



Solidarity

For a
workers'
government

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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End the pay freeze!

See page 5

Build 10 July
public sector strike

2013 NHS PAY

Senior
managers

UP
36%

Nurses

DOWN
1%



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!

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Thailand: preparing for a long struggle

By Riki Lane

In the four weeks since the coup, the military have repressed, but not eliminated, dissent.

The wave of protests immediately after the coup was a big step and a break from the past. Showing enormous courage, Thai working people demonstrated in their hundreds and thousands. At first the military seemed non-plussed, then they started their crackdown. Even after rounds of arrests, people continued to protest in large numbers, finding inventive ways to organise such as changing the sites to places where they were not expected.

Arrests of activists have become widespread, mostly followed by release with warnings to be politically inactive or face more serious action. The military have become particularly organised about this rounding up of opponents and repressing any expression of dissent much more systematically than in the 2006 coup.

They are arresting any group of five people or more who can be interpreted as protesting. The resistance has taken their cues from art, appropriating Or-

well's 1984 and the three fingered salute from *The Hunger Games*. The military responded by shutting down a showing of 1984 in the Red Shirt stronghold of Chiang Mai, and arresting people for the three fingered salute.

Lèse majesté is being used against opponents, calling people in to present themselves to the military. This includes people from overseas, such as the UK SWP aligned Giles Ungpakorn, who fled Thailand after being charged with lèse majesté in 2009 for his account of the 2006 coup in his book *A Coup for the Rich*.

MIGRANTS

Now the military are attacking migrant workers-deporting 25,000 Cambodian workers since 1 June.

Together with reports of brutal assaults by police and soldiers, this has triggered a wave of Cambodian workers fleeing back across the border from Thailand into Cambodia.

The military has tightened grip and seems firmly in control. The yellow shirts have got what they wanted — an unelected government rather than the Red Shirt backed parties of Thaksin

and Yingluck Shinawatra, which have won every election since 2001. As they cannot win elections, the monarchist Yellow Shirts' call for an end to the "the tyranny of the parliamentary majority". Yellow Shirt leaders argue that elected members of parliament be "balanced" by appointment of "virtuous people".

Coup leader General Prayuth seems to support this: "We need to solve many issues ... even the starting point of democracy itself — the election ... Parliamentary dictatorship has to be removed." If the military will extend to the House of Representatives the system in the Senate introduced after the 2006 coup, where appointed Senators ensure a right wing majority. That anti-democratic Senate appointed judges and other officials who worked to undermine and bring down elected Red Shirt governments.

However, the military may find that "reforming" the constitution in this way encourages mass opposition. Thai working people have found a larger political voice and that they can elect governments that take some limited actions in their interests, and may refuse to accept the appearance of

electoral democracy without any substantial content.

The red shirt leaders are trying to keep everything quiet, but they had no control over the wave of protests immediately after the coup.

Long term left activists say people need to be cautious and prepare for a long struggle that can build towards another mass uprising, such as in 1973, 1992 and 2010. Their forces are small, and the labour movement is small and divided. However, huge numbers of Thai people are angry that their electoral wishes keep being overturned by the military and reactionary mobilisation. The large numbers who have been prepared to protest is a good sign for the chance to build a larger, more powerful pro-democracy movement. To achieve lasting gains, a movement is needed that can mobilise workers around their own interests, rather than relying on the big business oriented Red Shirt leadership.

Solidarity actions internationally have been small and uncoordinated. The labour movement around the world needs to work to organise solidarity. A good first step would be an international day of action.

Miliband calls for "proper" Orgreave investigation

By Phil Grimm

Ed Miliband has called for a "proper investigation" into police conduct during the bloody confrontation at Orgreave during the 1984-85 miners' strike.

The 'Battle of Orgreave' saw thousands of police violently confront picketing miners in South Yorkshire, leading to many injuries. Almost a hundred pickets were then arrested and charged with riot, unlawful assembly and other offences. However, when the cases came to trial, all collapsed and were dropped, undermined by fabricated or non-existent evidence.

Since then, campaigners have been waging a long fight for justice for the miners and their supporters who were physically beaten, maligned in the press and fitted up in court. On 14 June, a mass picnic and festival was held at Orgreave to commemorate the event. For decades, the Labour

Party has been half-hearted at best in its support. The Labour leaders' new statement is a significant step forward — presumably the passage of time and the overwhelming weight of evidence has made criticism of the South Yorkshire police safe enough even for Miliband.

The Independent Police Complaints Commission says it is still "scoping" evidence for an investigation.

Nazis organising in universities

Warwick Anti-Racism Society, supported by Warwick University UCU, organised a demonstration on 12 June, in protest against the rising presence of far-right extremists on their campus.

