, and dumping the worst of the crisis onto rival states.

The EU now represents just over a third of global output (GDP), a huge market for the biggest capitalists to dominate. But it is a tale of two zones – the Franco-German core versus the sinking smaller states in southern and western Europe.

Germany has recorded several quarters of growth – its GDP has grown by 3.9 per cent since the third quarter of 2009, particular in machinery, equipment and the construction sectors. But for Spain, Greece and Ireland it is an entirely different story. The Spanish economy ground to a halt in the third quarter of 2010 – one in five Spanish workers is on the dole.

Offloading the crisis

Runaway booms in real estate and banking in the past decade led to illusions that some countries such as Greece and Ireland had shaken off their long history of poverty and dependency, becoming economic “tigers”. But when the global crisis broke in 2008, most of this wealth was revealed to be fictitious – massively overpriced properties and shares. What was left was a huge mountain of debt.

Iceland was the first to go to the wall when its banks failed; then Ireland had to make the first of its three huge bailouts.

Then news broke that the conservative Greek government was cooking the books to get more loans. Inflated Spanish and Portuguese property markets collapsed.

The rescues mounted for these countries were in fact res-



Portugal general strike 24.11.10

cues of German, French and UK banks which had both encouraged the debt sprees and profited from them. Letting foreign banking systems go to the wall would have caused catastrophic losses for the bankers of Frankfurt, Paris and London.

Commenting on last month's Irish bank bailout, BBC's Robert Peston said: “According to the Bank for International Settlements, total lending of non-Irish banks to Irish banks is around \$170bn, of which British banks provided \$42bn, German banks provided \$46bn, US banks \$25bn and French banks \$21bn.”

And *the Guardian* revealed the extent to which French and German banks were exposed to Greece's debt problems: “Data from the Bank for International Settlements shows that, at the end of 2009, Greece owed about \$240bn (£160bn) overseas. Of this, France and Germany have the biggest exposures of \$75bn and \$45bn respectively.”

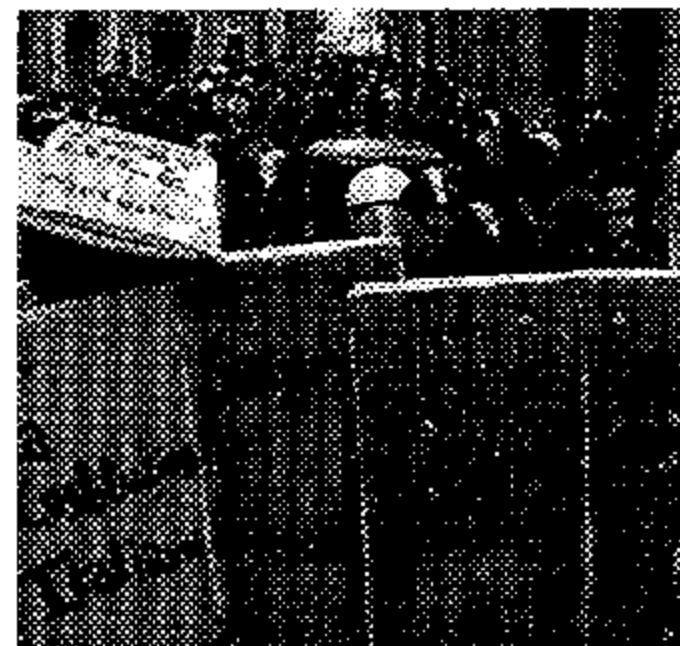
The EU's big banks have to ensure that they will get paid.

So Germany, France and the UK are lending yet more money to weaker economies. But the cost of repaying this debt is the slashing of public services and welfare. Effectively, the debt incurred by the EU's major banks is being offloaded onto the working class.

The bond markets

Governments and banks can obtain money by going to the bond markets where they are charged interest for loans. The bond holders are giant financial institutions, individual billionaires and even other governments, which loan money at a price which yields a profit.

Governments have to borrow more when they spend more than they collect in – their



Italy student protest 24.11.10

deficits increase. Currently the UK has a deficit of just over 10 per cent, Spain's is just over 9 per cent, Ireland's is now at 12 per cent, and Portugal is at 7.3 per cent. Germany's, by contrast, is under 5 per cent, while the EU recommends a 3 per cent deficit.

The UK pays far less interest on bonds than other countries with a comparable deficit, as a result of the size and prestige of the economy. Even after the recent Irish bailout, the price of Irish bonds was over 9 per cent; Spain and Portugal are currently paying around 8 per cent.

There is a struggle between the bondholders pushing up

interest and the European Central Bank (ECB) and Germany trying to force down the price by intervening into the money markets. The danger comes when the bondholders keep forcing up the interest until a government can no longer repay and then defaults on its debts. Currently the ECB and Germany are stepping in to safeguard the loans and debt.

The single currency

These problems have been exacerbated by the single currency. During the boom years the euro provided stability because interest rates are the same across countries; exports and imports are purchased with the same currency, which helps control inflation; and money can easily move across national boundaries.

Governments can use policies, such as taxation and control of wages and benefits, to attract business.

But when a crisis hits, the straightjacket of the single currency restricts a state's fiscal policy options. A country may want to manipulate interest rates downwards to boost lending and economic growth, or print more money and even depreciate the currency in order



Student 'Day X', UK 24.11.10

to make exports cheaper and stimulate demand.

But individual states can't use

markets attack euro

these policy options with the euro. The ECB, with the German Bundesbank and the French National Bank at its core, controls them. And the ECB promotes only one policy for countries with large debts and deficits: slash public spending and make the people pay in order to safeguard the money of the bondholders.

