

For a
workers'
government

Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

No 323 7 May 2014 30p/80p

www.workersliberty.org

Patients say closure is “life and death”



**OCCUPIED TO
STOP NHS CUTS!**

See page

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What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production. Society is shaped by the capitalists' relentless drive to increase their wealth. Capitalism causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class has one weapon: solidarity.



The Alliance for Workers' Liberty aims to build solidarity through struggle so that the working class can overthrow capitalism. We want socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for the labour movement to break with "social partnership" and assert working-class interests militantly against the bosses.

Our priority is to work in the workplaces and trade unions, supporting workers' struggles, producing workplace bulletins, helping organise rank-and-file groups.

We are also active among students and in many campaigns and alliances.

We stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. Free abortion on request. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Working-class solidarity in international politics: equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.
- If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!

Contact us:

● 020 7394 8923 ● solidarity@workersliberty.org

The editor (Cathy Nugent), 20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG.

● Printed by Trinity Mirror

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The new privatisation

By Ed Whitby

Social Finance and Social Impact Bonds are becoming a popular idea for public sector funding.

Social Impact Bonds (SIBs sometimes called Payments for Success Bonds) began under the Labour government in 2010. Private investors lend the public sector money to meet certain social "benefits" or targets. Investing in social projects for profit is led in the UK by Social Finance UK. (Its sister organisation in the US is Social Finance US).

One of its key projects is Social Impact Bonds, often using payment by results. With SIBs, Social Finance identifies an area where they believe they can help reduce long-term costs by investing up front. Key examples so far have been prevention of reoffending, and children in care.

As with PFI, the investors will ensure they make money (by receiving a payment for the service plus a return). As with PFI, the private sector is experimenting with public services, but this time the risks are not to the building or council finances but to the lives of the most vulnerable in our society.

CAMERON

David Cameron and the chief economist of Goldman Sachs claim SIBs will revolutionise public finances, enable innovation and returns to investors.

They have even been given tax relief under the new investment tax relief.

Cash-strapped local councils are now embracing social finance and SIBs.

Several councils including Manchester, Birmingham and Essex have SIBs for vulnerable children, the GLA has SIBs to challenge homelessness and DWP are using SIBs to tackle unemployment.

Public funds identified for vulnerable children, the unemployed and homeless will be paid to these private investors, who are skillful at setting outcomes that they know they can achieve and thus secure a return on their "investment".

Why are Labour councils joining the queue to work with SF and use SIBs? Councils so strapped for money they knowing they



London Mayor's rough sleeper project has been financed by a SIB. Outcomes are minimal. The underlying problems are not getting much better

will soon not be able to meet their legal requirements are desperate for solutions.

If the work is successful, they say, then the social benefit is achieved. In these austere times when councils or hospitals are strapped for cash, why not let the private sector lend a hand?

For councils to cut preventive services and then bring in the private sector in to "solve" the crisis they create for the most vulnerable is ridiculous. But this appears to be just what is being considered. We can challenge this, but only if we make an attempt to understand this new phenomena.

The labour movement must stand up to "PFI Mark 2". We need to fight crude targets linked to profit, for reduced workload and more resources.

The unions should demand a future Labour government and local councils reinvest public and democratically accountable funds into services.

Otherwise the results are likely to be similar to those with PFI.

Under the Labour government we saw the expansion of private finance in the public sector through PFI in capital projects.

The initial cost of these expensive projects were borne by the private sector. The way they got profit was by taxpayers, i.e. us, paying them back through rent over 30 or more years.

New Labour's thinking was that the public could bear the encroachment of

profit into public services as long as private companies didn't deliver the services, and weren't directly profiting out of the sick, children or the poor.

But gradually these projects started to take on what were called "soft" services such as cleaning, management of the facilities and catering. The companies wanted to profit from us renting our own buildings back from them (at vast cost) — and from the staff who worked in them as well.

Hence PFI contracts for buildings included outsourced cleaners, catering and support staff.

PFI

103 PFI deals in the NHS under the last government, were worth £11.4 billion.

By the time that they are paid off, they will have cost more than £65 billion. When these costs were revealed as part of a report on Government use of PFI, Margaret Hodge MP, chair of the Public Accounts Committee, described them as "staggering". PFI has been totally exposed for what it was — privatisation.

As councils and hospitals face massive cuts to budgets, councils and the NHS are still paying for buildings in which they can no longer afford to run services — such as libraries, schools and hospitals! All this when government borrowing is cheaper than private borrowing, and in fact pays interest rates lower than

inflation.

PFI buildings also had restrictive contracts and limited access. A PFI school building was only the school's from 8am to 6pm. The community which used the school as a hub for regular activities, (clubs, sports, meetings, leisure) could rarely afford the private rent of these gleaming new buildings in the middle of working class estates.

The buildings were like statues erected to "show off" private finance. They were a reminder of the failure of PFIs, from a government who had failed these communities.

And how was PFI for workers?

Look where the battles for union recognition, living wages and rights at work in the last few years have taken place. They are in outsourced contracts, cleaners and catering staff at universities, schools and colleges, in hospitals. Where soft services were outsourced as part of PFI, the results for workers were cuts to pay and conditions and rights.

We might have hoped the unions had learned the lessons from PFI.

Even the Tories under Osborne have proposed not to include soft services and to include greater public-to-private ratios, public appointments on boards, less debt and higher scrutiny.

This is not because the Tories oppose private finance in the public sector. They just want to reinvent it so it looks less obscene.

Occupied to stop NHS cuts!

By Beth Redmond

The Lifeworks centre, an open clinic service in Cambridge for people who suffer with personality disorders, is being threatened with closure. Patients have been occupying the centre for eight weeks to stop it from closing.

Lifeworks is part of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust's (CPFT) Complex Case Service. It is a community service which people can use as and when they need to. Lifeworks focuses on improving social functioning and getting people reintegrated into society.

Around 30 people are dependant on Lifeworks, which covers the entirety of Cambridgeshire.

With cuts of £6 million being made, CPFT have proposed merging the services provided by Lifeworks with Springbank, a lock-in ward providing psychiatric services for women with se-

vere personality disorders.

This would mean closing the Lifeworks centre on Tenison Road in Cambridge and patients would become reliant on their GPs or on treatment from a centre where they cannot come and go as they need, or live life as normally as possible.

Ann Robinson and Jacqueline Kidd, who are part of the continuing occupation of the centre spoke to me.

"We've known something was going on for the last two years, but staff have been denying it."

They explained that when they were referred to Lifeworks, they were promised a lifelong service. But two years ago, their regular five-day-a-week sessions were reduced to only two and older staff members were given the sack.

"Lifeworks is our lifeline. It was called Lifeworks because it was meant to be for life. Our condition is lifelong, and they want to see people discharged from the



service well again, but with us this is a lifelong condition.

"Once you're referred to Lifeworks, when you have your well episodes you can go away and live your life to the best you can, but when you get ill you don't have to go back to your GP, you can come back here. The staff here know your triggers, Lifeworks is always there for you."

CPFT offered empty promises of a return to the clinic being open five days a week and an increase in the number of staff, but neither have ever happened.

The centre began to bring in "socialisation groups" which allowed only a limited number of participants, and eventually led to patients only being allowed to come to the centre when signed up to a socialisation group.

People stopped coming, and 90% of the remaining patients received letters discharging them back to their GPs, with no support and

no access to Lifeworks. GPs, who do not have the same specialist knowledge as the staff in the Lifeworks centre, had not been told by CPFT that this change was going to be made.

Patients formed a peer-led action group and planned a sit-in protest of Lifeworks on 4 March and have been there ever since.

They feel that losing Lifeworks will contribute to an increase in self-harm and suicide attempts in patients. For nearly six weeks, no staff members came to the occupation to check on the patients, but CPFT managed to send pest control, fire management and health and safety officers to check on the building. "They left us here, patients with special needs, on our own."

A scrutiny committee which normally oversees the closure of any adult well being service in Cambridge, but in this instance had not been informed about Lifeworks at all.

"They set up a working

group to make sure the consultation process was not just a tick-box exercise and to make sure our side was heard".

The fact that CPFT said that they would keep Lifeworks open during the consultation process is not a victory. They ignored the scrutiny committee and reopened Lifeworks at Springbank, meaning that patients would be batted back and forth between the GP, psychiatrist, community pathways and hospital. Thus the decision to continue the occupation.

"When you're in this place, you're on a knife's edge, you haven't got that time, you're either alive or you're dead. We aren't prepared for that, because for us it's life and death and we'd prefer to come to Lifeworks and be alive."

CPFT have told the occupiers that they need to be out of the building by early June, but they are prepared to stay in the building for as long as it takes.

They have created a spon-

sorship system which allows patients who are too ill to stay in the building to support those who can, and allow their voices to be heard at the same time.

When *Solidarity* went to print, the occupation was waiting to give their input on discussion papers to be sent to the working group about what happens next.

The campaign to save the Lifeworks centre is one of national significance; an example of authorities discarding their responsibilities of caring for vulnerable people in the name of austerity, and of collective, direct action to stand up against the government.

They are seeking donations to sustain their campaign. Cheques to Cambridge & District Trade Union Council, marked Lifeworks. Send to Ian Beeby, Treasurer, CDTUC, 55, Station Road, Whittlesford, Cambridge, CB22 4NL.

•facebook.com/SaveCCS

Under pressure

Cuts in community mental health services are creating a huge pressure on inpatient beds in England and Wales. Mental health trusts are already having to cope with cuts of more than 1,700 beds over the past two years.

The chief executive of the one of the worst-affected trusts, Lisa Rodrigues, chief executive of the Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, said: "Mental health services are a barometer of how the system is operating. If you remove some of the lower levels of support that people rely on to maintain their lives, it's not surprising that they'll present in crisis.

"We are seeing people coming to hospital who are much, much iller when they arrive, so we have higher numbers of detained patients... we're seeing people have to stay in hospital for longer."

Claimants forced into zero-hours jobs

By Tom Harris

A Parliamentary business letter from Conservative minister Esther McVey has revealed that jobseekers face losing their benefits for up to three months if they turn down jobs on zero-hours contracts.

Under the new universal credit system, job centre staff will be able to mandate claimants to accept zero-hour contract jobs, sanctioning them if they refuse. This change will take place despite senior government ministers publicly denouncing the use of zero-hour contracts.

