

workers power 5



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

STOP THE ATTACKS ON MUSLIMS



Murderous racists daub Muswell Hill mosque with the letters 'EDL' then set it ablaze

- **No more attacks on mosques, schools and Muslims**
- **Organise self-defence against EDL attacks**
- **Unite against the real enemy: the Tories and their system**

For an Antifascist Defence League

Where we stand

THE CAPITALISTS' property must be expropriated, with not a penny paid in compensation.

Capitalism must be abolished across the globe and a world without class division, state repression or the oppression of women, subject races and nations, must be created. That is what revolutionary socialists call communism.

All power must pass from the capitalist elite into the hands of democratic councils of delegates from the working class, the peasantry and the poor directly elected by the masses and subject to instant recall. These councils must be supported by the armed working class and its allies.

The resistance of the exploiters must be broken by the force of millions acting together in a social revolution. Armed workers must forcibly break up the police and army that exist to support the rule of private property.

All production and distribution must be organised democratically and sustainably, without private ownership and the blind and brutal dictatorship of market forces.

Social inequality and the underdevelopment of whole continents must be overcome through the planned allocation of humanity's resources: raw materials, means of transportation, communication, technology and labour.

Imperialism, the highest and most violent stage of capitalism, means the exploitation of billions in all countries, it means blockades, invasions and occupations. We support all resistance to imperialism and its agents and demand an end to the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq. We demand the withdrawal of all British troops from abroad including from Northern Ireland. We demand the dis-

solution of Nato and all imperialist pacts.

We support the Palestinians' struggle to free their homeland from Zionist occupation and to create a single country "from the river to the sea", in which Arabic and Hebrew speaking citizens can live in freedom and equality.

The 21st century must become the century of human freedom!

There is only one road to this freedom. It is the road of class struggle and revolution, the fight against all forms of exploitation and oppression.

We demand equal rights for minorities, an end to all racist discrimination and an end to the lies of the racists in the mass media, which whip up violence against black people and other oppressed communities and ethnic groups. We fight against all immigration controls: they are inherently racist.

We fight for women's liberation: from the burden of childcare and domestic labour, which must be socialised; from rape, physical and mental abuse, from unequal pay and discrimination at work. Women alone must control when and whether they have children, not the state or the churches. This includes defending and extending the right to free abortion and contraception on demand.

Lesbians, gay men and transgender people must be defended against harassment on the streets, at work and in the schools. They must have equal legal rights to marry and bring up children.

We fight the oppression of young people and demand an end to their harassment by the police, the government and the press. Young workers should have equal pay and equal rights with other workers. We fight for free, universal education, under the control of students, teach-

ers and other education workers themselves. We fight for an autonomous, revolutionary socialist youth movement.

We fight the catastrophe of climate change, resisting corporations which pollute the earth, governments that refuse to take action against the emission of greenhouse gases, and policies which put the profits of big oil, the auto industry and the power generators before the very survival of our species.

We oppose reformism and the pro-capitalist policies of the Labour Party. Capitalism cannot be reformed via elections and peaceful parliamentary means; it must be overthrown by the masses through force.

We oppose the control of the trade unions by unaccountable bureaucrats. Union members should have full democratic control. All officials must be regularly elected, and subject to instant recall; they must earn the average pay of the members they claim to represent. A rank and file movement to carry out this transformation.

In the fight against austerity, we call for a united anti-austerity movement pledged to oppose every cut, for local councils of action, and for mass industrial and direct action, up to and including a general strike to halt the assault on the NHS, the welfare state and education and to kick out the coalition. We fight for a workers' government based on the fighting organisations of the working class and the socially oppressed.

We propose the unity of all revolutionary forces in Britain to build a new working class revolutionary party. Workers Power is the British section of the League for a Fifth International. It fights for a world party organised across national boundaries on a programme for world revolution.

★ TORY BRITAIN

The rich get richer while the poor get poorer

By James Copley

RECENT FIGURES show workers in Britain have suffered an average 6 per cent cut in the real value of their wages.

Since 2009 the cost of austerity has seen ordinary people lose out in every area, as the rising cost of basic necessities, like gas, electricity, water and food, deepens the misery for the vast majority.

The net effect is a wholesale transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich - carried out under the propaganda of a national collective sacrifice.

But we're not all in it together. When the bosses throw 2.5 million onto the dole, and the government forces the unemployed back to work unpaid for their mil-

lionaire mates, the real nature of the system is cruelly exposed.

Since coming to power, the Con-Dem coalition has cut corporation tax three times - but raised VAT which is grossly unfair, since this tax eats up a greater proportion of the incomes of those on lower wages.

Now the majority of those receiving some form of welfare assistance are actually people in work struggling to get by on poverty wages.

In one of the richest countries in the world tens of thousands of people are relying on food banks. Rents are out of control, sparking a rise in homelessness. Every winter the energy cartels carry out a massive legal extortion leav-

ing the poor freezing, broke or both.

The punitive measures imposed by Britain's rich elites, which have driven 3.5 million children into poverty, are the inevitable consequences of the boss's attempts to restore profitability.

While desperation and the savage competition this creates will certainly drive down wages, and so boost profits in the short term, it's the economic equivalent of a sticking plaster. To substantially boost the rate of profit requires more drastic measures the replacement of huge masses of plant and machinery, indeed of whole sectors of capital - the longer term positive effect for capital as a whole of letting sectors of it go to the wall.



THREE HUNDRED refuse collectors, who work for Cityclean in Brighton, have just completed a weeklong strike as we go to press.

They are striking against an imposed regrading package, which will see their pay slashed to the bone - and then some. Drivers would lose

up to £4,000 if the single status deal goes through.

In an added twist, local Green Party MP Caroline Lucas is backing the strikers against the local Green-led council. Messages of support to: mark.turner@brighton-hove.gov.uk

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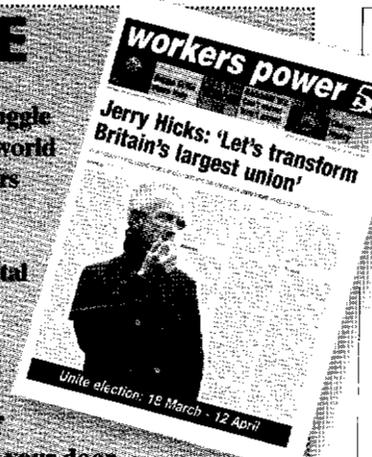
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Editorial

Organise self-defence before it's too late

THE SPATE of attacks by fascists against Muslim targets following the killing of a soldier in Woolwich must be countered by the organised self-defence of our communities.

From London to Grimsby, racists and fascists have firebombed schools and mosques, vandalised property and physically attacked Asian people.

- Muswell Hill Mosque firebombed
- Grimsby Mosque firebombed
- Darul Uloom Madrasa in Chichester set on fire
- Over 200 anti-Muslim attacks recorded in three days

The English Defence League (EDL) and the British National Party (BNP) have tried to capitalise on the torrent of racist scapegoating pumped out by the right-wing media. And the media bias has similarly encouraged racists to turn to violence. Imagine if Muslims had firebombed a Church of England school with children inside? Yet the media gives only the minimum coverage when white fascists attempt to murder Asian children.

The EDL and BNP's demonstrations failed to mobilise the tens of thousands who flocked to their forums and social media sites in the wake of the Woolwich attack. With a few exceptions their rallies were outnumbered by antifascists, and none sparked the kind of racist street war promoted by the hardcore fascists leading these groups.

But this is no excuse for complacency. Their failure to mobilise on the streets has caused many fascists to turn to individual acts of terrorism against Asian and Muslim people.

How do we meet this type of threat? Mass antiracist rallies and marches can help to strengthen the unity and confidence of the working class and will demoralise the fascists – but they won't prevent attacks.

How can we rely on the police. It is the police who defend the fascists when they march on our streets – and who arrested nearly 80 antifascists in central London on 1 June. It is the same police officers who are guilty of the racist harassment, abuse and murder of young Black and Asian people.

The police are not accountable to working class communities; a racist and sexist institution cannot be made to serve the progressive struggle against racism and fascism.

Equally, resorting to small-scale or individual retribution, while understandable, is not the most effective tactic. It can be counterproductive because it promotes individual bravery instead of collective responsibility for our safety.

In a society where millions are impoverished, exploited and oppressed by a system that enforces this logic through violence, there will always be a need for people to defend themselves.

Today the fascists are the immediate threat. Next week it will be the private thugs and bailiffs hired by councils to evict the poor, the ill and the unemployed from their homes. Finally when the fascists and bailiffs are driven off, there is still the police – the loyal servants of wealth and privilege, and not of the working class.

We live in a society where the ruling class deploys the police as the first line and the fascists as the last line of defence for a system based on the exploitation and oppression of working people and youth. In such a society organised self-defence is a necessity.

The more we organise to defend our communities, our right to free religious expression, our political meetings, assemblies and our labour organisations, the harder it becomes for the exploiting capitalist class to use violence against us.

The organised self-defence we create today is not a temporary measure to be discarded in the future. It's the embryo of what we will need tomorrow in order to smash the forces of repression that stand between the working class and the triumph of socialism over capitalism.

In every trade union, on every estate we need to organise our own protection. We can start by building democratic self-defence committees based on delegates from the estates, the unions and progressive working class organisations.

The methods are not new. From the Brazilian favelas to the mining towns of Spain, working class people have shown how to organise effective self-defence that is accountable to the communities under attack.

We can learn from closer to home too. The summer riots in 2010 saw ordinary people prevent the police from carrying out punitive raids on their estates.

We can't wait to have this discussion. We can't wait until some abstract shift in the level of danger.

The threat exists today, and our reaction to the threat must be rooted in the struggle for the overthrow of a system that carries racism, fascism and war in its DNA.

After Woolwich: smash the politics of despair

By KD Tait

WITH THE killing of a soldier in Woolwich, the people of Britain were treated to a glimpse of the mundane brutality inflicted daily on the innocent civilians of Kabul and Baghdad.

The violence of war is always barbaric. That is as true for the death of a soldier in London as it is for the indiscriminate murder and rape of the Afghan people by British soldiers.

For more than a decade the millionaires' media have gone to every effort to vilify Muslims as collectively responsible for the terrorism provoked by the imperialist slaughter in the Middle East.

The deep roots of racism are nourished by a social system that relies on creating and recreating artificial divisions to disrupt unity against the common class enemy.

In the fifth year of economic crisis, the ability of the rich to keep working people divided against each other is more important to them than ever. Instead of building homes, training nurses and investing in education, the exploiting class of bosses and bankers slashes jobs and tells us to blame our neighbours and coworkers.

The police and the courts embody the official racism of the ruling class. The media popularises this racism in tabloids, TV shows and news programmes.

But it is the fascist gangs of the English Defence League (EDL) and British National Party (BNP) who are the street fighting expression of the fear and insecurity sown by poverty, war and racism.

For the fascists racism is a means to an end. Their social role is to be the violent, semi-tolerated bootboys of capital, waiting in the wings to smash working class resistance to a system of exploitation and oppression.

When the working class rejects racism, it becomes capable of stronger collective action. When the working class is divided – when it identifies a race or a religion as the enemy instead of the elite who exploit all working people – then our collective resistance is undermined from within.

Those who want to exploit the death of an individual to persecute millions of British people simply because they share a different religion or cultural heritage to the majority are the enemies of the



working class. The instruments of capitalist reaction, they must be allowed no platform to spread their politics of hate and despair.

Unity

The fascists' attempts to capitalise on the Woolwich killing polarised the antiracist movement.

On the one hand, Unite Against Fascism (UAF), led by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), organised a series of peaceful celebrations of "multiculturalism" in collaboration with tame Labour councillors and conservative "community leaders", whose sole strategy is to rely on the police to keep the fascist gangs in line.

On the other hand, in places like London and Sheffield, the fascists were outnumbered and physically confronted by the militant antifascist youth who have no illusions at all in the racist police.

Nobody wants to see repeated splits and divisions in the antifascist movement. Nevertheless, if we are to succeed in creating working class unity against racism and fascism, then we need to break with the failed politics of concession and compromise with bourgeois liberal forces that are more scared of the self-organisation of the working class than they are of the fascists.

The policy of unity at any cost with these so-called allies has not only failed to deliver a comprehensive victory for the antifascist movement; it completely subordinates the independent activity of the working class to the tactics acceptable to the liberal sections of the ruling class and the intermediate layers.

We need to reject this approach in its entirety. The

tactical questions about whether mass marches, festivals or direct action are more appropriate in any given circumstance should be decided by democratic campaigns rooted in the working class communities under attack.

We should stop muzzling the youth. We should stop accommodating to pacifist illusions. We should stop the pathetic pursuit of bourgeois 'respectability'.

What we need above all is a way for the working class to take the lead in the fight against fascism.

We can and should seek to work with allies outside the labour movement, but we should not start from the position of what is acceptable to them; we should start from what is necessary.

Nearly a century of struggle against fascism provides enough lessons: organised self-defence, mass participation, democratic decision making and freedom of criticism; and above all, a working class alternative to the capitalist system which incubates the fascist menace.

The experience is there. The will is there. What is missing is an organisation – a revolutionary workers' party – able to distil our collective experience of antifascist struggles, the fight for women's liberation and the daily economic struggle into a coherent strategy for working class power.

Workers' power as the only alternative to the barbarism of capitalism is what we must aim for. And we can't put off creating the means to bring that about – a party – while we confront the fascists. The struggle against fascism is the struggle for a socialist society that will abolish the material roots of every social oppression.

Syria: the revolution needs arms!

By Marcus Halaby

THE STOP the War Coalition (StWC), led by Counterfire, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and the Communist Party of Britain (CPB) called a protest in central London for 15 June to "Stop Western Intervention in Syria". Originally formed to oppose the "War on Terror" declared by the United States under President George W Bush, which led to the invasions and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, the StWC has noticeably not felt any need to oppose the imperialist intervention that has actually been taking place in Syria since the outbreak of the Syrian people's uprising in March 2011 – by Russian and Chinese imperialism in support of the Assad regime.

This follows a Russian decision on 28 May to send sophisticated S300 anti-aircraft missiles to the Syrian government, something which deputy foreign minister Sergey Ryabkov defended as "a factor of stabilisation" necessary to "restrain some hotheads from escalating the conflict to the international scale" and "involving external forces". This prompted Israel's defence minister, Moshe Ya'alon, to issue a thinly veiled warning that Israel might obstruct the delivery if it posed a threat to Israel's security. Russia's decision followed the European Union's failure to renew its arms embargo on Syria beyond 1 August, potentially allowing Britain and France to send arms to the Syrian rebels, against the objections of Sweden and Austria.