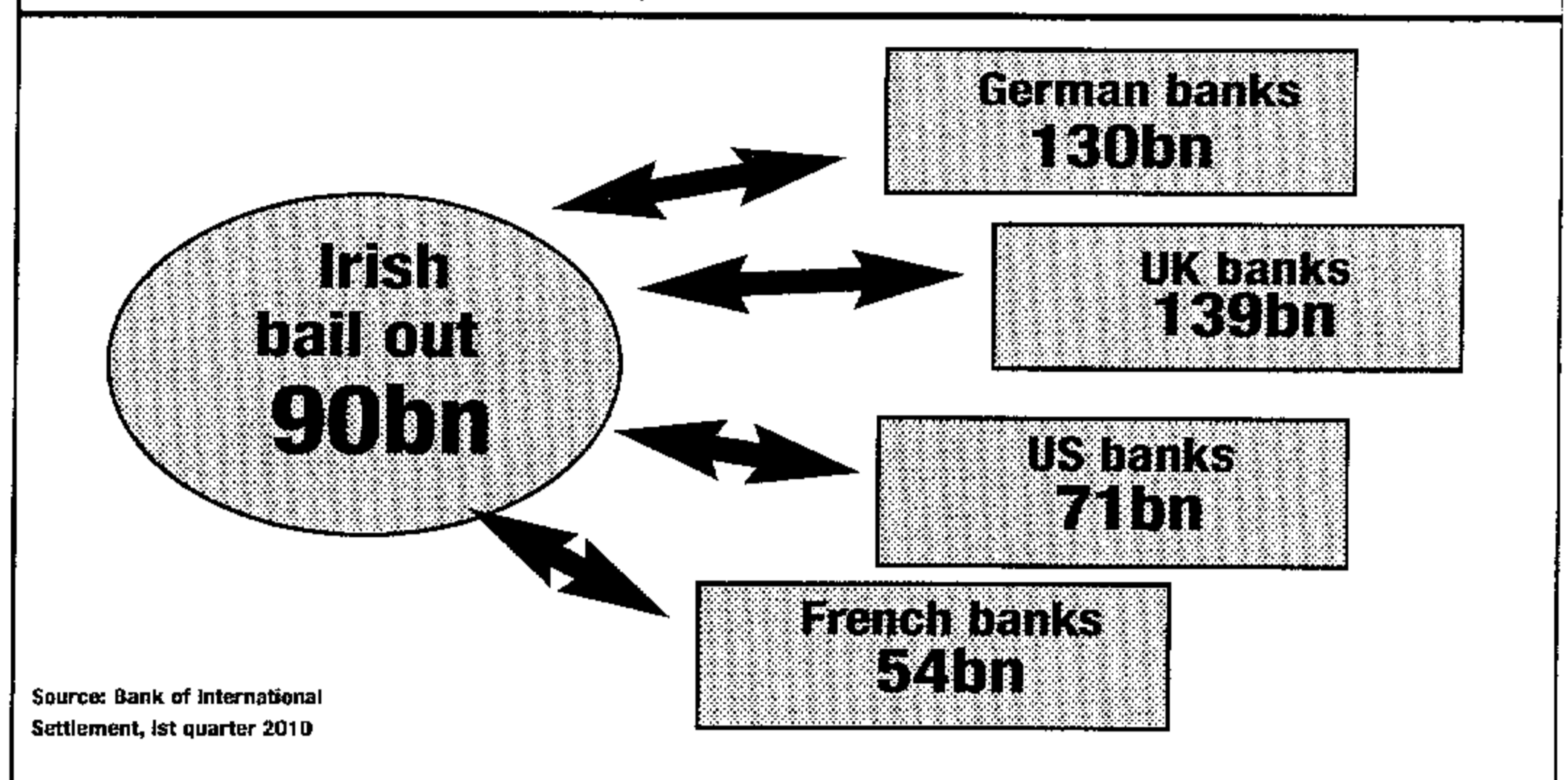
Hence, the euro acts like the pre-Second World War gold standard when currencies were pegged to the price of gold. In the crisis in the 1930s, some countries such as Britain abandoned the gold standard, let their currencies depreciate and recovered more quickly than those countries like France that stuck doggedly to it.

There are fears that an individual country may do this in the eurozone, but it would lead to a complete breakdown of the single currency and destroy attempts at EU economic integration. That is why Merkel, the German Chancellor, and French President Sarkozy are so adamant about defending the euro.

The role of Germany

Germany has played a pivotal role in the Greece crisis, including the size of the bailout. It partnered with the IMF and the UK over the Irish crisis, but won the right of EU oversight. Germany has led the way in forming a pan-European bailout fund of €750 billion but has also been pushing for greater controls over national economies. Recently, it raised the possibility that countries receiving bailout money should not be able to veto important economic decisions, i.e. those favoured by Germany.

BANKS HOLDINGS IN IRELAND, (Euros, banks according to country of HQ)



It has also allowed some depreciation of the euro to benefit its exports and help it out of recession, while other countries have been saddled with demand-sapping austerity programmes.

In effect, Germany has been using the crisis to offset its own debt problems onto the weaker countries, and then use the ensuing cuts and bailouts to strengthen its position within EU. For example, by forcing through changes in Greece and Ireland it has recouped billions of euros for its own banks. This means that it can postpone any emergency measures to cut-back on debt because it does not have to bailout its own banking system.

While the German ruling class will eventually put its own working class on rations, it does not have to do so immediately in an all-out attack, risking the sort of fightbacks we have seen in France and hopefully will see in Britain in 2011. Instead, it can buy off the better-paid skilled sections of workers and offload the crisis on those with insecure and low paid jobs.

In conclusion

The banking and state debt are the current phase of the crisis in Europe. Currently the leaders of continental Europe – Germany and France – are imposing harsh austerity measures on the weaker economies in order to increase their own economic wellbeing and hegemony. However, the bondholders – motivated solely by making huge speculative gains – are pushing the weaker economies into emergency measures and endangering the euro.

In both scenarios, the mass of workers will be thrown into misery with job cuts, slumps, and slashing of public services and privatisation of education.

That is why now more than ever we need to:

- Build European-wide coordinations of struggle in order to build the necessary unity to fight the bosses across borders.
- Fight for coordinated action up to and including general strikes.
- Campaign for emergency budgets to spend money on what the workers need, not austerity measures deter-

mined by the markets or ECB.

- Repudiate the debts. Not a penny to the bosses and money markets – make them pay for their crisis.

The money markets represent the anarchy of the capitalist system and how it ruins millions of lives for the benefit of a few billionaires; the EU represents capitalist club dominated by a few imperialist powers bidding for domination over the rest of the world economy with the US, China and Japan.

Private ownership of the means of production has left national economies at the mercy of their creditors – a handful of billionaire bondholders. The division of the world into nation states threatens ever deepening feral economic competition and ultimately war. It is these two features of capitalism that caused the crisis and are extending it across the globe today. Eliminating these twin blights, which restrict global development and human potential, is the overriding goal of communists today.

Defence of legal aid is a battle for us all

Natalie Silverstein

The Government's Green Paper on legal aid proposes a set of changes that will destroy this vital public service.