Amid anger at the rise of zero-hours contracts, which do not oblige bosses to guarantee any hours, Vince Cable and George Osborne both talked about the possibility of legislating to regulate them. But if the changes around universal credit outlined in McVey's letter come into effect, workers with parental or caring responsibilities could either be forced into working "on call" or lose three months worth of benefits.

At the start of May, figures from the Office of National Statistics showed that the number of workers on zero-hour contracts in the UK has risen to 1.4 million. This figure,

based on a more thorough study, stands at more than twice the previous estimate. Studies by the union Unite estimate that the real figure could be much higher even than that.

The startling extent of zero-hours jobs put pressure on Business Secretary Vince Cable to commission a study into the use of the contracts, and to concede that their use has resulted in "some abuse" by "less scrupulous employers". But thanks to the government's changes to the benefit system, thousands of poor and vulnerable people might be forced into precisely such working arrangements.

Labour has made much of McVey's letter, pointing out the hypocrisy and callousness of the government's position. It is right to do so, but its proposals on zero-hours contracts are far from adequate. Ed Miliband says that his government would ban the "abuse" of the contracts, but would not legislate to ban them altogether. He would stop contracts from including clauses which prevent workers taking up work with anyone else; but even Vince Cable proposes the same.

The labour movement must fight put an end to zero-hours contracts, not to tinker with the details.

Private tenants get organised

By Dan Rawnsley

On 30 April I attended a Waltham Forest Trades Council meeting on London's housing crisis.

Rosie Walker from Waltham Forest Renters, a private tenants' group organising against landlords, spoke about the need for rent stabilisation and longer, more secure tenancies.

WER also demands the licensing of landlords and the curbing of "buy-to-let". And Walker called for the abolition of section 21 of the Housing Act, which allows landlords to evict tenants without any reason.

Eileen Short from Defend Council Housing said that new layers of people have been brought into the fight for good, affordable housing through the formation of private tenants' groups

and campaigns against the bedroom tax.

She called for a living rent and for councils to have the power to regulate landlords and seize property.

Around 70 people attended the meeting, many of whom talked about the problems they faced as council tenants or private renters.

A young man from south London called on people to talk to friends and co-workers about housing, because when he spoke to friends about the meeting he found they had all been suffering the same conditions in isolation.

Private tenants' groups have sprung up in several London boroughs demanding laws that curb the power of landlords and fighting for good, affordable housing for all.

• <http://letdown.org.uk/>

A public meeting on 24 May, "Housing Struggles in east London", will discuss the campaign by a group of residents (mostly young mothers) at E15 hostel in Newham to stop their eviction. The meeting is organised by Feminist Fightback, Hackney DIGS (a private renters campaign) and Plan C London. Banner making from 2pm. At Common House, Unit 5E, Pundersons Gardens. Childcare provided.

May elections

Left

In the 22 May council elections, the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is making a big effort to stand 561 candidates. In the European elections on the same day, No2EU will field 46 candidates in seven regions. The Left Unity group is standing only 12 council candidates across the country.

TUSC is an electoral alliance mainly of the Socialist Party and the leadership of the RMT union. It also involves the Independent Socialist Network and the Socialist Workers' Party. Its platform is pretty much limited to opposing cuts.

Steve Hedley of the RMT is a TUSC candidate in East Ham; the International Socialist Network is petitioning TUSC to withdraw him (see below for background).

No2EU promotes British withdrawal from the European Union as the answer to social evils. Although No2EU claims to be left wing, its website deplores "free movement" of workers as producing a "race to the bottom".

It is an alliance of the RMT, the Communist Party of Britain and the SP.

The Socialist Party has candidates on No2EU lists, but promotes it little, and seems embarrassed.

Although many TUSC candidates are good activists, the TUSC-No2EU combo cannot be considered a workable version of what it is, a "propaganda" alternative. Socialists will have to vote Labour and step up the fight in the unions.

Rhodri Evans



Don't use sexist stereotypes

Activists in the RMT union, and wider labour movement, were dismayed in March 2014 when a boxing tournament organised to raise money for the RMT's London Widows and Orphans fund was promoted with a poster including a stylised, cartoon image of a bikini-clad "ring girl".

The cartoon woman, with an exaggeratedly small waist and exaggeratedly large breasts, entirely played into sexist stereotypes about body image and beauty standards. Although women boxers did participate in the event, only one was featured on the poster, compared to 15 men.

The ring girl image frequently appears on the material of the "London White Collar Boxing Championship", the body in conjunction with which the fundraiser was organised. This raises the obvious question of why the RMT is organising events alongside bodies which routinely use sexist cartoons to promote themselves.

The publication of this poster was particularly regrettable because women in the rail industry still experience sexism at work and therefore need a union that will vigorously challenge this culture.

RMT Assistant General Secretary Steve Hedley, against whom there have been allegations of domestic violence which many believe were not dealt with adequately, promoted the poster. Indeed, Hedley himself appears on the poster and boxed at the event.

The RMT Women's Conference on 7-8 March 2014 passed a motion condemning the union's promotion of the poster.

The motion was written, moved in RMT branches, and promoted at the Women's Conference by Workers' Liberty members.

The kind of sexist values clearly implied by the poster need confronting — in society as a whole and in within the labour movement itself. Posters that recycle and promote sexist stereotypes have no place in our movement.

- Full image of poster here: bit.ly/rmtbox
- Steve Hedley has case to answer: bit.ly/sh-left and bit.ly/sh-andyl

From <http://womensfightback.wordpress.com>



Socialists celebrate May Day

An international solidarity event organised on 3 May in London by Marxist Revival (an international project of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty and the Iranian Revolutionary Marxists' Tendency) heard speakers from around the world, live or via video clips.

Pictured are (clockwise from top left) Jade Baker of AWL (chairing); August Grabski and Urszula Lugowska of Dalej (Poland); Dashty Jamal of the Worker-communist Party of Kurdistan; Maziar Razi (IRMT); and Alejandra Rios, representing

the Left Workers' Front of Argentina.

The meeting also heard messages from the Association for International Workers' Solidarity (UID-DER) in Turkey; from Traven Leyshon, an activist with the US revolutionary socialist organisation Solidarity; and from Lalit, a socialist group in Mauritius.

The evening concluded with Kurdish food and dancing, with proceeds going to the Kurdish Construction Workers' Organisation.

Help us raise £12,000 by October

Marxist Revival is a project where Workers' Liberty has joined other organisations from around the world to debate issues facing socialists today. It has published a journal. We hope that starting this dialogue we will help build international solidarity and a culture of discussion and mutual education.

If you think this sounds worthwhile, you can help. Running a website and putting out a journal costs money.

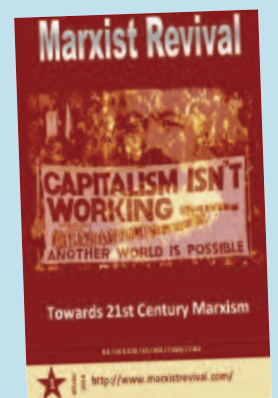
We want to raise £12,000 by our AGM in October 2014

You can set up a regular payment from your bank to: AWL, sort code: 08-60-01, account: 20047674, Unity Trust Bank, Nine Brindleyplace, Birmingham, B1 2HB). Or send a cheque to us at the address below (cheques payable to "AWL"). Or donate online at workersliberty.org/payment. Take copies of *Solidarity* to sell at your workplace, university/college, or campaign group, or organise a fundraising event. And get in touch to discuss joining the AWL!

More information: 07796 690 874 / awl@workersliberty.org / AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, 58 Riley Road, London SE1 3DG.

This week we have raised £190 in increased standing orders and donations.

Grand total: £3140.



Ukraine: self-determination is still basic

Accounts vary of the clashes between pro-Russian and Ukrainian nationalist groups in Odessa on 3 May, in which some 42 people were killed.

Some people say it started with an attack by militarised Russian and pro-Russian far-rightists on a peaceful Ukrainian nationalist demonstration. After that, “ultras” among the Ukrainian nationalists set out for the building where the pro-Russians had their headquarters.

Some say that it was a planned assault by far-right Ukrainian nationalists on pro-Russians who did no more than defend themselves.

Yet others suggest conspiracies. Maybe the “ultra” Ukrainian nationalists and the far-right pro-Russians have a common interest in fomenting bloodshed which will irreparably split Ukraine. If it leads to the east being annexed by Russia, then the “ultra” Ukrainian nationalists will have a better chance of influence in a rump Ukraine than if it stays united.

Maybe, so Ukrainian leftist Volodymyr Ishchenko suggests, “one of the reasons why all these protests in the Eastern Ukraine started now, and why they are so violent, is actually to halt the national elections in May — to postpone them and give [Yulia] Tymoshenko some time to gain more popularity among Ukrainians”.

Tymoshenko is way behind in the polls. Her pitch is Ukrainian nationalist. But she is also known to have had, and may still have, good relations with Russian president Vladimir Putin.

Putin certainly wants to sabotage Ukraine’s presidential election due on 25 May. Maybe he also looks forward to a later election when Tymoshenko can win and then do a deal with Moscow.

None of the stories give any special trade-union significance to the fact that the building which the Ukrainian nationalists stormed was the trade-union headquarters in Odessa. It appears in all stories just as the big public building in the city (built in a time when the “trade unions” were just departments of the state administration) where the pro-Russians happened to have gathered.

CLEAR

Some structural facts, however, are evidenced enough to be clear even at a distance.

The local coups in the cities of east Ukraine are not *just* external Russian interference. There is little evidence of active popular resistance to them, for example by workers in the public buildings which have been seized.

We would, anyway, expect a base for pro-Russian sentiment. A large minority of the population, over 30% in some areas, is Russian. The cities are more Russian than the countryside. The east has voted more pro-Russian, in independent Ukraine’s elections, than the west.

The new Kiev government is distrusted everywhere, but more so in the east. People in eastern Ukraine will be reluctant to resist the pro-Russian coups not just out of fear, but also out of a wish to avoid supporting the new Kiev govern-



Ukrainian Left Opposition poster. On the left: pro-western oligarchs, west-centre of Ukraine. On the right: pro-Russian oligarchs, east-south of Ukraine

ment, and a lack of any strong third alternative.