UK foreign secretary William Hague, however, made clear that his opposition to the renewal of the EU arms embargo was intended to pressure Russia to force its Syrian client regime to attend planned diplomatic talks. He explained "While



we have no immediate plans to send arms to Syria, it gives us the flexibility to respond in the future if the situation continues to deteriorate." In a statement on the issue, Hague added that he wanted to "send a clear signal to the Assad regime that it has to negotiate seriously, and that all options remain on the table if it refuses to do so".

UK Prime Minister David Cameron has since promised to hold a vote in the House of Commons before any arms shipments to Syria, to placate the alarm of some 80 backbench Tory MPs as well as the opposition Labour party leader Ed Miliband and Cameron's own Liberal Democrat coalition partners. Like the Israelis, they are concerned that Western-supplied weapons might

end up "in the wrong hands", that is, in the hands of anti-Western Islamists and others. Reiterating Hague's argument, Cameron announced that he would meet Russian president Vladimir Putin before the planned G8 summit in Northern Ireland, and that his objective would be to reach agreement on "a peace conference, a peace process and a move towards a transitional government".

Or, to put it another way, the British government's main priority remains what it has been for the last two years: to prevent the complete collapse and disintegration of Assad's totalitarian Ba'athist police state. Since it has few levers of its own, it has to rely on trying to pressurise Russian imperialism to preside over a negotiated

transition to a new government. At the same time, it denounces Assad's barbarity in order to embarrass Russia in the Arab world, and dangles the carrot of military assistance to the Syrian rebels in order to blackmail the less popular and less principled elements amongst the exiled Syrian opposition into betraying a revolution that has already cost more than 90,000 Syrians their lives.

This cynicism is matched only by that of US President Barack Obama's administration. Some months ago, it declared that the use of chemical weapons would be a "red line" that the Assad regime should not cross, while that same regime was butchering its own citizens by the somewhat more old-school methods of aerial bombing, artillery bombardment

and the stabbing, strangling and shooting of civilians by sectarian militias. Having since discovered that some 150 people, less than a day's work for the Assad regime, might have been killed by the regime's alleged use of sarin gas, Obama announced on 13 June that this violated norms "that have existed within the international community for decades". He then promised that the US would "increase the scope and scale of assistance that we provide" to the Syrian opposition, including the "Supreme Military Council" of Free Syrian Army Brigadier General Salim Idris. Even then, this was hedged with the proviso that any action would be "consistent with our national interest" and would advance objectives that include negotiations to establish "an authority that can provide basic stability and administer state institutions".

While the imperialist powers manoeuvre over the details of a negotiated transition, Syria burns. Qusayr, a town of 40,000 people between the Lebanese border and Homs, Syria's third-largest city, was virtually destroyed and its population driven out by a regime offensive supported by the Lebanese Shi'a militia Hezbollah, as well as by Shi'a sectarian militias from Iraq. It had been a rebel stronghold ever since the fall of Homs to regime forces in February 2012, which also led to that city's destruction and depopulation. The Syrian people desperately need arms to defend themselves and to prevent the slide into a regional sectarian war that the Assad regime, with Russia's backing, has threatened to unleash to maintain its grip on power. For Britain's anti-war movement to use this tragedy as an opportunity to revive a moribund organisation that has long outlived its role is nothing less than shameful.

Sri Lanka: new attacks on Tamil rights

By Peter Main

MAHINDA RAJAPAKSE, Sri Lanka's increasingly authoritarian president, has announced constitutional changes that will fundamentally alter the rights of Tamils living in the Northern and Eastern Provinces of the country.

At present, elections to Provincial Councils, due in September, would be held under the provisions of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution. This Amendment was adopted as part of the reforms introduced in 1990 under pressure from India and supposedly designed to resolve conflict between Sinhalese and Tamil communities by granting a degree of regional devolution.

In the aftermath of the barbaric end to the civil war against the Tamil independence movement, which brought widespread international criticism, although no substantial action, Rajapakse presented the

prospect of Provincial Council elections as a significant gesture on his part towards reconciliation.

However, the most openly chauvinist Sinhalese parties, such as the National Heritage Party, led by Buddhist monks, and the National Freedom Front, which split away from the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP, People's Liberation Front) when it turned against Rajapakse's government, have campaigned for the terms of the Thirteenth Amendment to be revised before any elections are held. In all probability, this campaign was itself orchestrated by the president's own office – certainly his brother, Gotabhaya Rajapakse, who is the Defence Minister, openly supported it.

The main demands of these arch reactionaries are that Provincial Councils should lose control of land distribution – a vital issue given the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Tamils by the war – as well

as police powers and the right to merge neighbouring Provinces by mutual agreement. They also want to remove the right of Provincial Councils to veto Constitutional changes that would affect their own powers unless there is a two-thirds majority in Parliament.

Clearly, were such changes to be made, the Provincial Councils in the Tamil-dominated Northern and Eastern Provinces would have no defences against government policies such as the resettlement of Tamil land by Sinhalese populations, which is already happening.

Now, the President has announced that changes will be made to the Thirteenth Amendment, specifically to prevent merger of provinces, which Sinhalese chauvinists see as a step towards future secession, and to restrict the economic powers of provinces. Given the fact that, at present, his government has more than a two-thirds majority in Parlia-

ment, these proposals are likely to be adopted.

In response, the biggest of the Tamil bourgeois parties, the Tamil National Alliance, TNA, has announced that it will boycott the elections to the Provincial Councils if these "reforms" are indeed enacted. As the party that would normally be expected to win a large majority in the elections, this is intended to remove any legitimacy from whatever Council might be elected. However, such a strategy is much more likely to open the door to a Council of unprincipled politicians willing to collaborate with Rajapakse who will be able to claim that they have an electoral mandate, if only from the tiny minority who would be likely to go to the polls.

What would really create an obstacle to the Rajapakse clan and their cronies would be a campaign of mass mobilisation in defence of the devolved powers of all Provincial

Councils and demanding the whole raft of democratic demands that include the release of political prisoners, the return of displaced people to their own lands, the removal of all restrictions on the media and the withdrawal of troops from the Tamil lands.

This latest example of chauvinist discrimination against the Tamils is yet another proof that there can be no stability in Sri Lanka until the National Question is resolved, and the only principled basis for that solution is a recognition of the right of the Tamil people to self-determination, including separation if that is their wish. That has to be written into the programme of any workers' party in Sri Lanka but such a party must also campaign to unite workers of all communities in a common struggle for their common interests against an ever more authoritarian and corrupt government.

Can the Turkish Spring become a hot Summer?

By KD Tait

THE MOVEMENT which brought millions onto the streets now finds itself caught between the uncompromising violence of the state and the limitations of its tactics. Now is the time to organise to ensure the loss of Gezi Park does not turn from setback to defeat.

As night fell on the evening of June 15th, hundreds of riot police advanced behind water cannon and clouds of tear gas to clear Gezi Park. Not content with bulldozing the encampment, they pursued protesters into neighbouring streets, even storming a hotel and preventing ambulances reaching the injured.

What started as a protest against the profit-motivated destruction of an urban park quickly escalated into a nationwide resistance to the government's brutal crackdown.

As the protests spread to more than 70 towns and cities, the response of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan was to denounce the protesters as "marauders, terrorists and extremists", as well as jailing dissident journalists and lawyers, before sending in the police to smash the protests with rubber bullets and tear gas.

But the scale of the revolt meant that it could not be ended by this show of force. Even a second attack, which cleared Taksim Square on June 12, resulted in a stalemate. Erdogan then appeared to make some concessions, proposing a referendum on the proposed building project, but the occupiers of Gezi Park rightly rejected this, insisting that the whole project be simply cancelled, as well as demanding the release of all those arrested and the sacking of the police chiefs who had ordered the attacks on the demonstrations.

The roots of resistance

The speed with which the original protest spread across the country had already made it clear that the proposal to uproot a park and replace it with a shopping centre and hotel was the trigger, not the cause, for a nationwide uprising that challenged the government's rule.

Although Turkey is formally a parliamentary democracy, its state structures and institutions remain highly authoritarian. Reflecting this, the protest movement that sprang up, as if from nowhere, showed many similarities with both the Arab Spring and the Occupy movements of the USA and Western Europe. What united so many people – and what could still divide them?

Anger at police violence, youth unemployment above 20 per cent, nine per cent inflation eroding wages and reactionary social policies are all factors. Opposition to the creeping authoritarianism of Erdogan's regime and the limits on the freedom of the press, judiciary and public protest further fan the flames of popular anger.

The social make-up of the protests was as diverse as the motivations which fuelled them. In the immediate aftermath of the first attack on Gezi Park, the working class districts around the neighbouring Taksim



Square were emptied as workers, with youth and women prominent amongst them, flooded out to erect barricades and drive the police out.

Those sections of the urban working class who fought to defend Taksim Square have a very real material motivation for their actions. The government's plans are not only to bulldoze Gezi Park but also large parts of the surrounding Taksim neighbourhood to build luxury apartments – effectively banishing the working class and the poor to the outer fringes of the sprawling metropolis.

Erdogan's "grand projects" also include the construction of a third international airport, the largest in Europe, costing \$29 billion, and the destruction of a forest to allow the building of a third bridge across the Bosphorus.

The diplomatic cables revealed by "Wikileaks" show that US authorities believe that Erdogan has amassed a huge personal fortune through the sale of Turkish state assets to foreign investors. Tight control of the media prevents corruption scandals reaching the public, preserving for a time the virtuous reputation of the pious Erdogan.

Gezi Park has become a potent symbol of the rampant cronyism which binds the AKP to the neoliberal policies of Turkey's business elite. Planning permission is exchanged for a cut of the profit and political support.

Also attracted to the protests in large numbers were women and youth opposed to the raft of new laws which undermine Turkey's secular constitution. Alongside socialists and progressive activists they are fighting to reverse limits on access to abortion and to overturn reactionary 'public morality' measures like the infamous 'kissing ban'.

The Kurdish Question

In many towns and cities protests were joined by sections of the country's

oppressed Kurdish communities. Kurds make up one fifth of the country's population and have been cruelly oppressed and denied national and cultural rights for decades. The solidly Kurdish regions in eastern Anatolia have been occupied by the army, which committed numerous atrocities in its war against the PKK guerrillas. Many Kurds have moved to the big cities where they constitute upwards of a quarter of the population.

While the Kurds are by no means united in their strategy, or even in a desire, for achieving an independent state of their own, their hatred of every government's violent war against the Kurds provides sufficient motivation for joining the protests.

For generations, the racist division between Turkish and Kurdish workers has been a vital advantage of the Turkish ruling class. However, Erdogan's foreign policy ambitions to make Turkey a major regional power have led him to a policy of negotiation with the PKK. This aims, ultimately, at assimilating elements of the Kurdish leadership into his coalition, the better to develop relations with the Kurdish region of Iraq. Clearly, a government based on Turkish nationalism could not achieve this, and it is this fact that motivates his drive to replace secularism with Sunni Islamism.

Creating democratic structures to unite the common interests of Turkish and Kurdish workers will be critical in thwarting Erdogan's divide and rule strategy. The occupied squares have shown the potential of united action but only recognition of the Kurds' right to national self-determination could ensure lasting unity based on equality and solidarity. That would remove one of the most effective weapons in the armoury of the ruling class, the policy of divide and rule.

Who should lead?

The spontaneous nature of the upris-

ing carries within it all the inner contradictions and conflicts that usually exist bubbling below the surface of society. On top of that, Erdogan can still rely on widespread support, particularly in the rural areas but also among sections of the urban poor who have benefited from the welfare aspects of his Muslim social policy. The working class is the only social force which, by fighting for its own class interests, can also provide leadership and a way forward for all these groups.

The ability to do that will now be tested immediately by Erdogan's crackdown. As we go to press, the Confederation of Public Sector Unions, KESK, has already called a general strike for Monday June 17 and this could be the signal for action beyond the public sector. The planned strike of engineering workers should be brought forward and all trades unionists should demand that their leaders call them out officially – and if they will not, then the rank and file should take action themselves.

The mass public meetings that have been a feature of the movement in solidarity with Gezi Park could become not only democratic forums for debate but develop into "action councils" to organise and extend the strike. This must not remain a one-day token of protest but take up Erdogan's challenge and make a reality of the demand that was increasingly heard in the demonstrations, "the government must go!"

All determined general strikes inevitably raise the question of who should rule. The main opposition party to the AKP, the CHP, have joined the protests and undoubtedly want to see the downfall of Erdogan, but they are false friends of the working class and poor. Their close ties to the military high command, who have been over-ruled by Erdogan, make clear that, despite their secularism and vocal opposition to his reli-

gious agenda, their programme is for the restoration of their own authoritarian rule.

To make any alliance with, let alone rely on, such forces would be the surest path to setback and defeat for the workers and youth who have battled in the streets for two weeks.

Fight to win

If there are similarities to the Arab Spring and the Occupy movements, then there are lessons to be learnt from them as well. As with Tahrir Square and Wall Street, the occupation of Taksim was both a powerful symbol of protest and an open challenge to the ruling authorities. The ultimate strength of the movement, however, depended on the development of forces in society as a whole, in particular of working class organisations, such as the new and more radical unions in the industrial towns of the Nile Delta.

In Turkey, now that Taksim and Gezi have been retaken by the government forces, the task is to continue the struggle by organising and mobilising the working class in every city and every union, enforcing the general strike not only for the movement's original demands – the abandonment of all plans to redevelop the district, release of all those detained and dismissal of the police and municipal leaders who ordered the attacks on the protests, but for the repeal of all the repressive measures already introduced and the repeal of all laws restricting democratic rights, particularly those affecting women and the Kurdish communities.

Above all, those committed to building the movement into a force that can not only bring down Erdogan but break up the whole repressive state apparatus and replace it with the rule of the workers' and peasants' own organisations, must form themselves into a political party, that can lead that fight to the end.

Rank and file group Unite Fight Back founded



Crossrail pickets in West End London need an alternative leadership

By Marcus Halaby

A NEW rank and file group has been formed, committed to the election of all officials, breaking where necessary the anti-union laws and supporting unofficial strikes. If successful, it could break the cycle of electing "left" leaders, then watching them betray us.