The paper proposes that advice and representation will no longer be available to all under civil legal aid. This includes most family and many housing cases, immigration, clinical negligence and education law. There are three main areas where it is being cut.

First, a key idea in the paper is that some cases are less deserving than others, depending on the situation. So immigration cases, other than asylum, are no longer to be funded because they supposedly involve people who have made a decision to travel.

There will be no assistance to bring partners and children from abroad, breaking up families; and vulnerable groups such as victims of human trafficking, are left out.

Second, the paper aims to restrict legal aid to cases where an individual's life, liberty or home is threatened. So it will still be available in housing cases where there is a risk of homelessness, but entirely cut for disrepair cases.

This will mean tenants living with damp, mould and infestations cannot use the law to force their landlord to do repairs, at a time when Tory cuts mean a huge increase in privately rented, often sub-standard accommodation.

Finally, eligibility changes mean if you own a home or



Lord Chancellor Kenneth Clarke is behind the proposals

equity of more than a £8,000, you won't qualify for legal aid. People who have savings between £1,000 and £8,000 will have to pay a £100 upfront, which means even benefit claimants will no longer be automatically entitled to legal aid.

All these issues will mean people are either put off bringing cases or have to make huge financial sacrifices to do so.

Legal Aid is overwhelmingly used by the poorest people in society. Being poor should not block access to the courts to challenge an injustice.

The ConDems claim the cuts are due to the budget deficit. But nothing is said about the huge sums spent on lawyers to represent central and local government departments!

Legal advice will still be avail-

able for those suspected of criminal offences. But fees are to be cut by 10 per cent across the board in civil and criminal cases. This will mean "advice deserts" in areas where all legal aid firms have gone out of business, and further wage cuts in a sector with an average salary of about £25,000 and much lower wages for unqualified assistants.

In place of legal aid, the government wants to move to services provided "pro bono" (voluntarily), perhaps by corporate lawyers in their spare time or students, and to reliance on NGOs and charities. Like other aspects of the Con-Dem "big society" this means a further move away from the idea of the state providing a good quality service for all.

What legal aid still exists will become increasingly marketised with firms bidding to provide services at the lowest possible rates, with no regard for quality. "Telephone only" advice, another proposal, would direct enquiries through a call centre with only the most complex cases referred to actual legal-aid solicitors.

Tory legal aid "reforms" are undermining rights to equal justice and are part of a comprehensive attack on the welfare state. Under capitalism, the law extends rights to each "equal" citizen – but does nothing to equalise the conditions between citizens. Denying access to justice is part and parcel of the Tory offensive. We need to resist it, and link our resistance to a challenge to the system of inequality itself.

Fight for our rights

The attacks of the police on the student demonstrators reveal the violence the state is willing to use to push through its austerity programme.

The government is also considering restricting the right to protest, strike and other forms of fighting back.

Currently, a handful of protestors have begun legal actions by against the police over kettling and use of violence.

But we need a united campaign to safeguard our rights and defend protestors. We cannot put our faith in "liberal" bodies such as Liberty to defend us.

We need the trade unions to fund a campaign supported by left-wing lawyers. Otherwise the cuts to our services will also be cuts to our rights.

Video evidence exposes war crimes against Tamils

Simon Hardy

The pure horror of the Sri Lankan government's genocidal war against the Tamils in May 2009 has been released in new photo and video evidence, which contradicts the Sri Lankan government's lies.

The photo and video footage show piles of dead bodies, many of them naked, with their hands bound behind their backs, and shot in the head. The summary execution of helpless prisoners, a war crime under the Geneva Convention, could lead to an investigation by the United Nations.

Julian Knowles QC, an expert in war crimes who viewed the tape, said: "On the question of whether there should be an inquiry, this is astonishingly powerful evi-

dence of a type I've only seen in a handful of times... there's some footage from Yugoslavia about mass killings... the idea that there can be a debate about whether there should be an investigation in the face of evidence like this is very surprising."

The Sri Lankan government, with financial and technical aid from Israel, Britain and the US, launched its assault in 2009 on the last remaining areas held by the Tamil Tigers, with the intention of annihilating the Tamil resistance movement.

The government's bloody slaughter of more than 8,000 civilians, and the subsequent internment of tens of thousands in camps in the north of the country, caused an international outcry from human rights groups and the Tamil diaspora

organisations that identified these actions as a genocide against the Tamil people, but saw only mild "concern" from Western political leaders.

The hypocrisy of the UK government is revealed in the US diplomatic cables published on WikiLeaks, which includes one sent in May 2009 by Richard Mills, an official at the US embassy in London, quoting his British counterpart Tim Waite.

Waite explained that the then UK Foreign Secretary David Miliband's diplomatic focus on Sri Lanka – which included requests to grant visas to foreign relief workers – was motivated by the need to gain the votes of UK-resident Tamils in the coming general election, carrying the suggestion that it would be back to business as

usual once the election was over.

The Tamil resistance movement may have been defeated, but the desire for a real resolution to the national question in Sri Lanka has not gone away.

- Internationally we need to support the rights of the Tamils and call for a full inquiry into the crimes of the Sri Lankan army.
- We must support the right for self-determination of the Tamil people up to and including the formation of a state separate from the Sinhalese majority.

The outrageous actions of the Sri Lankan government show us how brutal a capitalist state can be when it seeks to crush legitimate resistance to oppression.

Haitian people suffer another man-made disaster: cholera

Marcus Halaby

Eleven months after the earthquake that devastated Haiti in January 2010, the country is now suffering from an outbreak of cholera. This deadly water-borne disease, which thrives in the unsanitary conditions in which many earthquake survivors still live, has killed around 2,000 people and more than 96,000 are infected.

Haiti, which has not seen a cholera outbreak for 100 years, has diagnosed cases in all 10 regions of the country.

This outbreak is a serious threat to 1.3 million survivors living in tent camps near

the capital, Port-au-Prince.

Stefano Zannini, chief of medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres' mission in Haiti, has criticised the response to the epidemic as "inadequate", in view of the huge presence of aid agencies there.

A widespread belief that United Nations 'peacekeepers' in Haiti were the source of the outbreak provoked riots and attacks on UN personnel in the worst-affected regions, with suspicion focused on Nepalese troops in particular.