There are no reports of the local coups raising social demands, but it is plausible that some support accrues to them because of the social concerns of people in eastern Ukraine, worried that its old heavy industry will decline fast if Ukraine is more integrated into the world market.

The local coups also show evidence of being decisively shaped and led by people closely linked to the Russian government. They did not well up from mass protests about social or regional or language-group concerns, but started straight off with seizures of public buildings by armed groups.

The issue is not Russian-majority pockets near the Russian border, and a call for adjustment of the border. Putin has staked a claim to the whole of Novorossiia, which is a vast area of south and east Ukraine. Despite all the diversity within Ukraine, it has been a historically-defined nation for a long time. Ukraine’s right to self-determination is the central issue here, and can and must be defended without endorsing the ideas, or all the actions, of Ukrainian nationalists.

The Kiev government has put new laws for regional autonomy to the parliament, and promised to uphold the laws for Russian language rights introduced by Yanukovich, but in the east people seem to distrust the government that these measures change little.

Russia’s aim is to establish de facto control in the east so as to give Russia more options. Putin’s preference, probably, will be for a deal in which he agrees to reverse the local coups in return for strong influence over all Ukraine. Immediately, he wants obstruct and discredit the Ukrainian elections on 25 May and prevent a Kiev government gaining authority.

Volodymyr Ishchenko points out that “you have to understand that the political mainstream in the Ukraine is much further to the right than, for example, in Western Europe. Things which would receive very strong criticism in the West are more or less tolerable in the Ukraine. It’s more or less

okay to talk about things like ‘the defense of white European people’; this kind of thing can even be said by mainstream politicians. It’s okay to be homophobic, not to recognize any need to defend LGBT people... The Right Sector and Svoboda [the Ukrainian-nationalist ‘ultras’] are being criticized because their violent and provocative actions are seen as something that can be used by Russia” [i.e. not really out of a leftish revulsion at their far-right bias].

This rightward tilt of the political spectrum is at least as true of eastern Ukraine as of western Ukraine. There are many reports of strong far-right forces within the pro-Russian coup-makers.

We cannot orient ourselves here by asking which side seems less right-wing, and especially not by taking Stalinist nostalgia as evidence of good left-wing resistance to right-wing Ukrainian nationalism. We can orient only by the fundamentals: Ukraine’s right to self-determination.

The Kiev government is in an impasse. It cannot mobilise the population of east Ukraine against the coup-makers. It cannot send in the Ukrainian army full-force, because that would rally people against it and open the way for a Russian invasion “to restore order”. Equally, it would like to be able to prevent the local referendums scheduled in some districts in east Ukraine for 11 May, on propositions as yet unclear, but amounting to some sort of secession. It remembers the Crimea referendum on which those gambits are modelled. It will condemn the new referendums as undemocratic, like the Crimea referendum, and it will be right, but that won’t help it gain a grip in the east.

MIDDLE

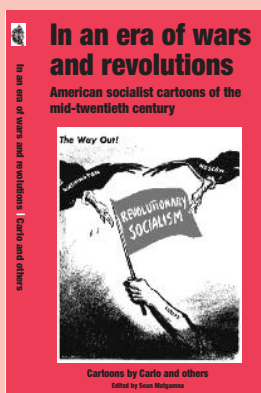
So it tries an ineffectual middle way, moving against the coup-makers, but mildly and tentatively.

The US and the EU side with the Kiev government, but see no overriding interest in Ukraine, and (especially the EU) fear the effect on their own economies of even sharp economic sanctions against Russia. So Putin, sees Ukraine as a vital issue for which he will take risks, has the upper hand.

A way out of the impasse will require the Ukrainian left to mobilise Ukrainian workers, west and east, on socialist demands against the corruption and oligarchic inequality which people both east and west name as their main concern. Those socialist demands will be integrated with a democratic programme of national self-determination for Ukraine and full minority rights for Russians within Ukraine.

At present, though, the Ukrainian left is weak. As well as helping it as much as we can, we must also support the national self-determination of the whole Ukrainian people against Russia’s moves to grab territory, tacitly threaten invasion, and seek decisive influence over the whole country.

BOOKS TO CHANGE THE WORLD

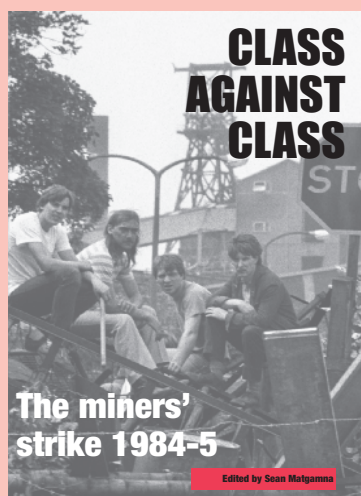


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Britain is the detention capital of Europe

In February of 2013 Alois Dvorzac, an 84-year-old Canadian national who suffered from Alzheimer's disease, died in handcuffs at the publicly-funded and privately-run Harmondsworth detention centre.

Immigration officials stationed at Gatwick Airport, where Dvorzac had made a transit stop en route to visit his native Slovenia, had detained him in Harmondsworth, even though a doctor's report declared him unfit for detention.

The circumstances surrounding Dvorzac's death did not come to light until January of this year, when HM Inspector of Prisons published its report of an unannounced inspection of Harmondsworth.

The following month the then Tory Immigration Minister Mark Harper (whose ministerial responsibilities included immigration detention) discovered that the Colombian part-time cleaner at his London flat had neither permission to be in the UK nor permission to work.

Harper felt compelled to resign. Not because he bore ministerial responsibility for a detention centre in which an 84-year-old suffering from Alzheimer's had died in handcuffs. But because he had unwittingly employed someone lacking permission to be or work in the UK.

The uncovering of Dvorzac's death, on the other hand, resulted in no more than a run-of-the-mill statement by Harper ("The use of restraint in this case seems (!) completely unjustified.") and a call for "significant improvements" in the way Harmondsworth was run by the (multinational) Geo Group.

The callousness with which Dvorzac's death was brushed aside by Harper — whose "achievements" in office had included the notorious "Go Home" billboards and advertising vans — sums up the brutality at the core of Britain's migrant-detention regime.

Britain's immigration detention "estate" is now one of the largest in Europe. In 1993 it had a total capacity of just 250. By 2003 its capacity had increased to 1,600 places in seven immigration removal centres. By 2011 it had more than doubled in size again, reaching its current figure of nearly 3,500 places.

Last year's decision to reclassify Verne Prison (Dorset) as an Immigration Removal Centre will have added another 580 places by September of this year. And in March of this year the government announced plans to almost double the number of places at Campsfield Immigration Removal Centre, from 260 to 510.

The eventual total detention capacity of over 4,000 places

will be split between ten Immigration Removal Centres, three Short-Term Holding Centres and one Pre-Departure Accommodation Centre. Three of the Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs) have security levels equivalent to those in a high-security prison.

When five new high-security wings were opened at Harmondsworth in 2010, HM Inspector of Prisons described the new wings as "prison-type accommodation, in small and somewhat oppressive cells", while the centre's Independent Monitoring Board, which reports directly to the Home Secretary, commented:

"The new rooms, to be shared by two people, are based on prison cells, with toilets located inside the room, behind limited screening. It is shocking that brand new facilities have been built that are ill-suited to their intended purpose and that offer lower standards of decency than the facilities they replace."

Just as the number of detention centres has increased, so too has the number of detainees.

26,000 persons were detained in the course of 2010, 27,000 in 2011, and 29,000 in 2012. Between 2009 and 2012, between 2,000 and 3,000 people were held in detention at any given time. But now the average monthly figure for immigration detainees has begun to exceed 3,000: in June of 2013 3,142 people were held in detention.

Official statistics on immigration detention do not include non-British nationals detained in prisons following completion of a criminal sentence and awaiting deportation. Estimates of the numbers held in prisons vary from around 650 to over 950.

Nor do official statistics include migrants subject to relatively brief detention in police cells, short-term holding rooms at ports and airports, and reporting centres in the main cities.

NO TIME LIMIT

Just as Britain can "boast" of one of the largest detention estates in Europe, so too it can "boast" of the length of time for which migrants can be held in detention.

On paper, the UK Borders Agency policy is that "detention must be used sparingly, and for the shortest period necessary." In practice, Britain detains migrants for longer than any other country in Europe.

Apart from two other member-states, Britain is the only European Union state which has not signed up to the EU Returns Directive, which allows for a (hardly restrictive) maximum of 18 months on immigration detention in exceptional circumstances.

Most EU countries have a much shorter time limit. In France the maximum permissible period of detention is 45 days. But in Britain there is no time limit at all.

According to Home Office statistics, around 60% of immigration detainees are detained for two months or less. But by way of comparison: even terrorist suspects can be detained only for a maximum of fourteen days.

The same statistics also show that nearly 10% of immigration detainees are held for over a year. And detention statistics for late 2012 revealed that the twelve longest recorded lengths of detention included one for over four years, two for over three years, and nine for over two years.

Average detention times for foreigners detained in prison after completion of their sentences vary from 523 days to 755 days (where the detainee's country of nationality refuses to provide a travel document).

In 2011 the High Court found the five-year detention of an Algerian national to have been illegal from day one. For three years prior to his detention the Home Office had tried unsuccessfully to obtain an Algerian travel document to allow his deportation from the UK. His detention could therefore never have been considered to be "pending removal".

And when HM Inspector of Prisons made an unannounced visit to Lincoln Prison in 2012, he discovered a Somali migrant who had been remained in detention in the prison for nine years. Apparently, he had been "forgotten".

Despite Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg's claim of December 2010 that children would no longer be subject to immigration detention, children continue to be detained (even if Britain no longer holds the EU record for detaining minors: between one and two thousand a year in the closing years of the last Labour government).

Although the number of children detained in 2011 fell to about a hundred (compared with a thousand in 2009), the number of detained minors increased to 240 in the course of 2012, split between Tinsley House (a high security centre with space for families deemed too "disruptive" for non-custodial pre-departure accommodation) and the Cedars centre near Crawley.

Cedars was opened in August of 2011 — just eight months after Clegg's announcement and the closure of the family unit in Yarl's Wood detention centre — and is run by G4S in partnership with ... Barnardo's.