At the first national gathering of Jerry Hicks' supporters since his election campaign for Unite General Secretary, the idea of a new grassroots organisation on the basis of the policies in Jerry's election platform was warmly received.

Jerry won nearly 80,000 votes, 36 per cent of those cast, with only an ad hoc coalition to get the message out to 1.5 million members. Meanwhile Unite officials refused him access to branch secretaries'

phone numbers and emails, despite the incumbent General Secretary Len McCluskey having every fulltime Unite officer plugging his candidacy.

Jerry stood on a platform calling for: the election of all officials; making Labour party funding conditional on supporting pro-working class policies; the General Secretary to receive the average wage of £26,000 instead of McCluskey's £122,000; rank and file organisation in every sector; confronting the anti-union laws and supporting unofficial action; and a strategy for a million "green" jobs.

Bureaucratic smears

Against this, McCluskey resorted to smear and innuendo, saying: "I have a clear positive agenda. My opponent in this election has no such

plan, merely a wish list of gestures which would wreck our union and leave our members defenceless. Crucially he played no role whatsoever in our union at any level for several years. He is a political opportunist relying on the support of the discredited Socialist Workers Party. We must not allow a small political clique to hijack our union."

This is classic demagoguery, worthy of the old right wing leaders in the electricians' union, Frank Chapple and Eric Hammond.

Prior to the meeting, Workers Power drafted a resolution (see box) and circulated it to Jerry Hicks and the Socialist Workers Party for comment and amendment. Its aim was to provide a new public face for the forces drawn together in the election campaign, with

an individual membership structure to enable democratic accountability.

We also wanted a political basis for the new organisation in the form of Jerry's election address. The SWP rightly suggested it would orient to the workplace, solidarity and fighting the bureaucracy, rather than just elections.

This makes Unite Fight Back unlike any other grouping in today's trade union movement. The Socialist Teachers Alliance, PCS Left Unity and Unison United Left all see their primary role as defeating the right in elections. This has led these "Broad Left" formations to caution and conservatism once in office, as they avoid bold tactics that might "frighten" less militant members, even at the expense of jobs, pay and conditions.

Broader, cross-union bodies like the National Shop Stewards Network and Unite the Resistance are even less of a democratic movement of the rank and file, being tightly controlled by the Socialist Party and SWP respectively. They may entice union general secretaries onto their platforms, but in return they promise not to interfere in these bureaucrats' control over their unions, not criticise or organise against them when they sell out.

Where now?

There is plenty for Unite Fight Back to get stuck into. Electrician Ian Bradley from east London explained how Unite full-timers had moved in to swamp the construction rank and file campaign on Crossrail, while delaying a recruitment drive. Andrew Osborne from Cambridge reported on disputes and strikes coming up at Equinox Housing in Southwark, hospitals in Leeds (see below) and caterers and cleaners at eight Royal Air Force stations, while urging people to support a mass picket at Hanson Brick in Peterborough, where Unite members are on all-out strike.

The 10-person steering committee that was elected pending a founding conference in September will have to relate to all of these disputes, and also

to instances of bureaucratic intimidation and neglect, such as the suspensions and bullying currently happening in the Bassa branch at Heathrow.

It should also consider launching its own initiative. Not only will this mark it out as a pro-union network (contradicting McCluskey's smears), but also make it less reliant on reacting to events.

A recruitment drive in fast food outlets like McDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken and Burger King, demanding a living wage and permanent, fixed hours contracts could be as successful as its counterpart in the United States. Unite Fight Back could also link up with SWP and Left Unity branches in such a campaign.

With a perspective like this, there is no reason why Unite Fight Back cannot grow and make September's meeting an even bigger success. Over the past five months the Hicks campaign has shown that it is possible for comrades from different traditions to work together openly and honestly to achieve something much bigger than the sum of its parts.

Workers Power is proud to have played a significant part in arguing for this course of action and doing all in our power to see such a potentially historic step was taken. But the real work starts now.

Leeds health workers set to strike in on-call dispute

A Unite activist reports on yet another NHS conflict in Yorkshire

PATHOLOGY STAFF in a large NHS hospital trust, mainly Unite members, have voted for industrial action against the imposition of new shift patterns to replace long standing Out-of-Hours (OOH) working arrangements. Pathology management propose to introduce the new arrangements on 1 July.

Biomedical scientists, support workers and other staff voted 63 per cent for strike action and 84 per cent for action short of strike. The result was announced on 23 May and action must be taken within four weeks for the ballot to remain legally valid. Some Unison members are also involved in the dispute.

Having been going on in a stop-go fashion for years, this dispute came to a head with

the issuing of a consultation plan instigating a 90-day notice of change of contract for any group of staff required to work on-call.

Nurses and hospital porters traditionally work shifts, while other professions are on-call as necessary from home. The old public sector General Whitley Council Conditions of Service provided payment for each call out. On-call working has always been voluntary, but continual increases in activity have led to the busier departments agreeing ad hoc sessional payments with their staff. A number of different payment systems have therefore arisen.

The purpose of management's attack is to reduce the payment per call, remove the voluntary nature of the scheme

and to remove the entitlement to compensatory time off. It is quite simply a large pay cut. All staff currently involved in OOH working would see a large drop in income. Some Band 2 staff expect to have difficulty paying their rent if this goes through.

Their plan notionally targets traditional on-call working but it is difficult to see how staff could be employed on two different contracts. It is intended as a divide-and-rule tactic, but it is clear that, if management win, they'll soon come for the rest of us!

Reasons for opposing the new arrangements vary between departments. For some staff they conflict with childcare and other arrangements. Some have never worked nights and don't

intend to start. In many sections there simply aren't enough staff to go round, and the service to patients would fail.

This is another turn of the screw on top of years of increasing workloads, staff reductions, and real pay cuts. In a group of workers not traditionally militant the mood is changing to one of great anger.

Pathology management have yet to give a convincing explanation of how they intend to deal with this. The "disconnect" between their thinking and realities on the ground is disturbing. Other groups of health workers in Yorkshire have already taken industrial action over down-banding and derecognition. We know that now it is our turn.

Resolution to launch Unite Fight Back

1. This meeting agrees to establish a network of members in Unite, called 'Unite Fight Back'
2. Membership will cost £5 a year - and will be open to all members of Unite, but not to full time officers of the union.
3. We will aim to encourage the development of solidarity networks in all of the sectors in Unite, though we will focus initially on passenger transport, civil air transport, construction and health where we have developed positive contacts from the election campaign and previous struggles. We will also encourage the development of similar networks on a regional basis.
4. The initial policies for Unite Fight Back will be those contained in Jerry's election material, especially his election address to all members.
5. We welcome and support the development of such networks across unions, with a view to developing solidarity in struggle.
6. Today's meeting will reconvene in September 2013, where reports, resolutions and elections will take place.
7. In the meantime, we will elect a steering group comprising of supporters who are Unite members.
8. Unite Fight Back will be orientated on the workplace, developing political campaigns and solidarity. We will also campaign to improve Unite policies and rules. We may also support credible candidates with good policies for office within Unite, but do not see this as our central function.

Luxemburg or Lenin

How should revolutionaries organise?

Jeremy Dewar asks whether Rosa Luxemburg's ideas on revolutionary organisation and working class spontaneity are a better guide than those of Lenin in building a new party of the left

TODAY THE far left in Britain is in a state of turmoil not seen since the late 1970s. The reason – because after five years of the most severe capitalist crisis since the war and with a government demolishing the post-1945 welfare state, resistance has been weaker and in particular more fragmented than most people expected. Moreover during a period of historically severe capitalist crisis the so-called far left has probably shrunk, certainly stagnated and suffered a series of splits.

The last year or so has witnessed growing discontent with “the sects”: both with their tactics and their methods of organisation. Many critics, accepting these groups’ description of themselves as Leninist, have responded by saying in effect: if that is Leninism then I for one am not a Leninist.

In 2011 there was a brief infatuation with the US and European Occupy movements and the Arab Spring which seemed to suggest that left activists could do without parties and leadership altogether. Yet the failure of these movements to either achieve the fundamental change they called for, or the way that in Egypt, Tunisia and Spain conservative forces profited from the move-

ments to seize control dampened the enthusiasm of all but the most committed libertarians for movements with few or no demands and without representatives.

The near victory for Syriza in the Greek elections of June 2012, a party that had gone from 4.9 per cent in the European elections of 2009 to 27 per cent per cent that year and was beaten by the conservative New Democracy by only 3 per cent, raised the prospect of a government that might reject the European Union’s imposed austerity plan and suspend repayments on Greece’s foreign debt.

This re-ignited an interest in parties as the means to halt austerity. It led to a debate around exactly what sort of party we need. Is there an alternative to the supposedly Leninist model claimed by most far left groups, be they Stalinist, Trotskyist or Maoist? Should it be one which is broader, more pluralist, more oriented to spontaneous mass action or should it concentrate on winning elections?

Negative judgements about the Leninism and democratic centralism abound. Some of those leaving the Socialist Workers Party have raised the prospect of a return to Rosa Luxemburg and the young Trotsky’s

views on the party, as expressed in their polemics with Lenin in 1904. Indeed this was a position once endorsed by the SWP’s founder Tony Cliff, before his conversion to (what he called) Leninism in as a result of the May 1968 General Strike in France.

In his 1959 booklet Rosa Luxemburg he wrote:

“For Marxists in advanced industrial countries, Lenin’s original position [in 1902-04] can serve much less as a guide than Rosa Luxemburg’ notwithstanding her over emphasis on the question of spontaneity.”

Whereas in the 1968 edition he wrote:

“However whatever the historic circumstances moulding Rosa’s thought regarding spontaneism, these thoughts showed a great weakness in the German revolution of 1918-19. “ And again Cliff wrote: “While one should learn from Rosa not to fall into sectarianism and adventurism, one must not bend the stick too far back towards passivity and tailism” and warned that her “conception of the structure of a revolutionary organisation [suffers from] the danger of passive commentary on events instead of active efforts to shape them.”

However narrowly organisational Cliff’s conception of Leninism – i.e., lacking in the notion of the party as a strategist of the working class, armed with a programme for power – his judgement in 1968 is nearer to the truth than it was in 1959, as we shall show.

Rosa Luxemburg

Luxemburg’s writings on party organisation are best summed up in her *Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy*. This dates to the year following the famous split at the second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP). Held in Brussels and London in the summer of 1903 this occurred not, as some people think, over the definition of a party member (on which Lenin suffered a defeat) but towards the very end of the congress over the make up of the Editorial Board of the party paper *Iskra* and of the new Central Committee.

When they were defeated on the composition of the leading bodies, the minority, led by Julius Martov and Pavel Axelrod with the support of the young Leon Trotsky, refused to play any further part in the proceedings. Martov refused to serve on the Edi-

torial Board of the party paper *Iskra* unless three of his supporters were immediately co-opted. He also refused to stand for the Central Committee. This would have given him an unwarranted majority, given his minority of Congress votes. Thereafter, the Mensheviks [supporters of the minority] boycotted all the leading and executive bodies chosen by the Congress.

After the Congress the Mensheviks, as they were from then on called, launched a public onslaught on Lenin, calling him a dictator, a Bonaparte, a Robespierre, etc. This was little more than a cover for their own undemocratic actions at the end of and after the Congress, and the refusal to recognise its decisions. In this way the Mensheviks, not the Bolsheviks carried through the split in the party.

For a month or two Plekhanov supported Lenin, but then caved in to Martov, calling on the party Council in the autumn of 1903 to co-opt the prima donnas. This was a clear violation of the Congress decisions and so Lenin resigned from the Editorial Board himself. He set about organising a public faction – the Bolsheviks (supporters of the majority) – rallying to his side the underground organisations in Russia, where he could

Spotlight on communist policy

The Leninist cadre party

Dave Stockton goes back to Lenin's original writings and rediscovers his idea of what sort of party was needed for a revolution

OF PRIME importance for Lenin was the necessity for a programme and publications, which form the political core of the strategy of the revolutionary party, providing the basis for its day-to-day line and orientation.

Nothing could be more un-Leninist than the mockery of the programme as a "blueprint when what was needed was a gun" (Tony Cliff) or the claim that Lenin made the October Revolution on a 14 years old programme. The entire history of Bolshevism is littered with strategic and tactical documents, which updated the party's programme,

not least the April Theses, which changed the party's goal to working class power, based on soviets and on measures transitional to socialism.

Internal debate and democratic discussion were vitally important, wherever possible, to agree these positions. Democratic

centralism accorded rights to every level of the party and allowed for opposition groupings and factions. All this was combined with discipline in the ranks, itself an extension of the necessary discipline in any combative workers' organisation, like a trade union, where united action is required in strikes or on demonstrations.

The need for an organisation of professional revolutionaries was the inner core. These were not paid bureaucratic functionaries, but people who not only devoted their whole lives to educating, agitating and organising amongst the working class and its allies, but also risked long periods of exile, imprisonment, mistreatment and death in the process. The highest degree of professionalism and discipline (the rejection of amateurism and indiscipline) was needed to prevent infiltration by the police and to win the confidence of workers.

Socialists who regard their politics as secondary to some other occupation will never be able to organise a revolutionary struggle against the state and the capitalists. Lenin always regarded these traits which he insisted did not come as second nature to the intelligentsia – as proletarian characteristics. Certainly he agreed with Karl Kautsky and, before him, Frederick Engels that these traits arose from the necessary discipline of social production, the division of labour, work discipline, etc. But this in turn gave rise to the self-sacrifice of workers, who stood up and risked their jobs (and in Russia sometimes their lives) to fight for their workmates. Rejection of discipline, i.e. dilettantism, he regarded as typical of the petit bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia as a caste.

A network or structure of such cadres, assembled in the early stages of building an organisation, in Russia under illegal conditions, could and should be enormously expanded in times of mass struggle, with its cadres spreading out to offer leadership to newly emerging mass organisations, but it could not be dispensed with. For these cadres not only had the leadership skills the workers movement needed, but

principles, and the methods of their application. They remained the core of the party's leading cadres, though one that welcomed with open arms the new cadres being thrown up by the workers' mass struggles, fusing their experience with the dynamism of the new young forces.