Oxfam and other aid agencies have blamed the violence for preventing them from delivering sanitary supplies and diar-

rhoea treatments, while UN officials blamed the rioting on Haitian oppositionists accused of trying to 'disrupt' the rigged presidential and parliamentary elections held on 28 November.

Originally scheduled for February, elections were delayed because of the earthquake, after which the US sent 10,000 troops to the country to 'impose order' and shore up the current government, interfering with genuine humanitarian aid efforts in the process. The election was widely condemned for ballot stuffing by government supporters, while legitimately registered voters were turned away.

imperialism in the dock MARCUS HALABY

Our very own Mukhabarat?

In the summer of 1994, when I was visiting my Iraqi cousins in Baghdad, I told them the story of the accidental death by hanging of Stephen Milligan MP in an auto-erotic incident involving self-strangulation and drugs. Their immediate response was to ask in disbelief: "Why did they kill him like that?"

From then on, no prurient musings over the affairs of other prominent Tories could shake their conviction that he had been assassinated, and in an intentionally humiliating way.

Their cynicism was understandable, and not just because of their unfamiliarity with the more idiosyncratic predilections of British politicians. After all, we had just visited the monument to Saddam Hussein's brother-in-law, General Adnan Khairallah, a popular military man who died in a suspicious helicopter crash five years earlier.

Eight years later, shortly before the US invasion of Iraq, the Iraqi Mukhabarat (secret police) announced that "terrorist mastermind" Abu Nidal had committed suicide rather than face arrest.

This Palestinian mercenary – who sold his services in turn to Syria's Hafez Asad, to Saddam, and to Libya's dictator Gaddafi – supposedly entered the country on a fake Yemeni passport, and was accused of involvement in a Kuwaiti-linked coup plot.

A running joke had it that he shot himself five times in the head, just to be absolutely sure.

So I could understand my cousins' scepticism over Milligan. And whatever the real cause of Milligan's death, they might well have been right on one thing – that what is truly ridiculous is the British assumption that "our own" Mukhabarat would never do anything so dastardly as to kill someone and cover it up.

And yet security related corpses just keep popping up in circumstances that are difficult to explain. Many doctors still fail to understand how Dr David Kelly killed himself. An MI5 agent was recently found dead in his flat due to "auto-erotic over-exertion". And Wikileaks have added to claims that MI5 were at least complicit in the 1989 assassination of republican solicitor Pat Finucane.

As the Iraq war inquiry and the Wikileaks revelations have shown, our rulers do a pretty good job of lying to us most of the time. So just how much should we believe of what they tell us about anything else?

The most stupid thing is to imagine that murdering secret police is something that only happens to other people.

★ INTERNATIONAL

Cancún conference: dirty great COP out



Via Campesina protest at Cancún

Joy Macready

World leaders failed the planet yet again in Cancún, Mexico when the Conference of the Parties on Climate Change (COP16) could not reach a legally binding agreement to replace the Kyoto Protocol – which runs out in 2012.

Less than half as many delegates and observers attended, compared to the 45,000 at the previous COP15 conference in Copenhagen, as they entered discussions with "low expectations".

The most important decisions were pushed back to future negotiations, like the date before which countries must "peak" their emissions. Not one country increased its emission reduction targets. They promoted new market mechanisms, a \$100bn a year fund to help countries adapt to climate change by 2020, and a mechanism allowing (mainly rich) countries to offset their climate emissions by protecting forests.

And to back market policies up, wealthy nations have habitually resorted to bullying. Wikileaks revelations have the US and the EU using espionage and threats of aid withdrawal to get support for the Copenhagen accord. An exchange between Connie Hedegaard, European Commissioner for Climate Action, and US deputy national security adviser, Michael Froman, discussed the need to "neutralise, co-opt or marginalise unhelpful

countries including Venezuela and Bolivia".

Only Bolivia stood up and refused to accept any language referring to markets in the forest treaty, bringing alternative proposals from the World People's Conference in Cochabamba in April 2010. This attracted 35,000 people from more than 70 countries, including representatives of 40 governments. Yet the Cancún conference systematically excluded these voices.

Outside of the official conference, 100 buses, carrying almost 3,000 people from 12 countries from all over Mexico and Latin America, arrived to participate in an alternative conference, organised by Via Campesina, the international movement of peasant farmers. For the second year running, the main slogan of the international demonstration on 7 December was: "System change instead of climate change".

"What they are proposing is good only for capitalists. Capitalism has caused climate change and now it wants to make new business from it. They want to turn the air into a commodity. They want to put a price tag on everything," said Luis Gomes de Maura of the Brazilian landless workers' movement. "These are false solutions to climate change."

This shows how the way to stop climate change is to build a global mass movement to challenge false market 'solutions' to climate change, and the rich corporations that seek to force them on us.

The war for information is on

Marcus Halaby

The USA, its intelligence services and right-wing media such as Fox and Sky are waging a brutal world wide campaign against Wikileaks and its founder Julian Assange – they are determined to destroy this site and crush the people behind it because it dares to reveal their crimes and refuses to bow the knee to them.

Bullying corporations into line, the US forced a series of sites to break commercial links with Wikileaks. But this in turn roused a new resistance on a global scale – the mass “Anonymous” movement which is retaliating against the anti-Wikileaks sites and fighting for freedom of information on the internet.

The first revelations in July exposed the murder of Afghan civilians by US-led occupation forces. Subsequently, WikiLeaks exposed the complicity of the US forces in murder and torture by sectarian death squads. Most recently, the release of US State Department diplomatic cables embarrassed the reactionary Arab regimes, who encouraged military action to halt Iran’s nuclear programme, while maintaining a public stance of conciliation with Iran.

Revenge

Now, the generals and politicians are getting revenge. WikiLeaks has been deprived of its internet domain name in the US, while companies like PayPal and MasterCard, which helped collect donations, have withdrawn their services under pressure. And Julian Assange sits in prison, arrested after weeks of complaining of a politically-motivated manhunt.

The accusations against him are serious. But their timing is suspicious to say the least. Equally suspicious is that Assange has been granted bail but not released pending an appeal and a formal request for extradition by the Swedish authorities. He is not charged with any crime.

Swedish prosecutors had previously dropped the original rape charges against him for lack of evidence, while Assange had offered to cooperate with the investigation from Britain. Suspicion lingers that the real purpose of his detention is to buy time for US prosecutors to charge him with



Under US pressure, Julian Assange is in prison, granted bail but still not released

the theft of government secrets.