Barnardo's Values Statement includes: "...working in partnership with children and families of all races, challenging discrimination and disadvantage, and creating positive opportunities."

When Barnardo's took on the contract for Cedars it set out a list of "red lines", including no use of force against children, no repeat periods of detention, and no detention for longer than seven days. All those "red lines" have been breached.

ASYLUM SEEKERS

Asylum-seekers continue to represent by far the largest single category of detainees. In 2012 asylum detainees constituted just under 50% of the total detainee population.

In the early 2000s the "justification" given by the Home Office for increasing the size of its detention "estate" was that the increase was needed to cope with the record number of asylum claims being lodged in Britain: by 2008 75% of the detainee population were asylum-seekers.

The then Labour government argued that asylum claims could best be dealt with by detaining selected asylum-seekers for seven days and processing their asylum claims during that week. Britain thus became the only country in Europe to detain asylum-seekers simply for the purpose of processing their asylum claims.

Bizarrely, one of the criteria in deciding which asylum-seekers to detain was that they were low-risk absconders. Under normal circumstances, this would have been a reason not to detain them.

Since then, the number of asylum applications has slumped. Between 2002 and 2010, for example, the rate of asylum applications lodged in Britain fell by 79%. The original "rationale" given in the early 2000s therefore no longer applies (not that it ever did).

Even so, asylum-seekers continue to be detained in large numbers: 30% of all new asylum applications are dealt with under the so-called DFT (detained fast-track) procedures. But while the detention is real the "fast-track" is a chimera.

Under the DFT procedure asylum-seekers are meant to: have an interview about their asylum claim on day two of detention; get a decision on their asylum claim on day three of detention; have their appeal against refusal — 99% of DFT claims are refused — on day nine; and have their second-level appeal heard and concluded by the 21st day of detention.

But research by the Detention Action NGO has found that asylum-seekers were in detention for a fortnight on average before being interviewed about their claim, and nearly 20% of asylum-seekers were in detention for over a month before being interviewed.

Most had no access to legal representation during that period and met their legal representative only minutes before their asylum interview. 60% of detained asylum-seekers received no legal help in pursuing their appeals. And once their appeal rights had been exhausted, they then spent an average of another 58 days in detention awaiting their removal from Britain.



2006 protest at Harmondsworth

Harmondsworth protest

On 2 May, 150 prisoners in Harmondsworth detention centre occupied the main courtyard with a sit down protest and began a hunger strike. Their demands included: "To be taken off the unfair fast track system; to not be treated as criminals by being locked up; for communications with lawyers to stop being interfered with; access to adequate legal representation."

The Home Office agreed to negotiate and the protest was suspended.

• More: <http://bit.ly/har-protest>



Detained asylum-seekers are also at risk of seeing their asylum claims dealt with under the Detained Non-Suspensive Appeals process, under which asylum-seekers are liable to removal from the UK as soon as their asylum claim has been refused. If they want to appeal, they must do so from their own country.

For detained asylum-seekers the detention system therefore functions as nothing other than a mechanism geared to frustrating their chances of being able to properly present their asylum claim.

SUICIDES

As the size of the detainee population has increased, so too has the number of attempted suicides and the number of detainees on suicide watch. In fact the number of such incidents has increased disproportionately.

The number of attempted suicides increased from 159 in 2007 to 215 in 2009, and to 325 in 2013. The latter figure equates to one attempted suicide every 27 hours. The number of detainees on suicide watch increased from 1,517 in 2007 to 1,588 in 2009, and to 2,379 in 2013.

The increase in the number of detainees on suicide watch is not to be attributed to any increased awareness on the part of detention centre security staff. In fact, investigations into detainee deaths and general conditions in detention centres have consistently been critical of the security staff.

Security staff are predominantly provided by private-sector companies, working under contract to the Home Office. Apart from three Immigration Removal Centres staffed by HM Prison Service, all other detention centres are variously run by: G4S, Mitie, Serco, GEO Group UK, and Tascor (formerly Reliance).

All five companies are global organisations, running prison

and detention facilities in countries round the world. And all of them are engaged not just in providing “services” in prisons and detention centres but also in lobbying governments to make increased use of their services.

Apart from allowing governments to distance themselves from responsibility for the failings inherent in the detention regime — it was not the handcuffs that killed Dvorzac; it was the detention — the use of private companies is also justified on the grounds of cost-effectiveness.

In fact, the use of private companies has proved to be cost-effective only for the companies themselves.

Although the Home Office is reluctant to publish figures for the financial costs of immigration detention, a Freedom of Information Act request of 2007 uncovered that the weekly cost of detaining an individual ranged from £511 (Lindholme IRC) to £1,344 (Colnbrook IRC) and £1,620 (the now closed Oakington IRC).

According to a government report published in 2010, the average cost per place per day in a detention centre was £120, equal to an annual cost of £44,000. On that basis, the cost of running Campsfield House IRC in Oxfordshire amounts to more than £8.5 million per year.

These figures do not include compensation paid out by the Home Office for unlawful detention. In 2010 this amounted to £12 million.

“STANDARDS”

Operating standards in detention centres are meant to comply with those laid down in the government’s Detention Centre Rules and in the UK Border Agency’s “Detention Services Operating Standards Manual for Immigration Service Removal Centres”, published in 2005.

In fact, such standards exist only on paper.

In 2008 a coalition of NGOs detailed some 300 cases of alleged assaults by security staff in detention facilities in the period 2004-2008. The allegations covered detainees of 41 nationalities, the majority being African migrants. The complaints procedures in operation in the centres were dismissed as ineffective.

In 2010 the charity Medical Justice published “Outsourcing Abuse”, which also documented 300 cases of alleged abuse. All reported incidents involved the use of excessive force, with the majority of injuries resulting from the use of restraints. Some of the attacks involved families and resulted in injuries to children.

In October of the same year Angolan deportee Jimmy Mubenga collapsed and died from suffocation after three G4S guards forcibly “restrained” him during his forced deportation. Eye-witnesses to his death testified that the Home Office and G4S accounts of his death were false. But in 2012 the Crown Prosecution Service closed the case without pressing charges.

2010 also saw the publication of a damning report of an unannounced visit to the G4S-run Brook House IRC by HM Inspector of Prisons:

“We were disturbed to find one of the least safe immigration detention facilities we have inspected, with deeply frustrated detainees and demoralised staff, some of whom lacked the necessary confidence to manage those in their care. At the time of the inspection, Brook House was an unsafe place.”

“Bullying and violence were serious problems and — unusually for the immigration detention estate — drugs were a serious problem. Many detainees were ex-prisoners and a number compared their experience in Brook House negatively to that in prison.”

The HM Inspector of Prisons report on Harmondsworth (January 2014) which uncovered the death of Alois Dvorzac was equally scathing of the topic of its report:

“A major concern is an inadequate focus on the needs of the most vulnerable detainees, including elderly and sick men, those at risk of self harm through food refusal, and other people whose physical or mental health conditions made them potentially unfit for detention.”

“A lack of intelligent individual risk assessment had meant that most detainees were handcuffed on escort and on at least two occasions, elderly, vulnerable and incapacitated detainees, one of whom was terminally ill, were needlessly handcuffed in an excessive and unacceptable manner.”

“The Rule 35 procedure that identifies victims of torture and others with special conditions was failing, as we often see, to safeguard possible victims.”

“Some rooms were overcrowded and much of the centre was dirty and bleak. Engagement between detainees and staff was just adequate and too many staff seemed confined to their offices. In our survey too few detainees felt respected.”

“Although more detainees felt they had enough to do (regarding educational and recreational activities), attendance, punctuality and access were constantly undermined by needless security and control impediments which served little discernible purpose.”

A failure to care for the most vulnerable detainees. Excessive and unacceptable handcuffing. A failure to protect victims of torture. Dirty and bleak physical surroundings. A lack of respect for detainees. And security measure which served no particular purpose.

What is true of Harmondsworth is equally true of Britain’s detention “estate” as a whole.



Iraqi detainees

The UK government has restarted detaining Iraqi refugees and threatening them with deportation.

Since 2005 more than 6,000 Kurdish and Iraqi asylum seekers have been detained by the UK and other European governments. Following detention they were forcibly deported to Baghdad or Kurdistan.

But in the last two years International Federation of Iraqi Refugees has successfully organised demonstrations, blockades and other activities forcing both the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Iraqi government not to accept forcible deportation flights.

Many refugees become unemployed and homeless when they return to Iraq and Kurdistan.

Now Iraqi refugees living in Britain are living in a state of fear. Many have partners and children who are either UK nationals or have status to live in the UK. Some have been under such pressure they have chosen suicide rather than face deportation.

Please support to IFIR campaign by writing to the Home Secretary Theresa May demanding that all Iraqi and Kurdish refugees are released from detention and deportations to Iraq and Kurdistan are stopped immediately.

**Rt Hon Theresa May MP, Home Secretary, 2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF
public.enquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk, Telephone number: 020 7035 4848. Please send IFIR a copy of your support to ifir@hotmail.co.uk. Or to IFIR, PO.BOX1575, ILFORD, IG1 3BZ.**

What happened in Odessa

Translations by Stan Crooke of articles about 2 May in Odessa, when over 40 people were killed and nearly 200 injured.

The eye-witness account

From the website of the Ukrainian Left Opposition, which states that it does not agree with all the article's arguments and conclusions, but publishes it as an eye-witness account.

Who bears the guilt for the tragedy in Odessa? For me, the answer is obvious: Russian fascists and the police.

Everybody knew that the "Chornamorets" and "Metallist" football fans would be meeting before the match to stage a demonstration for the unity of Ukraine. The fact that activists from the Odessa Maidan would be joining them was also well known.

For several days before the planned demonstration the most radical element in the pro-Russian movement — the so-called "Odessa Militia", which consists solely of Russian Nazis — were promising to break it up. On their social networks the calls to kill the "Maidanists" appeared with an almost enviable regularity.

The "Odessa Militia" assembled on Aleksandrovsky Prospect, around three or four hundred of them, almost all men (apart from some young women in the medical corps), not a single elderly person, all of them fighters, and equipped accordingly: in masks, a lot in bullet-proof vests, with shields, bats and truncheons.