The continuity of Lenin's thought can be seen clearly in the quotation from the introduction to the collection of his writings, *Twelve Years*, that Tony Cliff thought was a renunciation of his views on spontaneity and consciousness elaborated in *What Is To Be Done*, or that it is a self-criticism of these

views. It is worth quoting at length:

What Is To Be Done is a summary of Iskra tactics and organisational policy in 1901 and 1902. Precisely a "summary", no more and no less. That will be clear to anyone who takes the trouble to go through the file of Iskra for 1901 and 1902. But to pass judgement on that summary without knowing Iskra's struggle

against the then dominant trend of Economism, without understanding that struggle, is sheer idle talk. Iskra fought for an organisation of professional revolutionaries. It fought with especial vigour in 1901 and 1902, vanquished Economism, the then dominant trend, and finally created this organisation in 1903. It preserved it in face of the subsequent split in the Iskra ranks and all the convulsions of the period of storm and stress; it preserved it throughout the Russian revolution; it preserved it intact from 1901-02 to 1907.

"And now, when the fight for this organisation has long been won, when the seed has ripened, and the harvest gathered, people come along and tell us:

"You exaggerated the idea of an organisation of professional revolutionaries! Is this not ridiculous?"

"Take the whole pre-revolutionary period and the first two and a half years of the revolution (1905-07). Compare our Social Democratic Party during this whole period with the other parties in respect of unity, organisation, and continuity of policy. You will have to admit that in this respect our Party is unquestionably superior to all the others – the Cadets, the Socialist-Revolutionaries, etc.

"Before the revolution it drew up a programme which was formally accepted by all Social Democrats, and when changes were made in it there was no split over the programme. From 1903 to 1907 (formally from 1905 to 1906), the Social Democratic Party, despite the split in its ranks, gave the public the fullest information on the inner-party situation (minutes of the Second General Congress, the Third Bolshevik, and the Fourth General, or Stockholm, Congresses). Despite the split, the Social Democratic Party earlier than any of the other parties was able to take advantage of the temporary spell of freedom to build a legal organisation with an ideal democratic structure, an electoral system, and representation at Congresses according to the number of organised members." *The Reorganisation of the Party, Lenin Collected Works, 1972, Moscow, volume 13, pages 94-113*



The Petrograd Bolshevik Military Committee in 1917: the cadres capable of organising the insurrection were trained in the party

count upon a majority.

In July 1904 the Mensheviks managed to involve Rosa Luxemburg in the dispute. She wrote an extensive article, which was carried in both Iskra and in *Neue Zeit* the prestigious theoretical journal of the German Social Democracy edited by Karl Kautsky.

Rosa Luxemburg's *Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy* sharply attacked Lenin's 1904 pamphlet, *One Step Forward Two Steps Back*. The latter pamphlet documents in detail events at and after the second Congress.

Luxemburg's critique deals with a number of issues: what sort of centralism should there be in a revolutionary party? What is the correct relationship between membership of the party and of the working class? What is the role of spontaneity and what the role of discipline?

Centralism and Blanquism

Luxemburg refers to Lenin as a representative of the "ultra-centralist tendency in the Russian movement".

And indeed the picture she paints of this tendency is truly a frightening one:

"The party Central Committee should have the privilege of naming all the local committees of the party. It should have the right to appoint the effective organs of all local bodies from Geneva to Liege, from Tomsk to Irkutsk. It should also have the right to impose on all of them its own ready-made rules of party conduct. It should have the right to rule without appeal on such questions as the dissolution and reconstitution of local organisations. This way, the Central Committee could determine, to suit itself, the composition of the highest party organs. The Central Committee would be the only thinking element in the party. All other groupings would be its executive limbs." *Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy* (all quotes by Luxemburg are from this article)

The only problem with this argument is that it is a bogeyman – a fiction to frighten political children. The Statutes agreed at the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party's second Congress make it clear that:

"All organisations belonging to the party carry on autonomously all work relating specially and exclusively to the sphere of party activity which they were set up to deal with."

The party structure had moreover not one centre but three – the Central Committee (CC), the Editorial Board (EB) of the official party paper, Iskra, and with the highest authority, the party Council, made up of members of the two former bodies and empowered to resolve any differences between them that might arise. The Central Committee was to be located inside Russia, since it was tasked with advising and if need be directing the work of the local committees.

Since members of the latter were constantly being arrested and deported, and that under such repression it would prove difficult if not impossible for the local groups to hold democratic meetings of all their members to elect new committees,

power was given to the CC to appoint new ones if necessary. This was not even Lenin's proposal but came from a commission on which there was a majority of future Mensheviks. Moreover when the party was reunified in 1906 the Menshevik majority replaced this tripartite system (CC, EB, party Council) with an "all powerful" Central Committee which proceeded to exclude all Bolsheviks from it.

Luxemburg continues creating her artificial picture of the super-centralising Lenin:

"Now the two principles on which Lenin's centralism rests are precisely these:

"1. The *blind* subordination, in the smallest detail, of all party organs to the party centre which alone thinks, guides, and decides for all.

"2. The *rigorous separation* of the organised nucleus of revolutionaries from its social-revolutionary surroundings.

"Such centralism is a mechanical transposition of the organisational principles of Blanquism into the mass movement of the socialist working class." (Our italics)

The italicised phrases are a complete invention by Luxemburg and without them we are left with the statement that it is the duty and right of the party centre (elected by the only free and democratic body available in Russian conditions: a Congress of delegates smuggled out of Russia, meeting abroad) to direct the work of the local cells within the parameters set by the Congress and the party programme.

As for "rigorous separation" it is true that in illegal conditions party organisations can be neither public nor openly linked to the masses without at the same time finding themselves "linked" to the agents of the secret police. Avoiding this was difficult at the best of times. But this does not mean that the illegal committees did not seek to create the closest connection to the working masses by means of agitation, propaganda and working in any legal or semi-legal workers clubs or organisations, above all in times of strikes and spontaneous street demonstrations.

The charge against Lenin – that he envisages "as a separate corps all active revolutionaries, as distinguished from the unorganised, though revolutionary, mass surrounding this elite" – is quite simply untrue.

Luxemburg triumphantly quotes Lenin's phrase from *One Step Forward Two Steps Back* that a revolutionary Social Democrat is nothing less than a "Jacobin indissolubly joined to the organisation of the proletariat, which has become conscious of its of its class interests".

This is wrong, says Luxemburg – rapidly shifting focus to the Nineteenth Century French revolutionary communist August Blanqui (1805-1881) whose conspiratorial theory of organisation she tries to link Lenin to – because he too tried to organise for the insurrection in a conspiratorial, illegal way. Blanqui, she says, maintained "no close contact" between the revolutionaries and "the daily struggle of the popular masses" for fear of being exposed to the police.



Marxists, on the other hand, strive to raise the struggle of the workers to the level of a popular revolution, so Jacobin or Blanquist élitism runs contrary to the tasks of the revolutionary party. Again there is just one little problem; Lenin's Jacobin (all he means by this analogy, which was first used by his Menshevik opponent Axelrod, is the intransigent extreme left wing of the revolution) is as he says is "indissolubly joined to the organisation of the proletariat, which has become conscious of its of its class interests." Not rigorous separation therefore, but indissoluble links.

Party, class and spontaneity

Luxemburg goes further than demanding links between the party and the class, coming close to identifying the party with the whole working class in a way Martov's famous formulation at the second Congress did: "every striker should have the right to proclaim himself a party member."

Luxemburg runs with this and goes on to credit the masses with initiating the tactics of Social Democracy and systematically downplays the role

of leadership:

"The most important and fruitful changes in [the Russian socialist movement's] tactical policy have not been the inventions of several leaders... [but] the spontaneous product of the movement in ferment."

Indeed she asserts that social democrats have "played an insignificant role", and indeed if they had attempted to guide the movement from the centre they "would have probably increased the disorder of the local committees" or held them back.

Here we come to the heart of Luxemburg's organisational method. Because, as she says, "the unconscious comes before the conscious" and the "historic process comes before the subjective logic of human beings", she sees this objective process as determining the revolutionary action of the masses – as against which the "directing organs of the socialist party [tend to] play a conservative role."

Instead of planning ahead organisationally and tactically – preparing "a set of directives all ready for future policy" – the party should confine itself to providing the general perspectives and setting today's strug-

gles in context, warning of, and preparing the class for "the inevitable increase of revolutionary tension as the final goal of the class struggle approaches".

In *What Is To Be Done*, Lenin accepted that the "working class spontaneously gravitates towards socialism... provided, however, [socialist] theory does not itself yield to spontaneity" before noting that "bourgeois ideology spontaneously imposes itself upon the working class to a still greater degree".

Of course, workers' consciousness develops by leaps and bounds when engaged in economic or trade union struggles. However, for Lenin this is not the same thing as "class political consciousness [which] can be brought to the workers only from without, that is only from outside the economic struggle... There can be no talk of an independent ideology formulated by the working masses themselves in the process of their movement, the only choice is – either bourgeois or socialist ideology".

The problem with Luxemburg's view is that she throws onto the "historical process" the task of the revolutionary party to prepare the

class for the struggle for power. History is strewn with examples of this "process" going into reverse. In Germany and Austria after World War I, workers formed soviets, only for the Social Democratic leaders who dominated them to hand power back to the bourgeoisie.

Without the active intervention of a revolutionary party, whose members are trained in the Marxist method and organised around a revolutionary programme – i.e. the "subjective logic of human beings" – history, the objective process, alone will not deliver victory. Of course, humans are fallible and party leaderships can often "play a conservative role", but to fail to develop the best possible leadership and programme and to fight for leadership effectively of the class hands this over to the reformists and nationalists. A voluntaristic plea to step up the "revolutionary tension" is no substitute for winning the masses away from these misleaders and to the key demands with which to seize power themselves.

Discipline

Linked to this issue of the relationship of party to class and the vanguard militants to the broad masses is the question of party discipline. Luxemburg argues that Lenin's centralism rests on "the blind subordination, in the smallest detail, of all party organs [committees, newspapers, etc.] to the party centre which alone thinks, guides, and decides for all". This approach, she argues, breeds "the sterile spirit of the overseer... not a positive and creative spirit". The Polish revolutionary even declares that, "Lenin's concern is not so much to make the activity of the party more fruitful as to control the party".

Luxemburg attacks the passage in *One Step Forward* where Lenin claims that workers understand the need for discipline because they experience it daily under factory conditions, whereas intellectuals tend towards autonomy and anarchism because their social position between the main classes and their individual mode of production strain against organisation and centralism.

Luxemburg indignantly responds that the discipline of the factory demands "the absence of thought and will", while the "self-discipline" of the working class "struggling for its emancipation" is in fact "the spontaneous coordination of the conscious, political acts of a body of men [sic]".

In fact in referring to factory discipline Lenin is taking his lead from Frederick Engels' essay, *On Authority*, which was written in response to the autonomists of his day. Supposing capitalism has been overthrown and the workers have taken over industrial production, writes Engels, they are "obliged to begin and finish their work at the hours fixed by the authority of the steam, which cares nothing for individual autonomy. The workers must, therefore, first come to an understanding on the hours of work; and these hours, once they are fixed, must be observed by all, without any exception."

Lenin, like Engels, is referring to the disciplining character of social labour and the fact that this prepares and enables the worker to express the

conscious and wilful self-discipline of the strike that Luxemburg refers to.

Both aspects of discipline are experienced in a revolutionary party. The class struggle, like steam, does not set its rhythms according to the desire for self-expression of individual activists, so those wishing to fight for revolution have to subordinate their will to the party majority decisions if the opportunity is not to be wasted. As Engels points out, this can be done by majority voting, but once the decision is made it "must be observed by all".

Does this mean that party members must display an "absence of thought and will" and the Central Committee alone "thinks, guides, and decides for all"? Not at all. Internal struggles, even and faction fights marked the entire history of the Bolshevik Party, right up to Stalin's crushing of internal democracy in the mid-to-late 1920s.

Substitutionism

Luxemburg did not reject centralism in principle, but saw it as the final goal for the party, one that could only be achieved when a mass revolutionary workers' movement could be politically trained up to the task of leading the party. She wrote, "It is a mistake to believe that it is possible to substitute 'provisionally' the absolute power of a Central Committee... for the yet unrealisable rule of the majority of conscious workers in the party".

This criticism has struck a chord with members of the International Socialist Network, who recount how the SWP Central Committee employs an army of fulltimers to patrol the branches, fractions and districts, barking orders for everyone to obey the next "turn". Any fulltimers who demur or criticise the leadership are edged out or removed.

Of course this is a parody of Leninism. When he called for an "organisation of professional revolutionaries" in *What Is To Be Done*, he did not mean paid party functionaries. "Professional" was for Lenin the opposite of "amateur" – i.e., it meant the systematic and disciplined approach to party work. Lenin was far from suggesting that only members of the intelligentsia, students, etc. were qualified to become professional revolutionaries. He stressed that the party had a "duty to assist every capable worker to become a professional agitator, organiser, propagandist, literature distributor, etc., etc."

Whilst in the underground existence of the party, necessary in Tsarist Russia at the time, this meant a network of fulltime revolutionaries supported by the local groups, in democratic countries this process could be, as he said, "to a great extent automatic", i.e. by remaining in paid employment and fighting in the workplaces, the trade unions, the neighbourhoods, etc. In no sense did Bolshevik fulltimers enjoy undemocratic political (or material) privileges. Quite the opposite, they took greater risks of arrest and imprisonment and long periods in Siberian or foreign exile.

Luxemburg's alternative is a utopia – and therefore greatly inferior to Lenin's insights and methods. If it is

not possible to always obtain the “rule of the majority of conscious workers in the party” then how is the party going to make any decisions? If it tried to get as near as possible to direct democracy, then it could only do so at the expense of a thorough democratic debate. It would have to resort to plebiscites.

Other experiments in direct democracy have also failed. The Zapatistas’ *encuentros* in the Chiapas region of Mexico have led to the rule of an unelected elite of (largely middle class intellectual) guerrilla fighters, as the peasants cannot afford to stay till the end of the debates, needing to return to their work.

The truth is that, under capitalism, any revolutionary party, involving tens of thousands of members, will have to operate 99 per cent of the time by a system of delegation, representatives elected after a debate to a Congress. The Congress in turn would have to elect a Central Committee to act on its behalf and with its authority in between Congresses. Rules, including the right of branches and districts to recall Congress if the CC overstepped its mandate, would have to be put in place.

But since developments in the class struggle present new challenges, unforeseen by any Congress, and which brook no delay, leaderships have to be vested with the authority to develop the line of the organisation. Of course they must be answerable for their actions and the membership must be able to organise to hold them to account.