There is a matter of political principle involved. The Republican politicians now baying for Assange’s blood – some even calling for his assassination – will argue that it is necessary to defend the principle that the state should be able to protect its secrets.

But since 2001, Britain, the US, and many other Western ‘democracies’ have used the so-called ‘War on Terror’ to increase their powers of snooping and surveillance, while giving themselves the power to detain ‘terrorist’ suspects without trial or legal representation.

The state, it seems, is allowed to have secrets. The much-vaunted private individual of liberal theory, however, is not – and even less so the organisations of the working class and the oppressed.

This is because capitalist society is divided into classes – workers and capitalists – with real material interests that are directly opposed to each other.

The police, courts, prisons, armed forces, and all the associated machinery of coercion exist to protect the interests of the ruling class from the rest of society. When required, this machinery will be used to batter our defensive struggles into submission – as it has been in the recent student protests.

But a society in which the ruling class depends only on force would be in a permanent state of civil war. The capitalists

and their politicians therefore also have to lie to us.

This is done partly through a subtle ideological indoctrination, in which the education system, the mass media and the family play the major role. But they also have to lie to us about what they are doing and why – and it is exactly this that ‘state secrecy’ is designed to protect.

Defend against repression

We should not only defend Assange and other whistleblowers from state repression, but also demand the opening up of the state’s secrets to public inspection.

Liberals will say that we do not live in an ideal world, and that even in the most ultra-democratic system, we would still have to protect our secrets from foreign governments.

But war and diplomacy are an extension of politics. Our rulers use the police and courts to conduct the class struggle against us at home, and they use the armed forces and the diplomatic corps to conduct it against the global poor – and the ruling classes of other nations – abroad. We have as little interest in protecting the secrecy of the latter as in the former.

The fight against state secrecy is therefore, at one and the same time, part of the struggle against imperialist war, and for the defence of our democratic rights and for the overthrow of the ruling class and its apparatus of secrecy and repression.

South Sudan votes on independence

Marcus Halaby

Sudan's Southern region is set to hold a referendum on 9 January, widely expected to result in a majority for independence from the predominantly Arab and Muslim North.

The vote comes after a bitter war lasting for decades, in which the North attempted to hold on to the South.

It comes down to control of

the problem. The Christian and Animist South and the more developed and Muslim North had always been separately administered. But in 1946 Britain unilaterally merged the two regions.

In 1956 it agreed with Egypt to grant Sudan independence as a single entity. A year before its implementation the southern Sudanese rose in rebellion.

Since then conflict has raged,



Pro-independence supporters in South Sudan

oil resources, 85 per cent of which are located in the South. The disputed oil-producing Abyei region will hold a separate referendum on whether to join the North or South in the same month.

The argument the North used to deny the south self-determination was the "democratic principle" of the "inviolability of existing borders", claiming that to divide Sudan would make it unviable.

Yet virtually every one of the Africa's borders was drawn by European colonial occupiers without any regard to linguistic or cultural realities, let alone to the wishes of the inhabitants.

In fact Britain, the former colonial power, is the origin of

interrupted by a ceasefire from 1972 to 1983 during which the South was granted limited autonomy. Since 1983 more than two million people have been killed and four million displaced.

We should steadfastly defend the South's right to secede, and defend it against the North but at the same time argue for a Socialist Federation of Sub-Saharan Africa – free of the foreign multinationals that have plundered the continent since "independence."

Then the working class and poor peasants can plan the use of the continent's enormous natural wealth to end poverty, disease and malnutrition forever.

Letter from

Pakistan

Shehzad Arshad, Revolutionary Socialist Movement

Pakistan's finance minister, Abdul Hafeez Shaikh, has an international reputation as a privatiser. He has headed World Bank and International Monetary Fund teams charged with forcing the sell-off of telecoms, electricity supply, transport, aviation, banking and manufacturing in some 18 countries, including Argentina.

Now he is presenting a "reformed" General Sales Tax (RGST) as well as a Flood Tax Bill to parliament. He claims the old system is out of date and his proposals will mean increases only for the rich landowners and industrialists. But a sales tax, which includes 15 per cent charges on many basic food items, will ensure the working class and poor pay the price. In last 20 years, as Pakistan has become ever more integrated into the global economy with nakedly pro capitalist government polices, the working class and the urban and rural poor have been hit massively by sky-rocketing prices, unemployment and corruption.

The opposition – the Pakistan Muslim League (Narwaz) – is making some noise in opposing the RGST but has no real interest in blocking it. Rather they just want to get a share of the spoils.

The overall situation in Pakistan is worsening. Not only is the government imposing the RGST but they have also announced that electricity tariffs will be increased every two months. They are planning to privatise a number of state own companies. Whilst the federal government claims they have no money for higher education they have plenty for the so-called "war on terror" that is killing poor people in the tribal areas.

The Punjab government is planning to privatise the colleges. Over the last months thousand of students and teachers have been protesting against it. On December 10 and 11 student demonstrations in Faisalabad and other cities testified that – as in Europe – student militancy is on the rise.

The RSM is helping build this student movement, linking it with the resistance by working class and poor people to the growing economic hardship, despite the difficulties in squaring to right-wing forces that currently try to dominate it.

We need to convince students that the working class is their strongest potential ally, and we are arguing that radical students should join with the militants from the working class and the rural poor to build a revolutionary socialist party in Pakistan.



**DEEP
RED**

The fight for a general strike today

Dave Stockton

For all the verbal smokescreen of “caring Conservatism” and “fairness”, the attacks by the Tory-Lib Dem coalition are directly parallel to those of Margaret Thatcher’s government in the 1980s. David Cameron and George Osborne are setting out to complete the Iron Lady’s attacks on the post-1945 historic gains made by the working class.

Whereas her strategy concentrated on destroying the nationalised industries – British Leyland, British Steel, the mines, and the strongholds of trade unionism in the private sector: the docks, the print, etc. – her successors focus on destroying our post-1945 social gains – the free-at-the-point-of-delivery health service, the remains of free universal education and the welfare system.

Since the public services are now the fortress of trade unionism this would lead to a second historic defeat for the labour movement. It must not happen. Indeed this government, like Thatcher’s in her first years of power, can be defeated – if and only if we concentrate



all our forces on smashing the first wave of attacks. If we do this, we can go over to an offensive that can bring the government down and call the very existence of capitalism into question.