Around the same time supporters of the unity march began to gather on Soborny Square: two or three thousand of them. The football ultras were no more than a third of them. As is usual in activities staged by the Odessa Maidan: a lot of women, pensioners, and people with children. Only the Maidan self-defence guard had weapons.

The terrible Kharkov "Banderist" football fans — the bogeymen used by the "Odessa Militia" to scare the city's inhabitants — mostly headed off for the football match and did not take part in the clashes. The Right Sector, in Odessa, looks more like final-year school-students out on a day trip than violent radical militants.

When the unity march reached Grechesky Street, the "Militia" was already waiting for them. Several of the police were wearing the same red self-adhesive armbands as the separatist militants.

Stun grenades were thrown into the crowd of Maidan activists. And the sound of gunfire is unmistakable. Hence the gunshot wounds. Hence the bullet casings we found on Deribasovskiy Street. They were also shooting at us from the roof of the "Afina" shopping centre.

The Maidan activists defended themselves as best they could. Under the gunfire my friend and his friends, ordinary guys from Odessa, football fans who always looked down on the "ultras" with contempt, were soon fighting shoulder-to-shoulder with the "ultras" against the militants.

It was here that young girls made the notorious Molotov



Odessa Left Opposition poster: sick of Maidan and anti-Maidan? Repelled by the war-patriotism hysteria? Join with us — for a Third Force! General mobilisation against war and dictatorship!

cocktails — on the spot, in beer bottles bought in the nearest shops. And typical Odessa babushkas brought bricks for the Maidan activists to throw.

The retaliatory march to Kulikovo Polye [site of the separatists' camp, and also location of the Trade Unions House] was probably inevitable.

Many activists did not go there — for understandable reasons. Rather, it was the most radical section of the unity march who did.

Who set fire to the House of the Trade Unions is unknown — Molotov cocktails were being thrown by both sides.

Pro-Russian sources write that radicals amongst the Maidan supporters beat up people who jumped out of the burning building.

They do not write about how Maidanists themselves, above all the self-defence guard, defended the wounded from their own radicals and administered first aid.

Nor about how the same self-defence guard ensured that separatists who had been taken prisoner ended up in the hands of the police, not those of the enraged crowd.

And nor do they write about how there was gunfire from within the House of Trade Unions.

Kulikovo Polye [i.e. the separatists' camp] was a unique gathering of conservative forces of all shades. "All the forces of the old order", as revolutionaries would have put it in the past, came together there.

Worshippers of Stalin and lovers of the "Father Czar", Russian Nazis and music-hall Cossacks, Russian-Orthodox fanatics and grandmas who long for the return of Brezhnev, campaigners against juvenile delinquency, same-sex marriages and flu-jabs.

All the hallmarks of a conspiracy

According to Ivan Ovsyannikov, a member of the Central Council of the Russian Socialist Movement in Petersburg, events in Odessa must be prevented from becoming the pretext for a new wave of violence by either Ukrainian or Russian reaction:

Insofar as it is possible to judge from the contradictory versions of what happened, the Odessa massacre has all the hallmarks of a conspiracy. This involved the leadership of the local police, ultra-right wing paramilitary organizations, and armed people who were either Russian mercenaries or Ukrainians provocateurs.

But whichever version may turn out to be correct, the fate of the people who died cannot be allowed to be used as a justification for military intervention or new killings. Anger with those guilty of the tragedy must not become the pretext for revenge on rank-and-file supporters of the mainstream "Maidan" or "Anti-Maidan".

The acts of savagery which have taken place in the Donets region, such as the killing of the Gorlovka regional councillor Rybak and of the Slavyansk student Popravko, do not justify violence against peaceful citizens in the course of the Kiev authorities' anti-terrorist operation.

And in just the same way the tragedy in the Odessa House of Trade Unions cannot be used as a justification for using the Russian army or any paramilitary organizations in a civil war in Ukraine.

The only conclusion which can clearly be drawn from the tragedy is that the solidarity of workers in different regions of Ukraine must be counterposed to the savagery which crossed all boundaries on both sides.

A Settling of Accounts

For Andrei Ischchenko, a member of the Left Opposition based in Odessa, the events of 2 May represented a settling of accounts by the Kiev government with its political opponents.

First and foremost, the events of 2 May in Odessa represented an action by the new state authorities in Ukraine in which it used non-state armed formations to settle accounts with its political opponents, removing many of them physically.

Nationalism, both Ukrainian and Russian, now triumphs over the bones of the deceased young inhabitants of Odessa and the unrestrained grief of Odessa mothers, while imperialism, having successfully used its nationalist lackeys, wipes its foul paws and cynically expresses "sympathy".

Unavoidable Parallels

Sergei Kozlovsky, a Moscow member of the Central Council of the Russian Socialist Movement, sees the hand of Moscow behind the strife in Odessa.

Before now I was inclined to be sceptical about claims of links between right-wing Ukrainian nationalists and the Russian secret services. But after the strife in Odessa my doubts are dwindling away.

In contemporary Ukraine the Banderists would always be a marginal political force which would hardly be noticed in normal times and probably be written off as a bunch of clowns. Their only chances of real power lie in a partition of the country.

And if the Russian authorities were to initiate such a partition, then it would be perfectly logical for the Ukrainian nationalists to support it.

As long as Ukraine remains a unitary state in its current borders, more than half the population will prefer to use the Russian language in their everyday life and to identify with Russian culture.

Objectively, the interests of the Ukrainian nationalists and the Russian regime now coincide — to unleash a civil war and partition the country, so that both sides are as comfortable as possible on their territories.

Descent into war

On the website of the Russian "Open Left" Ilya Budraitiskis argues that the main issue is the impetus to war given by the events.

In the two days which have passed since the tragic events in Odessa there have been dozens of versions of what happened.

And, in one way or another, each of those versions was linked with the search for a "hidden hand" which directed the clash of two armed groups of demonstrators and impelled one of them to carry out the massacre in the House of Trade Unions.

Most versions point to the police, who in a conscious and organized manner refrained from any attempt to quell the escalating violence. And then, as a rule, the "scenario" is followed by an explanation of who benefits from this.

Each of these variants is credible. But whatever was the initial intention of the organizers of the Odessa tragedy, its result will lead — and probably already has led — to something different: an impetus to the logic of a civil war, which it is now almost impossible to stop.

• All texts are abridged.

Video evidence

One video clip on YouTube bit.ly/odes-1 shows pro-Russian separatists (with red armbands) being allowed or even waved through the police line and then beating people up in the background.

Another bit.ly/odes-2 shows pro-unity activists rescuing people from the House of Trade Unions. No police, no fire brigade and no ambulance present.

A gallery of still shots of the fire at bit.ly/odes-3 also shows pro-unity activists rescuing people from the fire.

The building, the House of Trade Unions, is still used by unions (which now, unlike before 1991, have some autonomy from the state), and by other organisations too.

The reason why the separatists ended up there is because it is the nearest large building to their camp, not because of its union links.

The unions' statement on 5 May expresses sympathy for everyone who died; complains that requests for protection for the building after the anti-Maidan camp was set up in the square in front of it had been ignored; and calls for an independent inquiry.

Ulster's Protestant general strike, 1974

First part of a two-part article by Michael Johnson

In May 1974 the Ulster Workers' Council (UWC) "strike" put an end to Northern Ireland's first short-lived experiment with power-sharing government.

The strike was, in fact, a "lock-out", with loyalists opposed to power-sharing persuading people to strike with significant intimidation. It succeeded in preventing nationalists entering the government in Northern Ireland but, without any positive alternative as an aim, the strike led to more than two decades of direct rule from London.

In the late 1960s, Catholic demands for civil rights created a crisis for the state in Northern Ireland. Unable to control the unrest, the Stormont regime which had ruled de facto independently from Westminster since 1921 needed to be propped up by British troops after August 1969. Communal tensions and violence led to a resurgence of Irish republican activity. Formed in December 1969 (from a split in the IRA), the so-called "Provisional" IRA launched an armed campaign against the British government, at first very small-scale.

In response, Northern Ireland's Unionist Party Prime Minister, Brian Faulkner, persuaded the British government to sanction internment without trial under the notorious Special Powers Act. Though it had been used successfully to a more limited extent by Faulkner against the IRA in the 1950s, the introduction of internment in August 1971 was a disaster.

In early 1971, 30 people had died in politically related violence; between internment and the end of 1971, this figure rose to 173 and another 80 would die before direct rule. Reflecting Catholic alienation from the state, opposition politicians called a rent and rates strike and a campaign of civil disobedience. To the British, it was clear that the Unionist Party was incapable of containing the violence or introducing limited reforms to the state.

By 1972 the Provisional IRA was about to step up its campaign, and a "Protestant backlash" was expected. On 30 January 1972 — "Bloody Sunday" — fourteen innocent civilians were murdered by British paratroopers and the Six Counties looked set to collapse into a death spiral of violence.

ULSTER VANGUARD

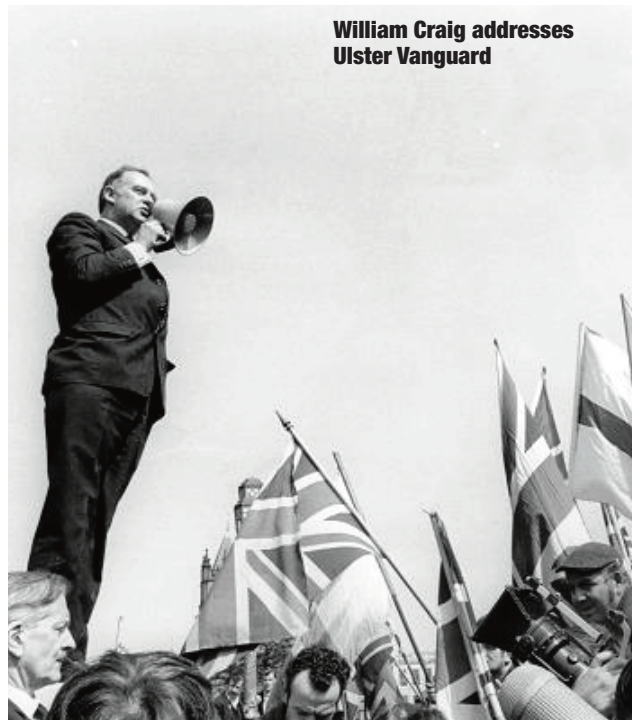
Barely a week later a new organisation called Ulster Vanguard was formed by William Craig from right-wing elements of the Unionist Party. It was to play a significant role in attempting to organise and control the UWC strike two years later.