A restriction on the right to form factions or oppositions simply turns the existing leadership into a closed faction against an atomised membership, as recent events in the British SWP have shown. But this was not the practice in Lenin’s party, at least between 1903 and 1921; the ban on factions in that latter year was, as Trotsky was later to admit, the beginning of the grave bureaucratic distortions and ultimate complete degeneration of the party.

Bureaucracy

But does an authoritative Central Committee in itself lead to bureaucratisation, to an undemocratic rule by the centre? Certainly many of today’s supporters of Luxemburg believe this to be one of her greatest insights. After all, was she not the one who first analysed and warned of the emerging trade union and party bureaucracy in Germany? Luxemburg appears to make a devastating point when she objects to Lenin’s assertion that: “to oppose bureaucracy to democracy... is to contrast the organisational principle of revolutionary Social Democracy to the methods of opportunistic organisation”.

But it is important to observe what Lenin meant here by bureaucracy and democracy. By bureaucracy he meant centralism, not the rule of paid and privileged officials. The centralist principle, as Lenin envisages it, “strives to proceed from the top downward, and upholds an extension of the rights and powers of the centre in relation to the parts... this top is inevitably the party Congress, as the supreme organ of the party; the Congress as far as possible includes



German Social Democratic Party leaders prior to the outbreak of the war in August 1914. Luxemburg is standing on the far left, next to August Bebel

representatives of all the active organisations, and, by appointing the central institutions (often with a membership which satisfies the advanced elements of the party more than the backward and is more to the taste of its revolutionary than its opportunist wing), makes them the top until the next Congress.” *One Step Forward Two Steps Back*

This will doubtless shock those steeped in the present “bottom up” ethos, because Lenin goes even further. It is the opportunist, he says, who “strives to proceed from the bottom upward, and, therefore, wherever possible and as far as possible, upholds autonomy and ‘democracy’, carried (by the overzealous) to the point of anarchism.” (ibid)

Lenin at this point places the word democracy in inverted commas to emphasise the fact that it is not really democracy – the rule of the majority – but anarchism, where each member can decide what s/he should or should not do. In other words, the minority can defy – and thwart – the majority. What if 90 workers vote for strike and the minority of 10 turned round and say, “We’re going to work anyway”? That would not be democracy, but scabbing. When we are facing a concentrated social force, imperialist capitalism, it would be suicidal for the revolutionaries to disaggregate their forces and run all over the place.

Of course bureaucratisation is a real danger that no formal allegiance to Marxism can safeguard a party against – as we have seen recently in the SWP. But for all her insight, Luxemburg never discovered the material roots of the bureaucracy. She wrongly placed it in the function of the trade union official, who has to negotiate between workers and the bosses, or in the MP, who similarly has to operate in the bourgeois parliament. This led her to distrust all leaders and see the seeds of bureaucracy in all hierarchical structures.

Lenin, it is true, was late in coming to this problem, but there is a reason for this. The SPD had hundreds, probably thousands of trade union leaders, councillors and parliamentarians in its ranks, who had access to middle class wages and privileges. Even Luxemburg had a servant and she was by no means among the most privileged. The Russian party had no such luxuries, even in exile. But when they came to power, Lenin was among the first to note that privilege and material gain were the bedrock on which bureaucracy could and

would grow unless rooted out.

‘Betwixt and between’

One of the most often quoted parts of Luxemburg’s polemic against Lenin comes immediately after one of her most brilliant insights:

“On the one hand, we have the mass; on the other, its historic goal, located outside of existing society. On one hand we have the day-to-day struggle; on the other, the socialist revolution... It follows that this movement can best advance by tacking betwixt and between the two dangers... One is the loss of its mass character, the other the abandonment of its goal. One is the danger of sinking back to the condition of a sect; the other, the danger of becoming a movement of bourgeois social reform.”

This explains very clearly the inescapable dialectic of revolutionary politics – outside of a directly revolutionary situation. In so-called normal times, when the mass of the workers can sustain themselves through reforms and waging piecemeal trade union struggles, the revolutionary “party” can often be reduced to a relatively few militants (a “sect”). Likewise in a reactionary period, when the workers’ organisations have been shackled or smashed. But by the same token, the party can grow rapidly as these times change and the tempo of the class struggle increases, with the important proviso that it pursues a correct policy.

Thus, the Bolsheviks shrank dramatically during the years of reaction after the 1905-07 revolution, grew rapidly in 1912-14, shrank in the first two years of the first world war, then grew again in 1916-17 as the revolution approached. In fact this was only possible given Lenin’s view – established first in *What Is To Be Done* – of a cadre party.

However, taken further than this, Luxemburg’s advice is dangerous and opens the door to opportunism. From the above quotation Luxemburg goes on to draw the following conclusions:

“Marxist theory offers us a reliable instrument enabling us to recognise and combat typical manifestations of opportunism. But the socialist movement is a mass movement. Its perils are not the product of the insidious machinations of individuals and groups. They arise out of unavoidable social conditions. We cannot secure ourselves in advance against all possibilities of opportunist deviation. Such dangers can be overcome only by the movement itself – certainly

with the aid of Marxist theory, but only after the dangers in question have taken tangible form in practice. Looked at from this angle, opportunism appears to be a product and an inevitable phase of the historic development of the labour movement.”

Once again we see Luxemburg’s tendency to shift onto the historic process and the masses the tasks that should fall to the conscious minority of revolutionaries, via struggles over tactics and strategy, programme and organisational principles.

While it is true that Luxemburg, before Lenin or Trotsky, saw the opportunist currents and the bureaucratic degeneration of the leadership of German Social Democracy (as both later freely acknowledged), and while she mercilessly exposed and criticised it, unlike Lenin this did not find a firm organisational expression. Before the war Luxemburg did not form a coherent and disciplined faction let alone, as some of her biographers have wished, break from the SPD.

Often it is necessary to “swim against the stream”, as Trotsky put it, of the masses’ consciousness. For example, at the outbreak of World War I, the tiny revolutionary forces nevertheless had to oppose the imperialist slaughter – even if this meant losing the support of millions in the Second International. To do otherwise would be to surrender the cause when steadfastness is most needed.

How can we prepare for such occasions? By developing a programme and building a disciplined party of cadres, who understand the meaning of the programme, because they were involved in its creation and trained in its method. And in the end, this is the final proof of who was more right, Luxemburg or Lenin. Luxemburg

found herself isolated in the war and the 1918-19 German revolution saw the young KPD lose nearly all its leaders right at the beginning and make disastrous mistakes as a consequence.

Lenin’s Bolshevik Party certainly made mistakes, but it was able to correct them much earlier through its democratic structures and the training of its members in the Marxist method. The party grew dramatically during the course of 1917, utilising the united front and a system of immediate and transitional demands to expose and split the reformists, centrists and revolutionary peasants. As a result, it led the first – and to date only – successful workers’ revolution.

We believe that was not only due to its programme, but also its superior understanding and application of party building. While Lenin and the Bolsheviks cannot be slavishly copied, all serious revolutionaries must study their approach today. We hope and trust that the participants in the current revolutionary unity discussions will join us in that collective study.

This weakness, which Trotsky shared with Rosa Luxemburg, was to leave to the objective revolutionary processes of history (which of course really exist but not without counter processes or tendencies of a reactionary character) tasks the revolutionary organisation must address. Later when he was defending Rosa Luxemburg against the crude and vulgar attacks of Stalin, who identified the great revolutionary with Menshevism, Trotsky wrote an accurate summary of Luxemburg’s strengths and weaknesses:

“Rosa herself never confined herself to the mere theory of spontaneity... Rosa Luxemburg exerted herself to educate the revolutionary wing of the proletariat in advance and to bring it together organisationally as far as possible. In Poland, she built up a very rigid independent organisation. The most that can be said is that in her historical-philosophical evaluation of the labour movement, the preparatory selection of the vanguard, in comparison with the mass actions that were to be expected, fell too short with Rosa; whereas Lenin – without consoling himself with the miracles of future actions – took the advanced workers and constantly and tirelessly welded them together into firm nuclei, illegally or legally, in the mass organisations or underground, by means of a sharply defined programme.” *Luxemburg and the Fourth International, 1935*



Carnations laid at the spot where Luxemburg was murdered

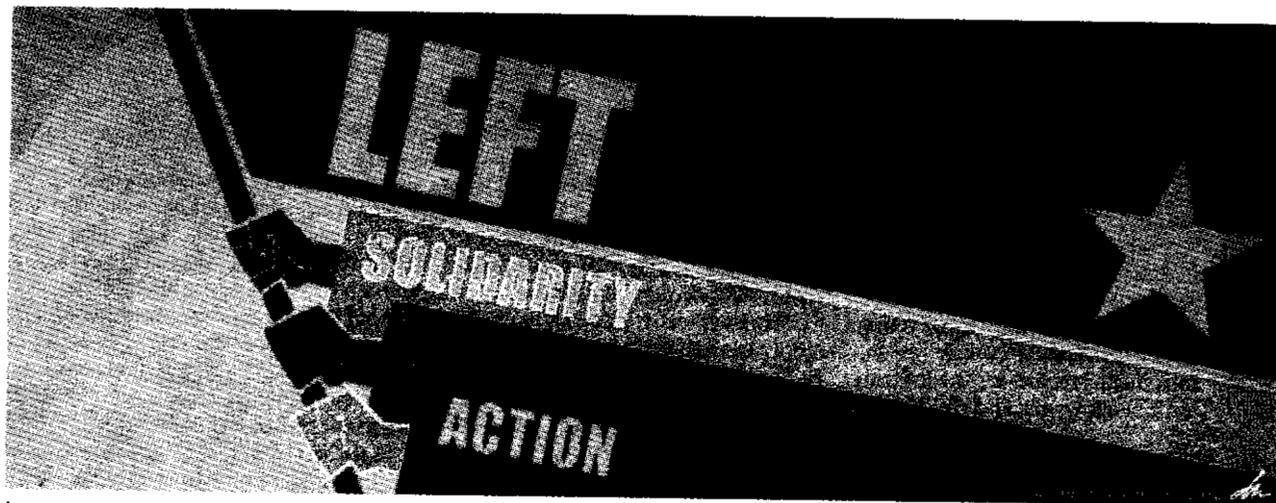
Ducking decisions in Doncaster

By Dave Stockton

FIVE WEEKS after Left Unity's first national conference around 40 delegates attended its first National Coordinating Group (NCG) meeting in Doncaster. Ten had been elected at the national meeting on 11 May whilst the others had been elected to represent the local groups. Clearly there are considerably more groups who were unable to send delegates. Nevertheless holding the meeting in Doncaster allowed for greater representation from the north of England and some were able to make the journey from Scotland and Wales.

It was valuable to hear – in the welcoming speeches from Doncaster Left Unity members and a local firefighter involved in a campaign to keep a local fire station open – the sort of struggles that Left Unity supporters there are engaged in. Indeed it was a shame, in retrospect, that more space was not given to discussing the ways in which the local groups are trying to launch Left Unity in their areas.

Clearly many people are still worried over issues of democracy and transparency in the way LU conducts itself and this once more tended to drive out discussions of political substance. The founding meeting had placed an embargo on the NCG adopting policy. This was adopted on the suggestion of the provisional organising group but now it boomeranged on them with organisational questions occupying delegates' minds and speeches – squeezing items like the Peoples' Assembly to just ten minutes at the end of a four hour meet-



ing.

An extensive debate took place about the role of the ten members of the nationally elected NCG – “the ten”. They had held two meetings to plan the NCG and discuss some other matters, including the production of a four page free sheet to hand out to delegates attending the People's Assembly on 22 June.

Many delegates felt that the national meeting had not empowered them to act as some sort of executive between meetings and the ten duly disavowed any intention of acting so in future. Resolutions from Cambridge and Southwark were passed emphasising that no distinction should be made between “the ten” and the other delegates and then minutes of all meetings should be carried on the LU website.

This leaves the coordination of LU work till the next delegate meeting (whose date was not decided) scattered amongst a series of separate working groups.

Hackney Left Unity proposed a resolution which

stated “The founding conference should discuss and vote on a broad policy statement (such as the East London draft), on democratic structure and membership issues, and on issues relating to ongoing anti-austerity campaigns and the 2014 European elections.” A Workers Power member delegated from Lambeth proposed that such a statement of policy – in fact what should be a limited action programme or manifesto rather than a full programme – could be discussed and adopted at the September meeting and become the basis for defining membership of Left Unity. But this was rejected. The danger now is that the September meeting will be a rally. It is not clear which working groups if any will prepare and organise this.

These roughly the sort of policies we think could be agreed. Left Unity – as an organisation laying the foundations of a new party – cannot continue to remain without policies until it has agreed the complete strategy (programme) that a party needs. It

has agreed to set up a number of policy groups with the idea that these will make proposals to the founding conference envisaged for November.

Workers Power believes however that to complete a whole range of policies let alone a full programme by then will be difficult if not impossible. However in order to recruit and consolidate members and participate as LU in ongoing struggles with a clear and distinct message it needs a more limited platform – a manifesto or action programme – which addresses the burning issues which face us this summer and through the following year. In this period decisive battles will be need to be fought and won if we are to save the welfare state.

As the main planks of such an action programme we suggest:

- Halt the privatisation and destruction of the welfare state – the NHS, public education, social services and pensions – by all means necessary including direct action, occupations, coordi-

nated political strikes.

- Unite the rival anticuts campaigns at a national level and unite the different local campaigns into committees of delegates that can plan and execute effective action. Together we must formulate a programme of action covering the immediate challenges we face.
- Build networks of rank and activists in the unions to fight for democracy and militant policies, with the union leaders if possible but without them if necessary.
- Fight against racism and fascism, join in the physical defence of the Muslim communities, to prevent the EDL and other fascists from taking over our streets. Mobilising the working class movement, especially the membership of the trade unions, the communities under attack in a mass militant rejection of racism in all its forms.
- Fight against sexism, homophobia, exclusion of the disabled people, and support all movements against social oppression and exclusion

- Fight against the capitalist destruction of the environment.
- Oppose all the imperialist wars, interventions and occupations and state repression of civil rights at home in the name of the “war on terror” or of delivering “humanitarian aid”.
- Support the Arab revolutions, the fight of the Palestinians for a state and their refugees to return to their homeland, supports the struggle of youth and workers in Turkey against the authoritarian repressive regime, for democratic rights, the environment,
- Support for Europe-wide actions in solidarity with all those fighting the Austerity programmes of both the EU and the national governments in Greece, Cyprus, Spain, and Eastern European countries like Slovenia and Bulgaria.