We need to get it clear: business-as-usual trade unionism and parliamentary speeches will be totally inadequate to halt Cameron and Nick Clegg. Obviously all Labour MPs worthy of the name should use parliament to expose the savagery of the cuts. Obviously a serious

fightback by any section under attack – the firefighters, the rail workers, the civil servants, the teachers and the lecturers – would be a huge step forward, as the youth from schools, colleges and universities have just shown us. But if these struggles remain isolated from one another – or receive only verbal solidarity – then the coalition will take us on one by one and defeat us, just as Thatcher did three decades ago.

This is all the more true, given the vicious anti-union

laws which can and will be directed against any section bold enough to go all out and any other section brave enough to take solidarity action. The BA dispute earlier in the year shows that the judges are gagging to use the law to invalidate ballots and grant no-strike injunctions. We can expect huge fines on unions, imprisonment of militants or union officials who defy them. There would probably be the introduction of a ban on strikes in “essential services”, hitting firefighters or rail workers.

We need to be clear that this is a political attack from the government with parliament, the courts, the police and, if need be, the army mobilised against us. It is aimed not only at robbing us of our social, health and education services and sacking a million or more workers in the process, but also at smashing the public service trade unions as bulwarks against any further attacks.

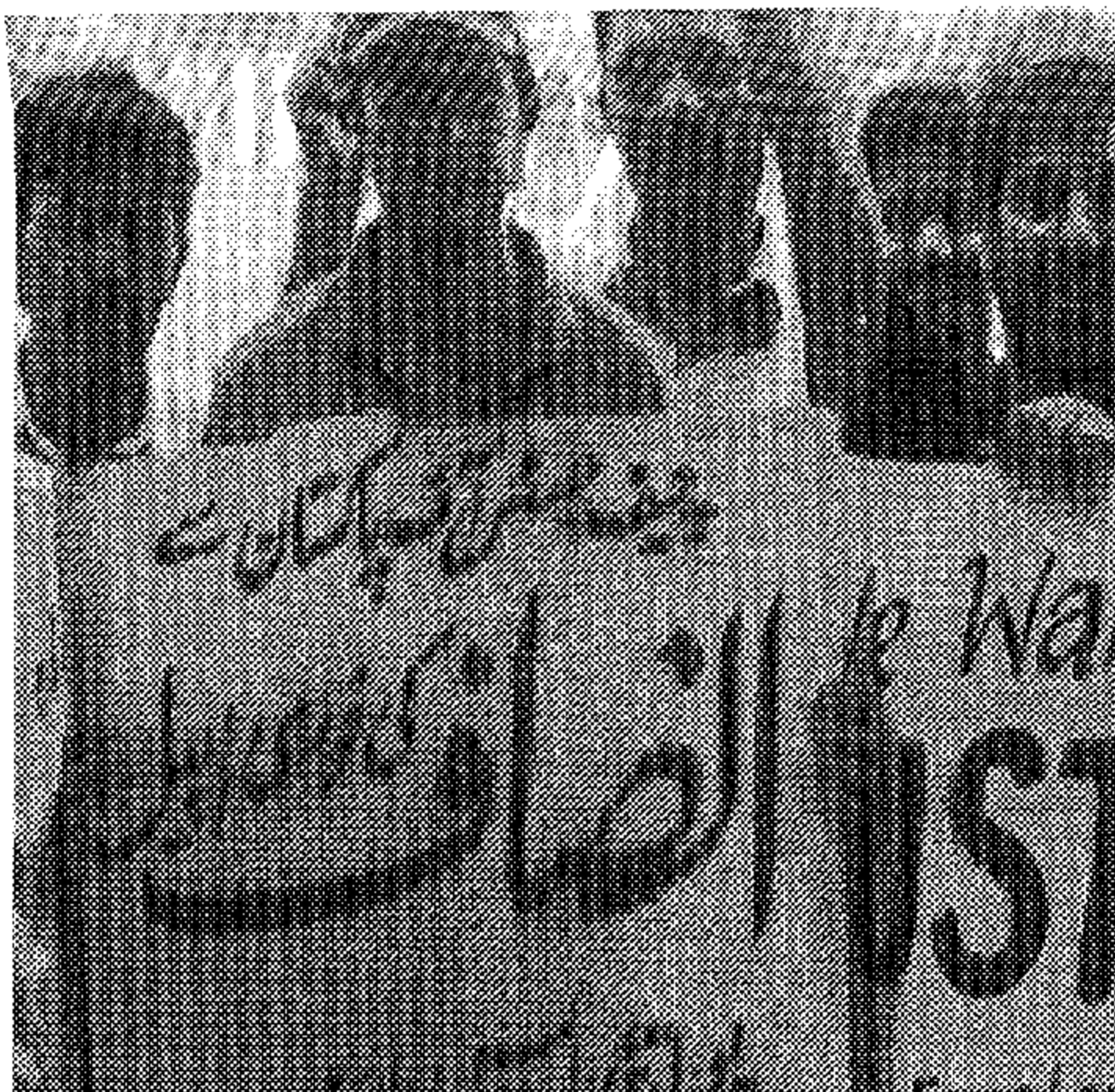
Against this coordinated offensive we need to mobilise our full and united strength as a class. This means bringing together the resistance of all the sectors under attack, demon-

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strating together and linking up with youth and pensioners in direct action – mass pickets, road blockades, occupation of facilities faced with closure. But as the mighty antiwar movement showed in 2003, protest – even in the millions, winning the battle of public opinion – can mean nothing unless it is backed up with the kind of action our rulers cannot ignore. It means days and weeks of strike action – building into an all out and indefinite general strike to win the unconditional and total withdrawal of every cut in services, wages, pensions or jobs.

The campaign for a general strike should not be counterposed to immediate actions in defence of every service facing cuts, every workforce facing job losses. Even the smallest local skirmish can inspire and link up with others. A wave of individual struggles will help pave the way to an all out and indefinite general strike. If we bring forward and coordinate the strikes in defence of services, if we occupy schools, libraries, hospitals and fire stations faced with closure, if we besiege councils making cuts as the youth besieged parliament, then the confidence and the desire for all out battle will grow and grow.

We need to launch a campaign of agitation and propaganda for a general strike to stop the cuts – to reverse the austerity measures already imposed. Only a political mass strike wave that defies the class-



biased justice of the courts and the fraudulent democracy of the parliamentary majority can defeat the Tory-Lib Dem proposals in their entirety.