Craig was the hard-line Minister for Home Affairs who ordered the police suppression of the major Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) march in Derry in October 1968. Dismissed as a Minister in December 1968, and unburdened by the responsibilities of Cabinet collective responsibility, Craig began organising opposition to the reformist direction of the Unionist Party leadership. Throughout 1969 Craig continued to address Unionist meetings, "making speeches" complained Faulkner, "which bordered on open incitement to rebel against the United Kingdom Government."

In September 1969, Craig launched the Ulster Loyalist Association (ULA) as a group for right-wing Unionists. Craig's language got more violent as discontent about the reforms grew, and he even urged loyalists to raise a force like Edward Carson's UVF (loyalist paramilitary group set up in 1913 to resist Home Rule). In October Craig told a ULA rally that he wouldn't rule out the use of arms if Westminster suspended Stormont and introduced direct rule.

Craig saw the ULA as "a ginger group within the Unionist Party". He later recounted that it "changed its name to Ulster Vanguard Clubs so that communities will have the direct opportunity of joining the Vanguard." The decision to make this transformation appears to have been taken at a meeting of "dissident" Unionists in Portadown in October 1971. A fourteen-person steering committee was formed to develop policies opposing the government's proposed reforms and a further meeting in Belfast decided on the name "Ulster Unionist Vanguard."

Its chairperson, Jean Coulter, announced a week later that: "The purpose of the organisation shall be direct and co-ordinate the work and actions of affiliated Unionist con-



William Craig addresses Ulster Vanguard

stituency associations in maintaining the constitution of the Parliament of Northern Ireland with all its powers and functions enjoyed and exercised in the year 1968 undiminished and conforming and adhering to the principles and procedures and parliamentary democratic and government prevailing in the United Kingdom."

In the Northern Ireland context this meant majority Protestant rule. Vanguard intended to organise discontented elements of the Stormont system to defend an "Orange State".

A central committee was formed reflecting the attempt to make Vanguard into an "umbrella" spanning the whole of loyalism. It involved Reverend Martin Smyth, Grand Master of Belfast and District Grand Orange Lodge, as well senior Orangemen from Antrim and Derry. Unionist MP Austin Ardill represented the Ulster Loyalist Association of right-wing Unionists, whilst two new groups, the Loyalist Association of Workers (LAW) and the Ulster Special Constabulary Association (USCA) were represented by Hugh Petrie and George Green respectively. This mirrored the federal structure of the Unionist Party, which itself was an attempt to construct a cross-class alliance of Protestants.

Craig had reason to be optimistic. Many sections of the Protestant community were angry at moves to reform the state. The Orange Order was furious at then Prime Minister James Chichester-Clarke's decision to suspend parades for six months in the summer of 1971. In 1969, the Hunt Report recommended the dismantling of the "B" Specials auxiliary police force and its replacement with the Army-controlled Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR). Former "B" Specials were brought together in the USCA, said to have the backing of around 10,000 former auxiliaries. Vanguard also received the support of discontented party councillors, who resented the diminished power of local government — the site of the most egregious sectarian discrimination under the Stormont system.

According one historian, out of 1,625 initial applications, only 700 were from former members of the USCA. For the remainder, the USCA provided a means by which they could continue to oppose the IRA. At a meeting on 3 September 1971, it was reported that around 2,000 former 'B' Specials met at Hillsborough, County Down, to call for an auxiliary force and expressed a lack of confidence in the UDR. Craig was intimately involved with organisation of these men into the USCA. Not only was USCA chairman, George Green, to become a Vanguard councillor in North Down; but Craig is cited in the press as having facilitated recruitment to the organisation. "My own phone has been ringing non-stop," he said, and "[businessmen] have promised money to pay staff needed to cope with the mountain of forms."

Just like the attempts of James Craig and the Unionist ruling-class in 1920 to control popular loyalist violence, Green explained that "our main idea is to prevent [violence] and to try and control people. We have upheld the law in Northern

Ireland for fifty years and I would deplore the like of this happening."

Craig thrived as a stubborn opponent of all reform. As one magazine's leader article at the time expressed it: "If you follow Bill Craig you don't have to make any adjustment at all in your ways of thinking. That suits a lot of people in Ulster."

Immediately after its foundation on 9 February 1972, Vanguard called a series of "monster rallies" in towns across Northern Ireland. The first was in Lisburn on 12 February, and was described by one observer as "deeply sinister." Simon Winchester, the *Guardian* correspondent in Northern Ireland wrote that it was: "something Ireland had not seen since the days of 1912 — Protestants in their own fighting uniform, the very makings of a loyalist army. There were 500 or more men, some in battledress jackets and jeans, many in berets and wearing insignia of rank in their epaulettes. Craig, who arrived in an ancient car escorted by a motorcycle outrider squad, dismounted in the manner of a latter-day Mussolini to inspect the readiness of his band of tough-faced men. And then he mounted the dais to read the words of the old Ulster Covenant, and to win from the crowd an approving triple shout of agreement, recalling the Nuremberg rallies or the Mosley meetings in London and Liverpool."

Each Vanguard rally was more or less larger than the last. A confidential report by the Northern Ireland Ministry of Home Affairs estimated that 2,000 attended the Lisburn rally, increasing to 7,000 at Ballymena at the beginning of March. A fortnight later, approximately 50,000 attended the rally in Ormeau Park, Belfast. Though derided by Faulkner as "comic opera parades", there was nothing funny about them.

The gathering in Ormeau Park on 18 March was described by the *Newsletter* as "the biggest rally since the days of Lord Carson." Vanguard now began to be taken seriously. The crowd of up to 50,000 heard chilling rhetoric from the platform. "We must build up the dossier of the men and women who are a menace to this country, it may be our job to liquidate the enemy," Craig warned. Just two weeks earlier during an interview with RTÉ Craig, when asked if the loyalist backlash would target all Catholics in Ulster replied: "It might not go so far as that, but it could go so far as killing."

After the Ormeau Park rally Catholics in areas such as the Ardoyne laid in stocks of tinned food, milk, fuel and other necessities in preparation for an expected siege. Seventy Catholics were killed between 1 April 1972 and 31 January 1973; the long-awaited "Protestant backlash" had begun. 1972 was not only the most deadly year of the conflict (467 people died in total) but also the only year of the Troubles during which loyalists were responsible for more killings than the Provisional IRA.

COLLAPSE OF STORMONT

Stormont was finally prorogued on 21 March 1972 and loyalists responded with a mass rally outside Parliament Buildings. The rally was called by Craig's organisation, but as one contemporary observed, the proceeding were "indicative of the uneasy line to be drawn between the old Unionist government and the Vanguard."

Faulkner by his own admission "was shaken and horrified, and felt completely betrayed" over the introduction of direct rule and the Unionist Cabinet made the astute political decision to resign collectively. This placed them temporarily on the side of popular loyalist opinion. The appearance of Faulkner on the balcony at the rally shaking hands with Craig was a powerful symbol of Unionist unity. Indicative of the tensions within the party, Craig initially admitted that there had been a prior phone call between himself and Faulkner to arrange their joint appearance; it was only when Vanguard realised that they had been upstaged by the Prime Minister that they issued an angry denial.

Faulkner asked Craig to participate in the Darlington Conference to map out a way forward for Northern Ireland with the liberal Alliance Party and the Northern Ireland Labour Party. "It was the acid test", Faulkner recalled, "as to whether I was going to be able to bring him along with me or whether the pressure on him from his Vanguard organisation would lead to a renewed split between us." Craig refused outright, "I can in no way participate in a conference which

is an attempt to set aside the constitutional and democratic processes." He was only in the Unionist Party in so far as it could be a vehicle to reverse the recent reforms and was not interested in taking responsibility for any positive proposals.

The breach between the Unionist Party and Vanguard began to widen. In April 1972 Craig made a speech to the Monday Club, a right-wing fringe of the Conservative Party, warning: "When we say force, we mean force. We will only assassinate our enemies as a last desperate resort when we are denied our democratic rights." Not only Faulkner but hardliner Harry West and the Vanguard deputy leader, Captain Austin Ardill, criticised the speech. Ardill's distancing from Craig's belligerent tone made him unpopular with some Vanguard members, and he faced calls for his resignation.

The final breach came in March 1973 when at the Ulster Unionist Council (UUC), Faulkner proposed to open discussions with the Secretary of State, William Whitelaw, on the British government Northern Ireland Office's proposals for a new power-sharing government between Unionists and Nationalists.

The Unionist Party had not yet committed itself to anything so ambitious but even opening up discussion on the basis of the proposals was too much for Vanguard members. The vote on opening up discussions was 348 in favour to 231. A number of delegates walked out and Craig soon published a letter of resignation from the governing UUC. He made it

clear that the break was final by calling for members to join him in the formation of a new party: the Vanguard Unionist Progressive Party (VUPP).

Now competing with the Unionist Party, the VUPP tried to rest on the support of loyalist paramilitaries. The largest was the Ulster Defence Association (UDA), formed from local Protestant vigilante organisations in the summer of 1971. Craig set up a phantom organisation, the Vanguard Service Corps (VSC). He tried and failed to attract many UDA men but the organisation allowed Vanguard a seat at the paramilitary table alongside the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and other loyalist groups.

The alliance between Vanguard and the loyalist paramilitaries was characterised by mutual distrust. The paramilitaries resented attempts by the politicians to control them, while the politicians were worried about the reputational damage that could be suffered by associating with what one Craig supported called "these elements."

These tensions would manifest themselves most strongly during the UWC strike. The trigger for the strike was the new power-sharing government.



Brian Faulkner, Gerry Fitt and John Hume at Sunningdale, 1973

quarters on Hawthornden Road in the leafy east Belfast suburbs. It was chaired by Captain Austin Ardill, and attended by Petrie and a group of workers from key industries. There from the Belfast shipyard was Harry Murray, a popular union rep with no record of association with the discredited LAW. Suspicious of Vanguard, and politicians in general, Murray nearly walked out but was eventually persuaded to become the chairman of the new, yet unnamed, organisation. All were agreed, however, on holding another strike for political purposes against power-sharing and the Council of Ireland.