A New Left party should aim to unite all these struggles with a struggle by the working class not just to defend the gains made by the labour movement in the past but which fight to put an end to crisis-ravaged capitalism and replace it with a democratically planned, ecologically sustainable, socialist system.

What strategy is necessary to achieve this goal – whether a social revolution or by a process of radical social reform – what kind of government would be needed to enforce them against the resistance of the bosses and the bankers – will have to be democratically debated and discussed by the members of the new party before being embodied in a new programme.

Growing Left Unity from the grassroots

By Paul Silson

This month Ed Miliband announced that he would follow the Con-Dem coalition's lead and vowed to cap spending on welfare.

This statement follows a long list of betrayals and climb-downs by the Labour leader the party will not reverse any austerity cuts, nor will it scrap legislation, such as the shameful bedroom tax.

Labour “New or Blue” is not a party prepared to defend the interests of the working class. This is increasingly obvious to millions of “natural” Labour supporters.

As a result, a huge vacuum

has opened up on the left due to Miliband's lurch to the right and his failure to support any action to defend jobs and services. This gives Left Unity (LU) the opportunity to offer an alternative to austerity. After the first national meeting in London, with over 100 delegates from across the country, expectations are high. There are now more than 8,000 supporters and nearly 100 local LU groups.

Groups need to get involved in local campaigns and become the focus for action against austerity. Each branch has to have open and honest political debate – without this it will be unable to respond to new

issues and events.

Policy and action

The recent killing of a soldier in Woolwich – and the resulting racist and Islamophobic backlash – means LU can't just be a talking shop but has to be a party of action. It was encouraging that LU activists were in the forefront of defending Muslim and Asian communities from attack by the fascist EDL in London, Yorkshire and Manchester. But what is LU policy on British troops in Afghanistan, on immigration or on how to defeat fascism? Action and debate need to resolve these issues over the coming months.

The key is to attract the most militant class fighters and activists. We want an influx of supporters new to politics because it is their enthusiasm and willingness to fight austerity that will help to overcome the legacy of previous failed projects, such as the Socialist Alliance and Respect. If LU can draw in those people disillusioned with Labour and frustrated by the Con-Dem attacks, then a powerful new political force is in the making.

LU should not be limited to the usual suspects on the left, but must be attractive to the mass of the working class.

Every campaign and action against the cuts must be sup-

ported and built for. Building solidarity with local community groups is vital in developing LU into a political party able to provide a real alternative to the charlatans in government.

Southwark LU branch in South London came up with a great idea to highlight the injustice of the bedroom tax and Labour's worthless “apologies”. They are handing in a letter to the Labour Council, demanding they refuse to evict anyone and redesignate all “spare” bedrooms as studies or living rooms. The branch is leafletting local estates and will invite press to a protest nipping on the pressure to make

refusal harder.

The fightback against the bedroom tax presents LU with the opportunity to make a significant impact on local and national politics. LU needs to make Duncan Smith's hated tax the focus of a nationwide campaign, similar to the mass movement against Margaret Thatcher's poll tax.

This is just one example. Branches can and should come up with many others. If LU can draw thousands of working class activists into a process of developing a strategy for fighting cuts on every front, then it will grow as it becomes a force for shaping struggles – and winning them.

Ed Miliband, shame on you for turning blue

By Jeremy Dewar

LABOUR LEADER Ed Miliband has started to show his true colours, setting out what he would – and crucially would not – do if elected in 2015.

Blue Labour is the name of a new influential tendency inside the Labour party, based on the ideas of Lord Glasman and Jonathan Rutherford. It has already captured the ears of Labour's front bench, including Marc Stears, personal advisor to Ed Miliband and Jon Cruddas, Labour's policy review coordinator. Miliband has praised Blue Labour's "political energy and intellectual confidence".

But this hasn't been without controversy. The party faction first came to light in 2011 when its guru, Baron Maurice Glasman said: "Labour lied about immigration and should recognise that it is not the case that everyone who comes to Britain should have equal status with people who were born here... Labour needs to involve people who support the English Defence League within the party as a way of reconnecting with working-class people."

Glasman later apologised, but without withdrawing his proposed zero immigration policy, which is to the right of the Tories.

Recent policy statements have been inspired by Blue Labour concepts:

- Capping welfare spending for three years, hitting pensioners hardest
- Raising the threshold for the higher contributions-based Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) from two years in work to five years, hitting women, youth, black and Asian workers, who rely more on casual, part-time jobs
- Introducing compulsory workfare schemes for under-25s after six months on the dole, and for the rest of us – including mothers of young children – after two years
- Introducing means-testing for winter fuel allowance and child benefit
- Toughening up work capability testing

Miliband claims this can be done by still "putting decent values at the heart of the system". So what are these values?

What is Blue Labour?

Blue Labour was launched in 2009, with the central tenet that Labour must win back working class support by positioning itself as a party of "social conservatism", in place of equality and internationalism. Labour apparently needs to ditch all this left wing nonsense and pander to the right.

For Lord Glasman, egalitarianism is the root cause of working class "dependency" on the welfare state. The achievements of the 1945 Labour

government, recently celebrated in Ken Loach's film "The Spirit of '45", were, according to this version of events, a wrong turn. If this sounds like rehashed Tory propaganda, maybe the clue is in the colour blue.

Instead, he says that decentralised public services should be staffed by volunteers and delivered according to people's ability to pay for them. So Lambeth, a flagship Blue Labour authority, is introducing a "co-op" library service, staffed by volunteers and putting ninety jobs at risk. In Newham, Blue Labour champion Sir Robin Wales has gone further, fast-tracking people in work ahead of unemployed families on the housing waiting list, arguing that it is "not acceptable that generations of people live on welfare".

Blue Labour thus looks suspiciously similar to David Cameron's "Big Society", with its union-bashing, its "democratic" camouflage for job and service cuts and George Osborne's divisive "strivers versus skivers" rhetoric. Glasman replies that Blue Labour also attacks the market.

But Blue Labour's solution is to tweak the market. Employers will receive a taxpayers' subsidy if they pay the living wage, rather than the minimum wage; local authorities will get powers to "negotiate down" rents, through council tax breaks to landlords of housing benefit claimants.

Family, faith and the flag

Blue Labour sums up its message in the slogan: "family, faith and the flag". Despite its rhetoric about reconnecting with working class voters, it is a thoroughly right wing, populist message.

Glasman claims Blue Labour is "a contemporary form of feminism" and "addresses problems with men: lack of maturity, faithfulness, responsibility", while "people [i.e. mostly women] who look after their parents... care for their children, that is to be conceptualised as 'putting in'."

This is not women's liberation; it is the state straightjacketing women into being faithful wives, dutiful daughters and caring mothers.

Even more reactionary is the notion of faith. Any attempts to give religion a greater say in education, healthcare or welfare will allow bigots to define who is deserving and who is not, what roles and rights are suitable for women, LGBT people and children.

Marc Stears, Miliband's speechwriter, has called for a "left patriotism". But what can this mean? "British jobs for British workers", a slogan that has led to strikes to demand the sacking of migrant workers? Support for military adventures, like those in Iraq and Afghanistan?

Blue Labour's populist twist on "New Labour", far from turning the

party towards the real needs of working class voters, simply reinforces the propaganda of the Tories and the tabloids, whipping up fear and hatred of migrant workers, the unemployed, and anyone with an alternative lifestyle.

Union leaders

Unfortunately the union barons, desperate to return "their" leaders to power, are fawning courtiers in the sycophantic charade that passes for party democracy. Unite general secretary Len McCluskey, promoted by some on the left like the Socialist Party and Counterfire, commented after Miliband's JSA rethink, "If Ed Miliband continues in this vein, he will win working people back to Labour... working with the unions, as well as employers, we can bring these policies to life."

Fake lefts like McCluskey will simply roll over when the Labour leadership tells them to.

Instead, we need to demand the union leaders stop bankrolling Labour unless and until the party adopts pro-working class policies: reverse all the cuts; nationalise the banks' assets; tax the rich.

At the same time, we should be under no illusion that Labour can be captured by the left. We need to break the unions from their slavish adhesion to Labour and to building a new workers' party.

UKIP pushes British politics to the right

By Andy Yorke

Desperation is fuelling anti-immigrant sentiments and the right, warns Andy Yorke

The right-wing United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) stood in a record number of wards in the May county council elections and polled 23 per cent on average across them, gaining 139 councillors compared to 13 per cent and one councillor in 2012. Hundreds more came in second place, splitting the Tory vote and losing it control of three councils.

Surveys since the election indicate up to 21 per cent of voters nationally supporting UKIP. A ComRes poll at the end of May even put UKIP first in voters' intentions in next year's European elections. Although a more recent Guardian poll suggested this had slipped to 12 per cent, the same research found that the party was taking voters away from Labour, not just the Tories.

This breakthrough for this anti-immigrant, anti-Europe, anti-Muslim party was quickly followed by the killing of a soldier in Woolwich by Islamists and a resurgence of the English Defence League (EDL). EDL leader Tommy Robinson endorsed UKIP's stance on Islam and Europe in April, adding: "They are saying exactly what we say, just in a differ-



Ukip leader Nigel Farage plays the populist card

ent way. I officially back UKIP and I would vote for UKIP."

Racist lies

With a 40 per cent approval rating, UKIP's grinning Nigel Farage is now probably the most popular leader of any political party. His attacks on the political establishment and chain-smoking, pint-holding public image are coupled to populist appeals: "It's

about mass immigration at a time when 21 per cent of young people can't find work. It's about giving £50 million a day to the EU when the public finances are under great strain."

UKIP connects Europe to immigration for workers, to "red tape and green fines" for small businessmen, and to higher taxes for everyone – the same reason it gives for cutting the

foreign aid budget.

But the further away from the cameras you go, the nastier and nuttier it gets. One local UKIP leaflet claimed that British people faced a similar "extinction" from immigration to Native Americans, while another stated that the lifting of immigration limits from new European Union (EU) countries in 2014 would "allow 29 million Bulgarians and Romanians to come to the UK" – that being the sum of both countries' populations!

EDL-supporting UKIP Councillor for Stourport Eric Kitson was forced to resign days after being elected, after Facebook rants calling for Muslim women to be hanged, the repatriation of immigrants (a BNP policy) and an anti-Semitic conspiracy theory that Jews controlled Adolf Hitler.

UKIP's populist policies include increased defence spending, more prisons, a freeze on immigration and fewer rights for migrant workers. But their manifesto also advocates raising Value Added Tax (VAT) to fund scrapping employers' National Insurance contributions, speeding up the privatisation of the National Health Service (NHS) and a flat-rate tax of 31 per cent for everyone from the poorest to the richest. If you liked the poll tax you'll love UKIP! No wonder free-marketeer Farage calls the Tories a "Social Democratic" party.

But while the wealthy former commodities trader Farage poses as an anti-establishment figure, he has the backing of several millionaire Tory donors, most of them City bankers and businessmen, and he prepared for the May elections by touring the tax havens of Monaco, Switzerland and the Channel Islands to consult rich donors. The party's new offices in swanky Mayfair underline its search for respectability.

Gunning for Labour

Aiming to win urban, white workers on Europe and immigration, Farage now wants to "turn the guns on Labour". A recent poll showed the proportion of voters defecting from Labour to UKIP rising from 2 per cent to 13 per cent.

Labour's response has been to chase UKIP and the Tories rightward, with a proposed list of benefit cuts (especially for migrants), and Miliband's "One Nation" rhetoric and Blue Labour policies.

Against this trade unions and the left must torpedo UKIP's anti-working class policies, expose its wealthy establishment backers and reject its xenophobia and racism. The only way to draw poor workers duped into following the Farage mirage is a mass movement against austerity that unites with workers across Europe to fight for a socialist united states of Europe.

US: Fast Food Forward!

By KD Tait

Since April, US fast food workers campaigning for better wages and the right to join a union have shut down hundreds of restaurants in one-day strikes across five cities. These low paid workers, many earning state minimum wages as low as \$7.25 (£4.26) an hour are demanding a wage increase to \$15 an hour and the right to set up unions without reprisal. So far, hundreds of McDonald's, Burger King and Wendy's franchises have been hit by walk-outs in New York, Detroit, St Louis, Chicago and Milwaukee. The strikes follow on the heels of a strike by hundreds of fast food workers in New York last November during a unionisation drive by the Fast Food Workers Committee. In the same month retail giant Walmart was hit by hundreds of strikes at stores in 46 states.

Exploitation

In an industry traditionally dominated by high turnover and part time and temporary jobs, the difficulty in building viable trade union organisation has left bosses free to rake in huge profits by paying poverty wages. US Fast food workers earned a national average \$9.05 in March – after a below-inflation increase of just 2.7% in three years. The only group that earns a lower hourly rate in the US is farm workers.

Contrast that with the wages

of McDonald's CEO who earns almost 1,333 times what his average restaurant employee makes.

Can't Survive on \$7.25 is the name of one of the campaigns, referencing the New York state minimum wage – a wage that tells the employee 'if we could pay you less, we would'. This wouldn't be a living wage anywhere in the USA.

While low wages form the basis of the industry's record profits, bosses are always looking for new ways to get more for less from their workers.

84 per cent of New York fast food workers are victims of wage theft, according to activist group Fast Food Forward.

From working overtime without getting time and a half, to being denied pay during breaks, to not being paid for the time spent reckoning up the till before and after shift, a whole array of infringements rob the worker of up to 15 per cent of their annual wage.

The latest scheme involves rearranging shift patterns to fall below the 30 hours threshold which would require employers to pay health insurance for their employees, due to come into effect in January 2014.

This is money which is sunk straight into fat cat pay or the billions doled out in dividends to parasite shareholders.

Why now?

The recession has created the

rise of a section of fast food workers who are supporting families or trapped with unaffordable rents – the so called precariat.

The ranks of the 3.8 million fast food workers have swelled by 11.5 per cent since February 2010 – twice the rate of all private employees, this shows that such jobs are often the only option for workers in a country with a pitiful welfare safety net.

In Wisconsin, a fast food worker on a 40-hour week would earn more than \$400 under the state poverty line.

However these "precarious" workers are not, as some claim, a "new class" but a part of the working class, and one whose struggles can inspire other sections of workers to organise and take action.

Building a union

The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) has lent material support and organisers to the campaigns; this active solidarity is vital to demonstrating the power that collective organisation can deliver.

In an industry where trade union activity is summarily punished with arbitrary sackings or reduced shifts, winning the right to unionise is the sole guarantee that any wage increase will be maintained.