We need to call on the leaderships of the individual unions – starting with the “lefts” – to take such action: we need to call on the TUC to announce a general strike on 26 March – and even before that if the courts move against a union for taking industrial action. But given the experience of betrayal in 1926 and, indeed, the TUC’s failure to call all out action in support of the miners in 1984-85, it would be madness to rely on the TUC General Council to do so or to leave control of a general strike in their hands.

Mass action

They will stubbornly oppose a general strike until the pressure from below becomes too great to resist – until it is clear that mass strike action is breaking out despite their wishes. Then they will rush to limit it to strict legality, control it from above, and keep it as passive and “peaceful” as possible. Keeping within the bounds of “legality” means recognising the right of capitalist judges to ban not just a

general strike but also any strike that is effective.

This is what the TUC did during the British general strike of 1926. It was only declared because the Tories provoked the unions into calling it by locking out 900,000 miners. When the High Court declared that a general strike was not a trades dispute and therefore not covered by the legal “immunity from prosecution”, which in Britain does duty for what in many countries is the right to strike, the General Council called it off and let the miners fight alone for eight months.

An essential part of preparing for a general strike is to warn about the existing union leaderships: both the right wing traitors and the left wingers, who hand over the initiative to the right at the decisive moment. When they fight, as long as they fight, we can fight alongside them and indeed call on them to go further. When they pull back or sabotage the struggle, we must be well prepared to go forward without them.

To do this we must build the rank and file organisations, based on the workplace, strike committees and mass meetings, and linked up by shop stewards’

**DEEP
RED**

committees and local councils of action that can, in the event of betrayal, replace the bureaucratic leaders with militant class fighters and revolutionaries.

In short we need a general strike, initiated and controlled from below by all those already fighting.

This means that the local anti-cuts alliances, springing up across the country, must develop into action committees – able to coordinate strikes and occupations, not just pickets or demonstrations. They must grow into real and powerful councils of action, drawing in delegates from every council estate and workplace, all sections of the class: the unemployed, pensioners, youth, black and Asian comrades, the disabled, etc.

Only such bodies can be guaranteed to be able to launch a mass strike wave, a general strike. Only such bodies can be trusted to give leadership to such a strike – to form a national strike committee that will not give in, that will not sell us short. Instead of the bureaucratic structures of trade unions, where officials are rarely elected or use the privileges of their office to secure their tenure even when they misrepresent or sell out their members, councils of action should rely on the simple method of directly elected and recallable delegates.

Given the behaviour of the police in London on 24 November and 9 December, it is plain that the movement needs to create defence squads, rooted in the workplaces, school and colleges, large enough, well-trained and equipped to defend our demonstrations, picket lines, occupations, against attack by the police riot (provoking) squads.

DEEP RED

Who rules society?

The great Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky always insisted that a general strike posed the question of power.

“The fundamental importance of the general strike, independent of the partial successes which it may and then again may not provide, lies in the fact that it poses the question of power in a revolutionary manner. By shutting down the factories, transport, generally all the means of communication, power stations, etc. the proletariat by this very act paralyses not only production but also the government. The state power remains suspended in mid-air. It must either subjugate the proletariat by famine and force and constrain it, to set the apparatus of the bourgeois state once again in motion, or retreat before the proletariat.

Whatever may be the slogans and the motive for which the general strike is initiated, if it includes the genuine masses, and if these masses are quite resolved to struggle, the general strike inevitably poses before all the classes in the nation the question: Who will be the master of the house? The leaders of the proletariat must understand this internal logic of the general strike, unless they are not leaders but dilettantes and adventurers. Politically this implies that from now on the leaders will continue to pose before the proletariat the task of the revolutionary conquest of power. If not, they must not venture to speak of the general strike.” Trotsky *On France* Monad Press, New York 1980 p 61

Of course mass direct action will open up a major political crisis in Britain too. We should not be afraid to say that our aim is



to bring down the coalition government. As the militancy of the students showed when their extra-parliamentary opposition slashed its majority in the House of Commons, this is not a strong or unbeatable government. Millions know it never received an electoral mandate either for its savage cuts or for that matter its very existence. The Lib Dems stand as a perjured party before their own electorate. The Tories did not dare confess they had designs on turning the welfare state into a Poor Law, based on the means test. As opposition mounts and becomes more and more militant, popular hatred of the government will become overwhelming.

If the level of struggle rises to the scale of a mass strike wave or general strike and the government begins to realise its own imminent collapse, as happened in 1972 and 1974, it will probably “threaten” the movement with a general election to show who rules. Should that happen, we need to be ready to fight for our own solution: a workers government – one based on councils of action and a mass workers’ militia, not on parliament and the police.

It must be a government that will not only stop all the cuts, restoring our services to the

highest levels, providing jobs for all in socially valuable work, ending the war, repealing the anti-union and anti-immigrant laws, but it should go on to nationalise the banks with no compensation and – for a start – expropriate the 71 billionaires and the 1,000 multi-millionaires whose wealth far exceeds the public debt.

Rapid change

Many will say this is a fantasy – a long way from reality. Yet what seems real and possible changes very rapidly in times like ours. Three years ago capitalism seemed unshakeable – no more boom and bust. Then came the biggest bust in half a century.

Just a month ago a youth uprising and furious demonstrators besieging parliament seemed a fantasy. Now police chiefs express the view that this is “only the beginning” and fear mass upheavals as the cuts are launched. When the unions start to act, a general strike will cease to seem a fantasy, and in the conditions of a mass strike wave working class power will cease to be one too.

But the task of revolutionaries is not simply to make predictions – to see the potential hidden in the events of today – but to fight for every concrete

step in that direction. Trotsky once more explained clearly what the preparation for a general strike and a revolutionary uprising means.

“A concentrated campaign in the working class press pounding steadily on the same key; real socialist speeches from the tribune of parliament, not by tame deputies but by leaders of the people; the utilisation of every electoral campaign for revolutionary purposes; repeated meetings to which the masses come not merely to hear the speakers but to get the slogans and directives of the hour; the creation and strengthening of the workers’ militia; well organised demonstrations driving the reactionary bands from the streets; protest strikes; an open campaign for the unification and enlargement of the trade union ranks under the banner of resolute class struggle; stubborn, carefully calculated activity to win the army over to the cause of the people; broader strikes; more powerful demonstrations; the general strike of toilers of town and country; a general offensive against the Bonapartist government for the workers’ and peasants’ power.”