The initial meetings were not promising. Though the body nominally had a 21-member committee, its first meeting only attracted eight. The next meeting attracted 9, including Paisley, Craig and West, and decided to call the organisation the UWC. The politicians were unhappy; it seemed ludicrous that an organisation that could not organise its own committee would be able to launch a general strike.

24 February 1974 was initially set as the date for the strike. However, British Prime Minister Ted Heath called a general election for that date because he was in a battle with the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) over pay restraint. Anti-power-sharing unionists mobilised under the slogan "Dublin is just a Sunningdale away" and almost swept the board. Of the 12 Northern Ireland seats in the House of Commons, the UUUC won 11. It got over half of the total votes. The only pro-Sunningdale MP left was Gerry Fitt, allowing the loyalists to claim that the new Assembly was illegitimate.

The strike date was moved to 8 March, and then to 14 March. Some in the UWC were getting frustrated with Murray. Of these, the most important was Billy Kelly, a power worker who threatened to go ahead on his own and use electricity cuts to paralyse the North.

In contrast to the shambles of the UWC, the loyalist paramilitaries were organised. Every Wednesday during April 1974, Glenn Barr, an Assembly-member with public connections to the UDA, convened a meeting of up to 30 representatives of all the loyalist paramilitaries. These included not only the UDA and the UVF, but the Orange Volunteers, the USCA, and other minor groups.

The UDA also wanted to re-build the loyalists' trade union connections. Its commander, Andy Tyrie, decided that the easiest way would be to influence the new UWC. He invited the UWC to a meeting in the UDA headquarters near the Shankill Road in west Belfast, with both the paramilitaries and the workers agreeing not to invite the politicians. The UDA's intention was to nail the UWC down to a date, and suggested 14 May when the Assembly was due to ratify the Sunningdale Agreement. The decision to launch the strike, then, was not a UWC decision; the push was given by the UDA.

The strike was not to be the token affair envisaged by the politicians, and Craig, Paisley and West were hostile to it. On 14 May, Murray and other UWC members were watching the Assembly debate from the public gallery. Later in the day, there was a heated exchange of views between the UWC and the loyalist leaders. Murray recalled that the UWC men "were worried they seemed to have no will to win. We told them they were bankrupt of idea and were finished as far as leading the people was concerned... I was greatly distressed to hear Craig say in that room that we wouldn't last twelve hours, that we would not get support... They didn't seem to care and we walked out of the room."

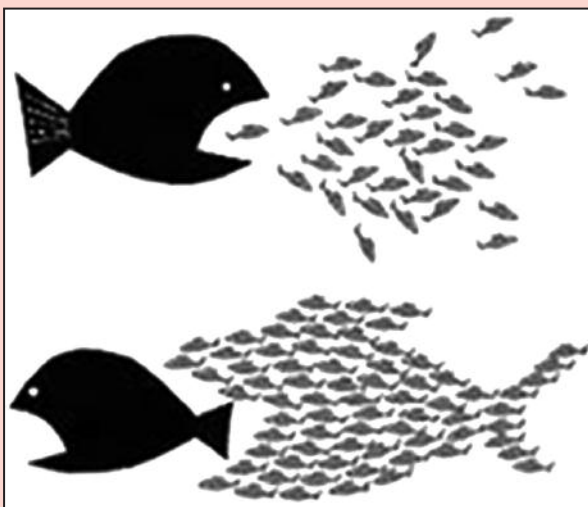
• Part two next week

Labour

By B.B.

While the ages changed and sped
I was tolling for my bread.
Underneath my sturdy blows
Forests fell and cities rose.
And the hard reluctant soil
Blossomed richly from my toil.
Palaces and temples grand
Wrought I with my cunning hand.
Rich indeed was my reward—
Stunted soul and body scarred
With the marks of scourge and rod.
I, the tiller of the sod,
From the cradle to the grave
Shambled through the world — a slave.
Crushed and trampled, beaten, cursed,
Serving best, but served the worst,
Starved and cheated, gouged and spoiled.
Still I builded, still I toiled,
Undernourished, underpaid
In the world myself had made.
Up from slavery I rise,
Dreams and wonder in my eyes.
After brutal ages past
Coming to my own at last.
I was slave — but I am free!
I was blind — but I can see!
I, the builder, I, the maker,
I, the calm tradition breaker,
Slave and serf and clod no longer,
Know my strength — and who is stronger?

From *Young Spartacus*, youth paper of the US Trotskyists, 1932



POWER-SHARING

On 28 June 1973, an election was held to a new 78-seat assembly. The Unionist Party was in disarray, split between pro- and anti-power sharing candidates. On the anti- side were 12 Unionists, eight members of Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), seven members of Vanguard, and three other loyalists. On the pro-power sharing side were 19 members of the nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), 8 members of Alliance and 20 pro-White Paper Unionists. The majority of unionists/loyalists opposed power-sharing, but Faulkner could rule in a coalition with the SDLP and Alliance.

In November 1973, the SDLP, Alliance and Faulkner's Unionists reached an agreement with representatives of the British and Irish governments (the Sunningdale Agreement). It safeguarded the position of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom so far as the majority wished and instituted a cross-border Council of Ireland recognising the claim of the Republic of Ireland to have a say in the affairs of Northern Ireland, subject to Unionist veto.

The Council of Ireland proved a step too far for many Unionists. It was a limited advisory body with little power, but in the words of historian Don Anderson, "many Unionists had only to hear the name of the body to be opposed to it."

On 1 January 1974, the new Northern Ireland Executive was sworn in, led by Chief Executive Brian Faulkner and Deputy Chief Executive Gerry Fitt, from the SDLP. But three days later Faulkner's own party rejected the Sunningdale Agreement by 427 votes to 374, leaving the new Chief Executive without a party machine or headquarters, ruling only with his other party allies in the new Assembly.

This considerably strengthened the hand of the anti-Sunningdale Unionists. The new Official Unionist leader Harry West led his party into a coalition with the DUP and Vanguard; it became the United Ulster Unionist Council (UUUC). They sought to make the Assembly unworkable, occupying the front bench, removing the mace, and starting a partial boycott of proceedings.

THE FORMATION OF THE UWC

The most ominous developments lay outside of the Assembly, amongst loyalist paramilitary and workers' organisations. The Ulster Workers' Council (UWC), the front behind which the strike was eventually organised, had its roots in the now-defunct Loyalist Association of Workers (LAW). LAW was formed by Belfast shipyard union official Billy Hull in 1971, and had strong links to the UDA. It had been tarnished as a result of a previous failed strike by loyalists in February 1973, which led to five fatal shootings, including that of a fireman fighting a blaze in the Protestant Sandy Row.

In November 1973, Hugh Petrie, a Shorts aircraft worker, had the idea of forming a new loyalist workers' organisation. Together with an official from Vanguard, he met with contacts in power stations, grain mills and engineering works around Belfast.

A secret meeting took place in the Vanguard party head-

Tube strike forces concessions: keep up the pressure!

By Ira Berkovic

The RMT rail union suspended its three-day strike on 5-8 May after the union reached a settlement with London Underground management.

The settlement commits management to actually carrying out the station-by-station review first promised after the February strikes, sets out a timescale for this (by 23 May), and establishes a framework for proper trade union input. The settlement also commits managements to discussions to "ensure" that workers who previously faced pay cuts will be re-located to a role of at least equivalent salary.

LU has also committed to pause the implementation of "Fit for the Future", including the voluntary severance procedures through which it planned to make job cuts, while the review takes place.

Of course, this deal is not

perfect. But it is an advance on the position before last week's strike, and does buy us some time to try and step up our organisation and press for more concessions.

Management promised a station-by-station review after our first, very solid, strike in February. But, once the pressure had eased off, they were allowed to back-track on this. They can't be let off the hook again.

Whether the review leads to any ticket offices staying open will depend on mobilisation over the next few weeks rather than on the exact wording of this deal. The wording from February — that it may lead to some ticket offices staying open — has not been revoked and remains on the company's intranet.

Some local community uproar in defence of their local ticket office would be really useful. The Hands Off London Transport campaign coalition will be crucial to organising that,

starting with the action organised by Transport for All at 2pm at Brixton station on Tuesday 6 May.

The definitive commitment to ensure no worker loses pay is a step forward. Management had previously spoken unofficially about this, or about extending the three-year protection of earnings to more staff, for longer, but this is a more concrete commitment. While it does not address the central problems of the overall reduction in staffing levels and ticket office closures, it does mean that staff who, prior to the strikes, were staring down the wrong end of a £6,000 to £12,000 pay cut are no longer doing so.

Management, and TSSA, might say that this would have happened anyway, and that it was down to negotiations, not strikes. But without the strikes, and the threat of further strikes, management would have been under no pressure

whatsoever in the negotiations themselves. We know they have a far-reaching austerity project: if they could have gotten away with it, of course they would have slashed pay. Our strikes stopped them; that should encourage us.

But the struggle is far from over. Here are our suggestions for the next steps...

- keep up the fight — don't drop the ball; the strike being suspended does not mean that the dispute is over
- name action now to start after the end of this review so that management know we expect it to deliver results and so that members are prepared for action
- industrial action should consist of strikes, and also action short of strikes, with each grade/function/area taking action that its members believe will be most effective (eg. overtime ban on stations, work-to-rule on fleet, etc.)

- relaunch the existing strike committee as a democratic body with delegates from all grades and branches

- serious fundraising can build a substantial fighting fund to help members facing hardship from industrial action

- mobilising public opposition to the cuts can make the difference and help us win — hold a major central rally, set up HOLT groups in every area and for every line, organise mass leafleting, protests, target politicians etc.

- **more effective political campaigning, with more rank-and-file input: RMT members should be able to use their union's Parliamentary Group and supporters on the GLA to ramp up political pressure on Boris Johnson and the Tories, through lobbies, demos, motions in Parliament and the GLA, and other initiatives.**

Higher Education dispute ends

By a UCU member

The UCU dispute in higher education was called off on 2 May after a campaign of strike actions over eight months.

In an e-ballot there was a 5:1 majority to settle on a 53% turnout.