Where next?

In New York City, more than half of the 70 restaurants hit

by strike action have raised wages. But the franchise nature of the industry means winning sustainable collective bargaining rights across chains will be a difficult task.

To achieve longer term more permanent gains – a significant reduction of hours with no loss of pay, permanent contracts, a minimum wage a worker can live on in every state, union rights and recog-

inition in the workplace will be a harder struggle. It requires democratic unions where the rank and file exercise real control and initiative. They will need active support from the communities workers come from, plus solidarity from other sectors of workers and students too.

With echoes of the 'Leagues for the Eight Hour Day' which mushroomed across the USA

more than 100 years ago, the spread of 'Can't Survive...' networks has the potential to organise common action amongst one of the largest sections of the modern working class. Around the world the growth of these precarious jobs has created similar layers of workers. They can take enormous inspiration from their sisters and brothers in the USA.

Civil service cuts

By Rebecca Anderson

The Public and Commercial Services Union has been taking strike action against pay cuts and freezes, attacks on their pensions and terms and conditions and against privatisation since the Tories took power.

They, along with the University and College Union initiated the two million strong 30 November strike in 2011 but since the pension strikes ended PCS has been fighting alone. At their recent conference delegates decided to "carry out an extensive consultation with reps and members on the next phase of the programme of industrial action and the tactics to employ."

Some alternatives were posed; one motion said that during the pension strike PCS should not have stood by whilst the TUC refused to lead and co-ordinate the action and should have offered alternative leadership.

In the current situation this would mean PCS breaking bureaucratic etiquette and publically calling on other unions to take action with them to fight the cuts, up to and including a general strike.

Another idea was that PCS should set up a strike fund to enable it to target action in the parts of the civil service that could cause the most disruption and have the most impact, and enable these strikes to be serious and long-term by paying the members out of the strike fund (paid selective action). These are both great ideas that should be raised in the consultation process and agreed by the National Executive Committee at its September meeting.

Other proposals should include taking on the threat of privatisation by working with other organisations to create campaigns that raise aware-

ness of the issues and collecting funds to launch serious strike action.

Privatising the entire justice system is an ideologically bold move by the Tory government and could easily backfire if PCS can both build the necessary campaign and use it to raise enough money for an all-out, indefinite strike of members working in that department. The recent strikes and protests by lawyers over the proposed cuts to Legal Aid shows that there are allies we can work with to save our services.

A general strike would be the most effective response to cuts and privatisation – such a strike could bring down this government – but trade unionists can't wait for that to happen and need to fight every battle as it comes.

If we wait for the TUC to call a general strike then we will still be waiting when the whole public sector and welfare state has been decimated. But winning victories in key struggles will show union and non-union workers that determined industrial action gets results.

Alongside this we need to be publically campaigning for the TUC to call a general strike and that means making that campaign public and critical of the TUC for their cowardice.

The current round of PCS strikes – focussed mostly on the issue of pay – were to start with a one-day all-civil servant strike, then move to strike action by each individual department and then finish with a further one-day strike. This final strike has been called off and replaced with protests, despite the conference agreeing that the NEC should "call national action involving all balloted members at the end of June." Although that may be because the leadership understands that PCS members are

tired of one-day protest strikes, it is weaker to call off a strike than to go ahead with one that might win less support than previous action. We need to resist this by passing motions in any Branch Executive Committee meetings being held before end of June demanding that the strike is reinstated. This climb-down by the National Executive Committee, along with their conference motion calling for the mass consultation, clearly demonstrates the disarray in the union leadership.

Reps and activists need to seriously consider what strategy they think can lead to victory. We shouldn't start from the question of what is possible, we should start by asking ourselves what we need to do to win and then work backwards from there. One-day protest strikes are not enough, we all know that, and neither are half-day walkouts.

Let's propose to the NEC that we take the fight to the other union leaders and to the TUC and not ask but demand that they co-ordinate with us.

Let's propose that we start to seriously raise funds for our key battles with the employer and come up with a plan of paid selective action and even department-wide paid action alongside the all-member protest strikes.

Let's agree a plan that we really believe can win and then let's use our seriousness and enthusiasm to convince every PCS member (and non-member) that if we stick together then we can stop the cuts and privatisation.

To organise our response to the consultation, reps and activists who want to see a radical change in our industrial strategy need to talk to each other and co-ordinate together. There has never been a more pressing time to build a rank and file organisation in PCS.



Striking a light in the East End

In 1888 the women Matchworkers' strike lit the fire of the New Unionism. Joy Macready examines the strike's origins and the lessons for today's precarious workers

"BORN IN SLUMS, driven to work while still children, undersized because underfed, oppressed because helpless, flung aside as soon as worked out, who cares if they die or go on to the streets..."

These words could be used to describe the miserable living and labour conditions for workers, mainly young women, in sweatshop factories operating in special economic zones across the world, from Mexico and Jordan to Bangladesh and China.

But this description was written in 1888 by Fabian activist Annie Besant in her weekly paper, *The Link: A Journal for the Servants of Man*, exposing the terrible working conditions of the matchworkers in the sweatshops of London's East End.

In an article published on 23 June 1888, entitled *White slavery in London*, Besant continued: "The hour for commencing work is 6.30 in summer and 8 in winter; work concludes at 6 p.m. Half-an-hour is allowed for breakfast and an hour for dinner. This long day of work is performed by young girls, who have to stand the whole of the time. A typical case is that of a girl of 16, a piece-worker; she earns 4s. [20p] a week and lives with a sister..."

Not only were these workers paid a pittance, but the owners of the factory, Bryant & May, also docked their pay for the slightest of trifles, such as talking, going to the toilet, dropping matches and being late. All the while the company's shareholders were receiving a dividend of up to 25 per cent.

Exposure to white phosphorus was the worst aspect of the job. Poor ventilation made the phosphorus fumes lethal, and 'phossy jaw', a form of bone cancer, ran rife. The first signs of exposure were toothache and swelling of the face, then the gums and cheeks developed putrid abscesses. The matchwomen went to great lengths to hide their symptoms because they would be immediately dismissed as a result.

Spark that lit the strike

At the time of the strike, owners Francis May and William Bryant (both Quakers) were at a peak of status and influence. Besant's article forced them to defend their reputation by threatening to sue her for libel. In order to refute the allegations, factory foremen tried to force the matchwomen to sign a paper to prove that their conditions were fair. When a group of women refused to sign, three workers – considered the ringleaders – were sacked. The response was immediate and the vast majority of workers walked out. On 2 July 1888 these unskilled, unorganised, poverty-stricken women, went on strike.

They didn't leave the factory grounds, but waited at the gates for workers from the other sites to come out, told them what had happened and persuaded them not to go back after the lunch break. More than 1,500 matchworkers went on all-out indefinite strike. Their lively and well-attended picket line was in action by 8 a.m. on the second day of the strike. In addition, they elected a strike committee.

A mass meeting was held at the factory gates and 1,100 took to the streets in Bow



The Bryant & May Matchworkers Strike Committee, including Annie Besant

By 6 July the whole factory was lying idle and management was threatening to draft in workers from their Glasgow factory. Lewis Lyons, a militant activist in the tailoring trade, came down to the factory, attempted to address the crowd and was arrested for obstruction. The matchwomen surrounded the arresting officers and marched in solidarity to the police station, where a mass meeting was held.

On 7 July 100 workers went to Besant's Fleet Street office to ask for support. Two days later there were two mass meetings, one at Mile End Waste and the other in Regent's Park, the latter passing Besant's resolution to boycott Bryant & May. On 11 July more than 50 matchwomen marched on parliament.

Donations flooded in for the strike fund. In her new book, *Striking a Light*, Louise Raw dispels the popular myth that Besant was the leading force in the match strike, but she does acknowledge the role played by Besant, and fellow Fabians and socialists, such as George Bernard Shaw, Sidney Webb, Tom Mann and Herbert Burrows, in appealing for donations, effectively providing the material basis for the strike to continue.

Fourteen days into the strike, management caved in: all fines and most deductions would be abolished; petty deductions were abolished; 3d. was restored to the packers' pay; there would be no victimisation; and the firm would recognise the union.

On 27 July 1888, the inaugural meeting of the Union of Women Match Makers was held. Besant was elected the first secretary. By the end of the year, it became the Matchmakers Union, open to men and women, and the following year sent its first delegate to the Trade Union Congress. Although the Matchmakers' Union only existed until 1903, the action taken in 1888 had both immediate and long-term reverberations.

It is easy to see how those women provided inspiration for a new type of trade unionism. They were young, loud

and unwavering in their solidarity and support for each other. They forced Bryant & May to climb down – they won!

New Unionism

Up until the late 1880s, trade unions were mainly craft-based and only organised skilled labourers, or labour "aristocrats". With the industrialisation of Britain bringing thousands of semi-skilled and unskilled workers into mass production, Mann argued that the trade union movement needed to become far more open and inclusive. "New unionism" reached out to the many unskilled workers who lacked union representation.

The matchwomen were an example to all the other unskilled labourers that, if they stood united in withdrawing their labour, they too could improve their conditions and stand up to abuse. As news of their victory spread, the dockers – thought unorganisable because of the casual nature of their work – contacted the Union of Women Matchmakers to ask for advice on setting up their own organisation. And the next year saw the Great Dock Strike, as well as boilermakers, cotton workers, ironworkers, miners and a number of other industrial disputes.

The Great Dock Strike started on 14 August 1889; dockers unloading cargo on South-West India docks walked off the job when a supervisor refused to pay the extra owed to them. On 21 August 100,000 supporters demonstrated in Hyde Park, with seven bands playing the 'Marseillaise', demonstrating their revolutionary feelings.

The next day saw 37,000 workers on strike, brought out by 15,000 flying pickets; by the 25 August there was more than 130,000 strikers, including stevedores, ship-painters, carpenters and biscuit and jam factory workers. The dockers organised almost daily marches through the streets, collecting money to sustain their fight. Australian dockers sent a £30,000 donation.

The dockers returned to work on 16

September having won all their demands. Other workers took up the drive to build unions and win better conditions. In November Eleanor Marx was involved in the fight of women workers in East London's rubber industry, with thousands striking and demonstrating. There were major strikes in Cardiff, Bristol, Wolverhampton, Sheffield, Manchester, Halifax, Hull and Tyneside. In Leeds thousands of gas workers joined the union and won an eight-hour day.

The strike wave of 1888-89 led to a massive May Day demonstration in London in 1890. In 1892, Friedrich Engels wrote: "That immense haunt of human misery [the East End] is no longer the stagnant pool it was six years ago. It has shaken off its torpid despair, it has returned to life, and has become the home of what is called the 'New Unionism', that is to say, of the organisation of the great mass of 'unskilled' workers."

Engels championed the break from 'old unionism', which accepted the wage system and effectively the rule of the bourgeoisie: "The New Unions were founded at a time when the faith of the eternity of the wages system was severely shaken; their founders and promoters were socialists either consciously or by feeling; the masses, whose adherence gave them strength, were rough, neglected, looked down upon by the working class aristocracy; but they had this immense advantage, that their minds were virgin soil, entirely free from the inherited 'respectable' bourgeois prejudices which hampered the brains of the better situated 'old' Unionists."

Lessons for today

A similar process of industrialisation that happened in Britain in the 1800s is happening across the developing world, pulling millions from the countryside into mass production. These new workers, the vast majority young women, are rising in revolt against their terrible conditions. New trade union organisations are burgeoning in sweatshop zones to fight against workers being used up and disposed of when their bodies are broken from overwork and underpay, while multinational companies are reaping super-profits.

Similar to the matchwomen, the level of solidarity is inspiring – when more than 1,000 Bangladeshi workers were killed as their factory collapsed, tens of thousands of garment workers came out on strike across the country. Workers around the world protested against this tragedy and raised money to help the workers' families.

This new wave of trade unionism is also of great importance in Britain and the US where there has been a massive regression from unionised, well-paid jobs to poorly paid, precarious working, again often involving women and young workers. It is the urgent duty of socialists and rank and file militants in the unions (like the Unite community branches) to help these workers to launch a wave of action (like the recent strike wave at US fast food chains) similar to the "new unionism" wave in 1888-91.

The long shadow of the Anti-Nazi League

By Peter Main

THE ANL was first founded in 1977 in the aftermath of the "Battle of Lewisham" that marked the high point of a series of increasingly violent clashes between the National Front and anti-fascist groups, the largest of which was the Socialist Workers Party.

The National Front, which was itself a coalition of extreme right wing groups, had adopted a dual strategy. Publicly, it was committed to electioneering but, behind that screen, it was also organising its street fighters, the cells of future "stormtroopers" who would be turned on the left and immigrant organisations.

For the Front, the holding of marches was a central tactic, designed to show its popular support, to provide an opportunity to exercise these gangs as "stewards" or "guards of honour", and to attract new recruits to their ranks.

The Left Reacts

On the left, opinion was divided over how to respond, particularly when the Front began to make progress electorally under the Labour Government after 1974. The "soft left" argued for peaceful counter-demonstrations, peace vigils and, if necessary, for state bans on particularly provocative marches. Learning from the 1930s, and emphasising the centrality of street politics in the development of fascist parties, the "hard left", including centrally the SWP, adopted the slogan "No Platform for Fascists" and focused on mass mobilisations to physically prevent the fascists from assembling or marching anywhere.

The year before Lewisham, first in Bradford and then in April 1977 in Wood Green, North London, the mobilisations to prevent National Front marches, despite their protection by the police, came close to success. Although marches were held, they were repeatedly attacked and injuries inflicted – not least because the anti-fascists succeeded in mobilising local youth who knew the terrain and had their own reasons to attack both racists and the police.

As soon as the Lewisham march was announced, it was clear that it would be bigger than any previous confrontation. The leaders of the Front knew they had to put on a big display to keep up morale. They chose Lewisham because it had a big African-Caribbean population and had also been at the centre of a racist police campaign against local youth. For weeks there was a public debate in the media about just how violent the day would be, whether the Front's march should be banned or the counter-demonstration, or all demonstrations.

At the same time, both local community organisations and anti-fascist groups cooperated in planning how to stop the fascists and, all credit to them, the SWP were central to this planning. On the day, that preparation paid off. The Front's march was hit almost immediately by a well-planned attack and then, when the police ensured that they could reassemble, the anti-fascists were able to get ahead and occupy the centre of Lewisham. Even more importantly, it ensured the involvement of the local community and the youth who, it was generally agreed, inflicted even more damage on both fascists and police.