(Trotsky, *On France*, Monad Press, New York 1980 p. 61)

workers power 5

★ BOOKS & FILMS

Adventures in a communist future

Richard Brenner

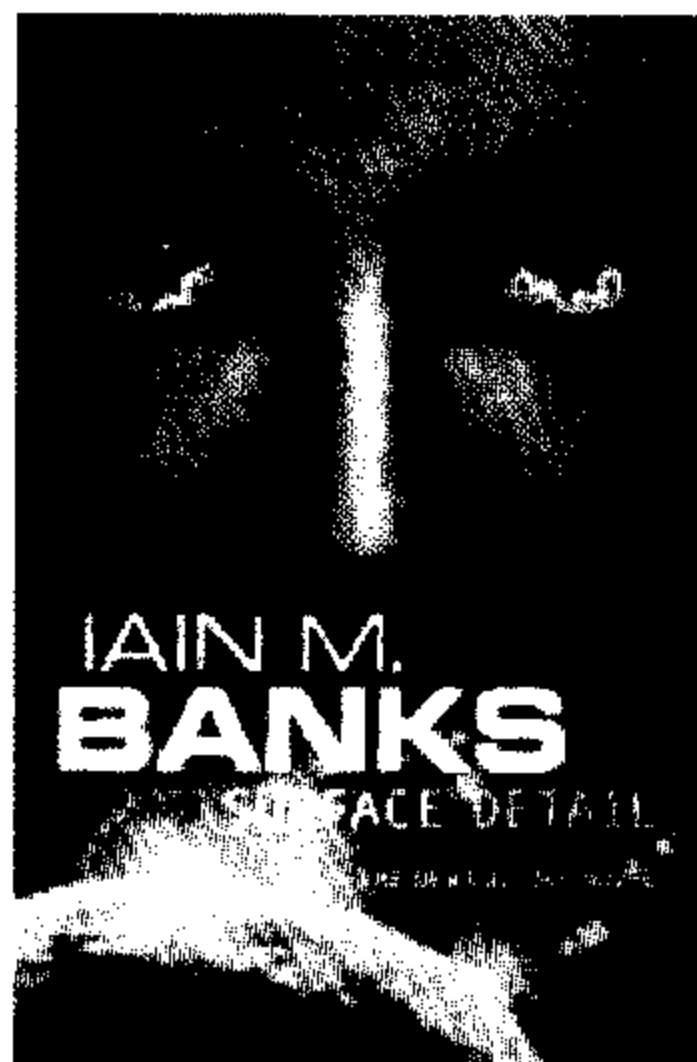
Surface Detail, Iain M. Banks, Orbit, 2010

Iain M. Banks' latest adventure is once again set in The Culture, the hi-tech communist civilisation that has been the subject of nine of his science fiction novels.

It's by turns exciting, shocking and infuriating as Banks weaves a complex drama involving super-intelligent communist spaceships waging interstellar class struggle.

Visions of the future in fiction are typically pessimistic: one-party dictatorships (Orwell's 1984), or liberal democracy in space (Star Trek). But Banks' Culture novels draw inspiration from the Marxist idea of a civilisation based on common ownership, mechanisation and free access to superabundant goods and services.

So it is brave of Banks to produce popular literature based on the idea that communism will be more advanced than capitalism – and more fun to live under too.



In *Surface Detail*, the Culture comes into conflict with a superrich oligarch from a more backward – i.e. capitalist – society. He hates the Culture because it has no money and every citizen can live a fulfilling life.

Again as per Marxist theory, the Culture has no classes and therefore no state to hold the lower class down – everything is administered voluntarily and by machines. But the Culture's citizens have set up a Contact organisation. This is where the fun starts.

Contact is the closest the Culture comes to an army, to deal with dying capitalist classes in far flung backward reaches of the galaxy. Contact's own 'Special Circumstances' division, responsible for dirty tricks and espionage, is often at the cutting edge of the struggle, and this fast paced and violent book is certainly no exception.

It's all good fun, even if it's sometimes a bit too clever for its own good. But it's always great to read a book where you really want the good guys to win.

Miserable middle classes

Simon Hardy

Another Year, Mike Leigh, (12A)

UK director Mike Leigh is best known for his gritty social realism and his use of improvisation to allow actors to develop their characters.

Though often funny, Leigh just as often deals in unremitting misery. His latest film targets the malaise of middle class suburbia. Its main characters are Tom, Gerri and son Joe, a self-satisfied, middle class family. The film follows the crises of their friends.

An example is Mary, a divorcee conscious of growing old and increasingly desperate. She buys a car to gain freedom but it brings nothing but problems – the car's breakdown at the end of the film epitomises Mary's life. Each scene is awash with alcohol. Leigh

soaks his characters in booze, their escape from their lives that have not worked out as they wanted.

Tom and Gerri's marriage is depicted as the life everyone wants – middle class, emotionally stable and wholesome. When Joe gets a girlfriend, the family structure is passed on to another generation, and the status quo remains.

But while the working class characters try to copy Tom and Gerri's, they can't. It's a hard message. But Leigh – unlike his Ken Loach – doesn't depict any solidarity or struggle that might point a way out.

For all that, Leigh is a master of his craft and I'd rather watch this for a couple of hours than some feel-good rom-com designed to distract us from the social crisis we're living through.



Our dog's life observed by everyone's favourite cosmic canine



Lib Dem MP Simon Hughes has been made Access to Higher Education Tsar as a reward for not voting against the tuition fees hike that will exclude working class students from, er, higher education.



On the subject of Tsars, a few months back the Tories made Labour's Alan Milburn Social Mobility Tsar. Do they even know what a tsar was? Maybe they'll appoint an Equalities Fuhrer next...



Meanwhile, the BBC's Ben Brown stepped in the dog poo during his interview with journalist Jody Macintyre, who was dragged from his wheelchair by riot cops. Brown asked Jody, who has cerebral palsy, whether he was "rolling his wheelchair" to attack police lines.



My satellites tell me the official NUS held a glo-stick vigil on the 9 December because candlesticks are too dangerous. NUS President Aaron Porter said there was definitely no violence there – nor were there many students!



Tory councillor David Shakespeare was less than poetic when he suggested northerners go south to pick fruit. "The north may replace the Romanians in the cherry orchards...and that may be a good thing."

As his namesake William once said: "He has not so much brain as ear wax."