The dispute, launched in October 2013, was to recover the 13% loss of pay experienced by University workers from 2008 through to 2012. But as the settlement provides no more than 1% for 2013/4 and another 2% for 2014/5, fails to keep up with inflation and will lead to further erosion of pay.

The 2014/5 2% settlement is above the 1% ceiling that the government want to maintain elsewhere in the public sector. But as 2% is not an adequate reflection of what was possible, it is not a strong incentive to other public sector workers to go into dispute.

Throughout the pay dispute there were hopes that the NUT would be renewing action. Whilst the NUT also took strike action in 2013, it was separate from the UCU.

The UCU-left did call for joint action with the NUT whenever the NUT looked as though it was going to take action. But to our knowledge there was no attempt by activists in either the NUT or UCU to map out any joint action together. Ultimately it was the lack of any such plan that led to UCU members deciding to settle the dispute.

The Independent Broad Left (IBL), which currently carries a majority on the UCU's Higher Executive Committee (HEC), refused to escalate the dispute after strike days in both October and December. It carries the majority of the blame for the failure.

Like strikes in many public sector services, it is hard for those in universities to hit economically or politically. The strikes got very poor media coverage. However the strikes did help mobilise other forces on campus against austerity, with students engaging in militant support action.

After Christmas the only actions were two ineffectual two hour strikes. A work-to-rule in operation did not

really bite. Non-strike action is always more difficult to maintain when confidence is low.

The marking ban faced similar difficulties, especially after it had been pushed back from January to 6 May, reducing both the effectiveness and the numbers that could take part.

The UCU-left had attempted to get the HEC of UCU to respond to any pay docking over the marking ban with a national strike, but failed. The ballot was therefore conducted with members fearful for their students, their union and themselves.

Given the clearly predictable result of a ballot where concern on the marking ban was prominent, it is surprising that the UCU-left went along with it. It would have been far better to ballot solely on this year's claim.

The left in the UCU, indeed in all of our unions, have to realise that if action is to be successful, it has to be escalated quickly and in concert with other unions.



Save Lambeth College!

By a Unison member

Lambeth College workers struck on Thursday 1 May.

Workers are fighting the introduction of reduced terms and conditions for new workers, creating a two-tier workforce at the college and threats to the terms and conditions of current staff.

An all out indefinite strike by members of the UCU union had been announced. However the bosses at Lambeth College obtained an injunction against that action. The 1 May strike was exempt from the injunction and so went ahead.

The new package of conditions, which include reduced sick pay entitlement, increased hours and reduced holiday, are a national initiative for further

education from The Association of Colleges, with Lambeth College the first to try to introduce them. This dispute therefore has national significance.

The attack on terms and conditions runs alongside the sell-off of the Brixton site of Lambeth College. Brixton college is to be reduced by two-thirds its current size. Education Secretary Michael Gove has granted part of the site to Trinity Free School Academy.

UCU have decided to appeal the injunction and a hearing for that will be later this month. A solidarity march has been called for Saturday 17 May. UCU have also decided to rebal-

Unison members at the college have voted 83% in favour of striking.

Firefighters escalate

By Darren Bedford

Firefighters took industrial action over three days last week as the FBU's pensions long-running battle escalated.

Firefighters in England and Wales took strike action between noon and 5pm on 2 May, between 2pm on 3 May and 2am on 4 May and between 10am and 3pm on Sunday 4 May.

There was also a ban on voluntary overtime across England and Wales from 3pm on 4 May until noon on 9 May, and in Scotland a ban on voluntary overtime between noon on 2 May and noon on 9 May.

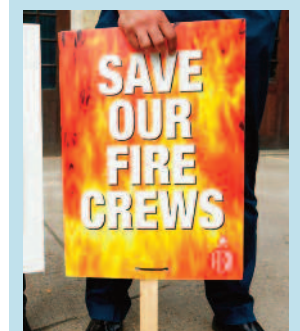
The action was provoked by the prevarication and evasiveness of the Westminster government, despite months of fresh negotiations and a delay of 17 weeks since the last strike.

The FBU asked the government to table its new proposals from the recent talks by 24 April. When no offer was forthcoming, these strike dates were set.

At that point, the fire minister Brandon Lewis told the union that the government was no longer willing to discuss the issue and would now impose their original proposals. But a leaked letter to fire service employers from the government showed they had fully-costed alternatives ready since 19 March, but failed to provide them to the FBU.

This has further angered firefighters. During discussions, the government has admitted there are huge problems expecting firefighters to work to 60 — yet it has refused to provide any written guarantee to address these concerns. Firefighters fear they will be sacked or get half the pension they have paid for.

The dispute seems set to rumble on and may well escalate.





Behind the arrest of Gerry Adams

By Sean Matgamna

A new mural on a Belfast wall, painted in response to the arrest and detention for four days (30 April-4 May) of Gerry Adams, comes close to proclaiming Adams a saint: "Man of the people: Peacemaker, Leader, Visionary"... That view of him is held by many northern Ireland Catholics.

Adams, the leader of Sinn Fein, member of Dail Eireann, could not have been arrested and held for four days on the mere say-so of middle-ranking Northern Ireland police officers. His arrest must have been sanctioned at the highest level.

Who sanctioned it? Why?

Who will benefit? Sinn Fein's leaders indignantly point out that they are in the middle of an election campaign. This reminder of Sinn Fein and the IRA's past may have been intended to damage them in the election, to reduce the Sinn Fein vote to hard-core supporters.

It isn't difficult to see why the arrest of Gerry Adams in Belfast, and his prolonged questioning in custody, should anger and perplex Republicans. Adams was being questioned about the abduction and murder of a suspected informer, Jean McConville, more than 40 years ago, in 1972.

Martin McGuinness, the sub-states Deputy First Minister, spoke about the "dark forces" in the PSNI. He came close to making a threat that Sinn Fein would break with the Police Service Northern Ireland unless Adams was released.

Unionists responded with the accusation that he was "bullying the police".

After his release, the much more subtle politician Adams pledged continued Sinn Fein support to the PSNI. But McGuinness' threat will continue to reverberate in both the Protestant and Catholic segments of the population

The main beneficiaries,



however unlikely, will be the dissident republicans, who see Adams and Sinn Fein as traitors to republicanism.

Adams is an ardent supporter of the Northern Ireland government and the Police Service of Northern Ireland. He led the IRA to end its long war, disarm, and enter mainstream politics. His party, Sinn Fein, supplies the power-sharing Northern government with its Deputy Chief Minister, Martin McGuinness.

That Adams, who has played such a big part in ending the conflict which engendered the killing of Jean McConville, should now be apprehended in connection with a long-ago incident in that war, is strange indeed.

PSNI

The PSNI turning on Adams like that will seem to many Northern Ireland Catholics to be proof that the PSNI is only another edition of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

The authorities claim that the police are not under political direction or control, that their investigations follow their own logic, go where the facts lead them.

And newly available testimony, that of one of Adams's closest political and military associates in the early 70s, Brendan Hughes, names Adams as the man who gave the order to kill Jean McConville.

Those were terrible times in Northern Ireland. IRA bombs were reducing the centre of towns to rubble. The British Army ran rampage in Catholic districts. Unionist assassins were picking off Catholics at random. But even against that background this was an exceptionally horrible deed.

The widowed mother of 10 young children living in the Divis flats at the bottom of the Catholic Falls Road, Jean McConville was taken by armed Republicans in full view of her children, who helplessly tried to stop them taking her. She was not found for 30 years, until her body was washed up on a beach.

It seems she was not in fact an informer. It was a miscarriage of even the rough justice in operation at that time.

For fear of reprisals by the supposedly non-existent IRA, her children have never dared identify those of their neighbours who, without masks, were part of a large group of Republicans that invaded McConville's flat to take her away. They now say they will bring a civil action against Adams and others for the killing of their mother.

Terrible, indefensible deeds, incidents in a terrible war that was both a half-suppressed Catholic-Protestant communal war and, for the Catholics, a war against the powerful British state. It

is not hard to imagine the hysteria that must have gripped those who killed Jean McConville and those of her neighbours who turned so savagely on the widow — and on the children who were thereby doomed to be separated and to grow up in care.

That her children should want justice, and revenge, for both their mother and themselves, is only natural.

But it makes no political sense to treat even such terrible things as the killing of McConville as individual crimes that should now be punished after all these years as individual crimes.

PEACE PROCESS

Certainly it contradicts such aspects of the so-called peace process as the release of Republican and Loyalist convicted prisoners.

There was no general Amnesty, no Act of Oblivion covering all the past, in the peace process. The Republicans balked at agreeing to an "amnesty" for the deeds of the British Army during the long conflict. That is what now allows the police, in disregard of the political implications of the arrest of Adams, to treat the McConville case as just an individual crime, which it surely was not. It makes no sense to treat it in retrospect as an individual crime.

Calls for a South African style confession and rehabilitation ritual for de-toxi-

fying events during the conflict, miss the point about Northern Ireland. The conflict in South Africa is over. It ended in bourgeois-democratic majority rule. Only an unimaginable white reconquest of South Africa could undo that settlement.

In Northern Ireland, there is only a pro-tem settlement. The issues have not gone away. The conflict is not resolved. Under the Good Friday Agreement has been erected an intricate sectarian, political and social power-sharing structure.

With the help of 60 internal walls in Belfast, to keep the peace between adjoining Protestant and Catholic districts, this manages and regulates communal relations. But in doing that, in its way of doing that, it also strengthens, reinforces and perpetuates them.

The ratio of Unionist-Protestant to Nationalist-Catholic people continues slowly to shift in favour of the Catholic-nationalists —

that is, potentially in favour of a majority for Irish unity.

The politicians on both sides continue the old sectarian-national conflict, but in a legal, muted way. The past and past events are weapons in their jockeying for advantage, for legitimacy, for the moral-political high ground. What Gerry Adams did or may have done or is plausibly accused of having done 42 years ago is still a living factor in current Northern Irish politics and in the competition for the moral high ground.

It is astronomically improbable that there could be again a combination of the political-social elements that led to the breakdown of the old, Protestant majority, rule in Northern Ireland, the Catholic revolt and the IRA's long war. But the present arrangement is intrinsically unstable. It could begin to unravel.

At some point in the future, most likely, it will begin to unravel.

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