"People wanted to march ... but they just wouldn't line up behind a Socialist Workers Party banner. Eventually, we found the IMG with a banner for some united campaign against racism and fascism. People agreed to group behind that"



The police were unable to hold back the antifascists in Lewisham in 1977

The ANL is born

Despite the success at Lewisham, the SWP realised it had revealed a problem; the scale of the anti-fascist mobilisations had now reached a point where it required something bigger, organisationally, than they could provide. Until then, the SWP had essentially pursued its own policy, mobilising through its branches and periphery on the basis of, there was often a degree of cooperation with other groups, but the SWP basically went its own way and was not interested in participating in any broader united front.

Peter Alexander, one of those involved in the SWP's planning for Lewisham, realised the limitations of this on the day: "The fascinating thing was that people wanted to march ... but they just wouldn't line up behind a Socialist Workers Party banner. You could see it ... Eventually, we found some members of some other group like the IMG with a banner for some united campaign against racism and fascism. People agreed to group behind that. It taught me a lesson for later – many people would support a united campaign, they didn't all want just to line up behind the SWP."



In other words, Lewisham made clear that there were thousands of opponents of the National Front who were prepared to get out on the streets to stop them marching – but, for whatever reasons, were not prepared to identify with the SWP. Alexander's solution on the day, grab another banner with an anti-racist slogan for them to march behind, was, basically, an ad hoc version of a united front to impose "No Platform for Fascists!" What was needed to build on the advances made at Lewisham was to give that temporary arrangement an organisational form.

However, having recognised the problem, that was not the solution that the SWP adopted. Instead, under the pressure of a barrage of condemnation as "Red Fascists" not only from the press but also from within the Labour Party, and facing the prospect of an even bigger con-

frontation because the National Front had announced a march in Manchester, the SWP changed course. Paul Holborow, its East London organiser, met with Peter Hain, who had just left the Liberal Party to join Labour, and Ernie Roberts, deputy general secretary of the engineering union, AUEW, to discuss the formation of a broader campaign.

It was from this that the Anti-Nazi League was formed. Crucially, it was not based on the policy of "No Platform for Fascists" but one of separate demonstrations, campaigns and carnivals. In *Socialist Review* Alex Callinicos, its editor, explained that the purpose of the ANL was to try to find a response "among the many thousands of people who hated the Nazis but disapproved of the Socialist Workers Party's strategy of physically confronting them on the streets."

From then on, the focus was no longer on explaining why the National Front was not just another right wing party and why it was necessary to take extraordinary measures to stop it growing. Now, the task was to maximise the audiences at carnivals and concerts that promoted a more respectable "anti-racist, anti-fascist" mes-

sage. Unlike "No Platform", this was a message that the Labour Party, the Communist Party, trade union leaders and celebrities were willing to endorse wholeheartedly. In effect, the SWP adopted the reformists' political strategy but brought to it not only their own reputation as the organisers of Lewisham but also the verve and creativity of an entire generation, symbolised by Rock Against Racism, that was previously far beyond the reformists' reach.

United Front of a Special Type

This decision initiated what became a key feature of the SWP's politics. While building the ANL as the main vehicle for its anti-fascist work, it did not itself drop the "No Platform" position. In fact, many of its members remained committed to it and the leadership had to agree to the forma-

tion of "squads" to undertake this work. However, within the broader movement, the SWP now argued against the need for united action to prevent the Front from marching. In effect, the analysis of fascism, and the tactics that flowed from that analysis, became a kind of private belief of revolutionaries – but not a guide to action for the masses.

In short, this was the original outing for the "united front of a special type" which was later theorised by Callinicos. As opposed to the Lenin's imperative to "march separately, but strike together" in relation to forming a united front with the Cadets against the proto-fascist Black Hundreds, the SWP leadership dropped all criticism of its united front partners.

Within the SWP, those who opposed this turn became more isolated and many made the mistake of thinking that clandestine organisation to disrupt fascist activity was the "real answer", forgetting that it was the development of working class organisations, not only to prevent fascist marches but to fight against the conditions that allowed fascism to breed, that was the political priority. In the end, the leadership condemned this "squadism" and most of its supporters left the SWP either to join the National Front as well. It did not disappear – in fact it held a march in London on the same weekend as the first Anti-Nazi carnival – but it was increasingly difficult to mobilise beyond its hard core membership and many of them were now disillusioned with "electoralism" and were decamping to the more openly fascist British Movement. In the general election of 1979, its vote amounted to just 1.3 per cent.

In contrast to the visible decline of the National Front, the Anti-Nazi League, in terms of numbers attending events as well as less glamorous details such as affiliations from trade union branches, went from strength to strength. This has led many to assume that it was the growth of the ANL that led to the decline of the NF when, in fact, it was already disintegrating under the impact of the earlier confrontations. By 1981, the rationale for the ANL had disappeared as the attacks of the Thatcher government mounted and the SWP simply wound it up.

The SWP leadership drew the conclusion that it had found the formula for success; while retaining its own membership organisation, based on its established politics, it could reach far bigger audiences by making alliances with organisations to its right and by accommodating to their politics. Given the commitment and discipline of its own members, it could then not only build a bigger movement but also recruit to itself from that movement. This has been the logic behind one campaign after another – the resurrected ANL of 1992 and its subsequent merger into Unite Against Fascism, the Stop the War Coalition, Respect, all share the same logic and purpose.

In all of them, the contradiction between the SWP's professed revolutionary politics and its willingness to promote much less than revolutionary campaigns has generated not only increasing distrust from other activists but also the internal divisions that have caused its own present crisis.

Workers power 5

People's Assembly: our best chance for unity

THE 22 JUNE People's Assembly, with its trade union backing and its 3,000 registered participants, presents the most serious – and the last – opportunity to unite the anti-cuts struggles within a single, democratic federation of groups and campaigns.

This is no easy task, and it is certainly not the intention of the Assembly's principal organisers and backers. The danger is that it will just be another top-down rally with no follow through.

Seize the day

Excellent though it is to have so many people attending, and inspiring though the handful of preparatory assemblies were, the Assembly's ability to act as a strategic forum is hamstrung by the fact that people are not attending as delegates armed with a mandate to vote on policy, the only way it could be confident of issuing an authoritative call for action.

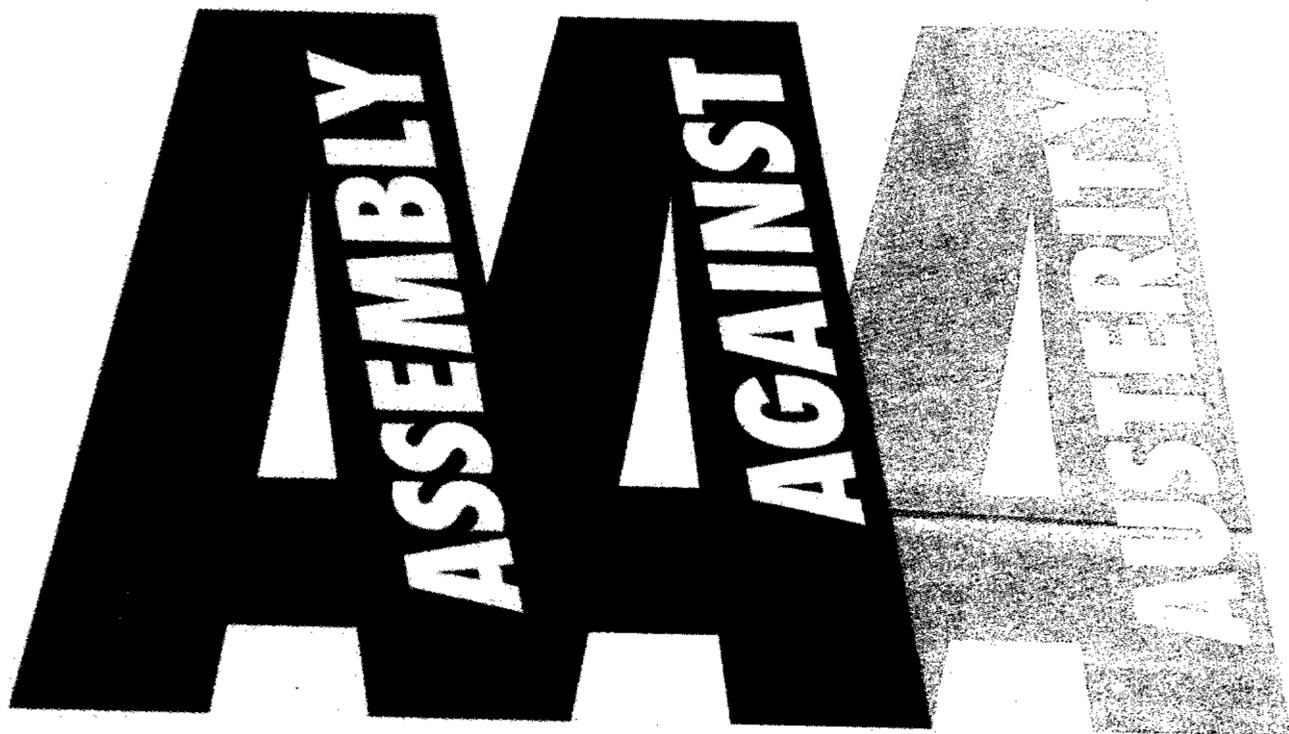
Nevertheless, there is no more time to organise another Assembly on this scale; we must seize this opportunity with both hands. Against those who say the Assembly does not have the authority to order action we say "then let us appeal, let us organise – get behind us or get out of the way."

This is important because debate without action is futile. Passing resolutions with no desire to act is not only pointless, it's a criminal waste of an opportunity.

Fight to win

It is urgent that the People's Assembly recognise both the historic nature of the attack mounted by the Tory and Liberal Democrat government against the welfare state, and the critical conjuncture 2013 represents in the government's plans.

Like Thatcher's attacks on jobs in the nationalised industries, on social housing and on trade union rights, Cameron and Clegg aim not only to destroy the reforms wrung from capitalism by generations of working people, but to render the trade unions yet more



powerless and smash their remaining strongholds in the public sector.

We should not be complaining about this ruthless prosecution of class war but replying to it blow for blow. As a political attack by the whole capitalist class, it requires a response by the whole working class – and all its progressive allies – that is both industrial in its main sphere of action and political in its aim.

And this aim can be nothing other than driving this gang of parasites from power. In short it requires a general strike. Defending the National Health Service (NHS) alone against break up and private plundering would justify this in the eyes of millions. Similar vandalism is underway in social housing, comprehensive education, access to higher education, social security benefits, pensions, access to culture and recreation and so on.

Don't repeat mistakes

But so far the response, though it reached a highpoint in 2010-11, has lacked any focused leadership or initiative. Our forces have been divided, both locally and nationally.

The Labour Party leadership has not fought to rally its members against the Tory-Lib Dem offensive. Instead it triangulates between half-hearted parliamentary criticism and budget cutting and wage freezing policies of its own. To "wait for Labour" in 2015 is to accept in advance a historic defeat on the scale of the 1980s.

The trade unions' policy of "coordinated action", linking separate sectional disputes via single days of action many months apart, has failed miserably. So too has the calling of mass demonstrations with no tomorrow, without a perspective of rapidly escalated and expanded action.

The competing coalitions of campaigns set up by groups to the left of Labour have not found a solution either. These coalitions should unite and dissolve into a common movement at this People's Assembly.

Nor have the purely local or sectoral campaigns done so, magnificent as many of their actions have been. They have not yet been able to draw together everyone yearning to save our public services into a single mighty force and

unleash it on the wreckers in power.

Democracy in action

The great opportunity of the People's Assembly is to unite the resistance both locally and nationally not just in words but also in deeds. The local people's assemblies attended by hundreds of activists that preceded 22 June are a step in the right direction. They must continue after it to spread to every town and city over the summer, and be repeated in the autumn to discuss the implementation of any decisions.

They will however only generate a permanent and growing mass movement if they elect action committees or councils democratically chosen by the union branches, the campaigns, the political and community organisations, and the individuals drawn to them.

We need a national focus for action, and last year's Trades Union Congress (TUC) decision – hesitant as it was – indicates what this must be: a general strike accompanied by all manner of direct action to demand an end to the cuts, to unemployment, to wage freezing, and to defend public services, centrally the NHS. The

the unions supporting the Assembly – escalating to all-out action

- A recalled conference of delegates from the local people's assemblies, trade unions etc, soon after the day of action to plan all-out action

Keep up the pressure

Taken in isolation, this won't be enough to stop the austerity juggernaut. If the People's Assembly is unwilling, or incapable, of adopting the necessary measures, then we will find ourselves at a dead end. If we wait for some indeterminate time in 2014 to agree a plan of action, we will be weaker for the delay, not stronger.

The trade union leaders – whose current capacity for resistance leaves much to be desired – will say "don't rock the boat – wait for Labour". But while union bigwigs wait for Labour, for tens of millions of working class people it will be far too late.

Between now and Election Day the coalition will go all-out to create austerity's facts on the ground. Whoever wins the election will make those facts permanent.

Whatever the outcome of the People's Assembly, uniting the anti-cuts movement behind a common strategy for resistance will remain the most important task facing the working class, the unemployed and the youth. Creating follow-up assemblies in every town and city will bring the debate to more people. These assemblies should be organised with the open intention of critical discussion that can lead to action.

If these can draw in representatives of the labour movement – rank and file workers, branch reps – if it can draw in the unemployed and the youth, if it reaches out to the thousands resisting the Bedroom Tax and organising to defeat the fascist English Defence League; if we can create these democratic and representative forums, then we will have given ourselves a fighting chance.

Assembly should demand such a call from the TUC and will organise a demonstration at it to support all the unions calling for this. If the TUC will not respond to this then the People's Assembly should be recalled to plan and call one.

Even a one-day action can massively rally huge forces. From its platforms a call for escalating and finally all-out, decisive action can be made. Once real masses are in motion the threats of the courts and the anti-union laws will melt away or successfully be defied, especially if the left union leaders hold their nerve and their members make it impossible for them to betray by imposing democratic controls over them. Mass class-wide action like this could drive this reactionary government from power.

We will therefore be arguing at the People's Assembly that it should declare itself in favour of:

- Uniting the anticuts campaigns nationally and locally
- People's assemblies and committees of action in every town and city
- A general strike and day of mass action on a date to be decided in consultation with