Over 200 students and trade union activists attended to oppose *National Action*, a group who want to "ethnically cleanse the UK of Jews and non-whites". They are targeting

universities because, according to their strategy pack, if they cannot tap into this market then they cannot succeed at all.

It is estimated that there are only 60 members nationally, but have caused enough trouble to gain national press attention.

National Action also held a demonstration in Liverpool earlier this month.

NCAFC plans for national demo

On 14-15 June, the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts hosted two national meetings, Class[room] Struggle and the Free Education Meeting.

Speakers involved in the dispute at Lambeth College opened the first event. Discussions throughout the day ranged from looking at the class struggle from a

gendered perspective, anti-racism campaigning and living wage struggles on campus.

The second event saw a broad group of activists vote on a set of action points, mandating those present to mobilise as many as possible for a national demonstration next term, to make a promotional film for free educa-

tion and to ask NUS to call a national free education meeting as part of its summer training, amongst others.

Despite the turn-out being unimpressive, the discussions were directed more sharply towards class struggle, direct action and the idea that this is all part of a fight for a better society.

The collapse in Iraq

By Martin Thomas

On Wednesday 11 June, the Al-Qaeda-oriented Sunni Islamist group ISIS seized control of Iraq's second-biggest city, Mosul.

It has taken several other cities in the Sunni-majority north and west. Before 11 June it already had control of Fallujah and much of Ramadi, and of significant areas in Syria.

Nadia Mahmood of the Worker-communist Party of Iraq told *Solidarity*:

"What's going on now with ISIS is a new phase of the sectarian violence which reached its peak in 2006-7 with the bombings in Samarra".

That simmering sectarian civil war died down in 2007-8 and after. But, said Nadia: "After the Arab Spring [in 2011], the Sunni [minority in Arab Iraq] became more assertive.

"In 2013, [Iraq's Shia-Islamist prime minister] Maliki ended the [peaceful, and not sharply Islamist] protest camps outside the roads to Fallujah and ignored their demands.

"Now in 2014, after the election two months ago, Maliki wants to stay in power and has marginalised even the other Shia parties. Because of the sectarian nature of the government, this sort of violence will happen again and again. Socialists need to call for a secular state.

"The left and the labour movement in Iraq are not powerful right now, so first of all we need a secular state without religious identity which will give us ground to build. The target now is to end the sectarian nature of the state".

Some of the roots of this collapse of the Iraqi state lie



Demonstrators chant for ISIS and hold Al-Qaeda flags in Mosul on 16 June

in what the USA did after invading in 2003. It disbanded much of the Iraqi state machine, including low-ranking people, and promoted "de-Ba'athification".

HEGEMONY

At first the USA hoped that pro-US and relatively secular people like Ahmed Chalabi and Iyad Allawi would create a pro-US Iraqi government.

But those neo-liberals turned out to be good at schmoozing US officials while in exile, hopeless at winning support from Iraqis in Iraq. Amid the chaos and rancour which followed the invasion and the destruction of everyday governance, the mosques and the Islamist factions won hegemony.

The US adapted and worked with people like Maliki. As Aso Kamal of the Worker-communist Party of Kurdistan told *Solidarity*: "The Americans made a political system that depended on balancing three ethnic and sectarian identities.

"Iraq had been a modern society, with sectarian divisions not so deep. These events are the product of the new system America

brought to Iraq. Especially with other powers like Turkey and Iran intervening, seeking their allies within the Iraqi system, it has been a disaster". Now Saudi Arabia has seized on the current crisis to call for the fall of Maliki and his replacement by "a government of national consensus".

Nadia Mahmood explained: "I think some of the Ba'athists saw the de-Ba'athification policy as targeting Sunnis more than Ba'athists. In fact there were Shia Ba'athists who held powerful positions in the state, and they were protected because they were Shia.

"So the Sunni Ba'athists went to the Sunni side and the Islamist side, not the Ba'athist side. They held to their religious identity".

According to Aso Kamal, Maliki's government is seen as a Shia government, and that rallies groups like ISIS and ex-Ba'athists against it.

For us in Workers' Liberty, the horrible events confirm the arguments we made during the previous simmering sectarian civil war in Iraq (especially 2006-7) for slogans of support for the Iraqi labour movement

and democracy against both the US forces and the sectarian militias, not the negative slogan "troops out". The two-word recipe "Troops out" then certainly entailed sectarian collapse like this one, only worse.

Now it is happening, even those who previously most ardently insisted that anti-Americanism must be the first step, and everything else could be sorted out later, dare not hail the ISIS advance and the Shia counter-mobilisation as "liberation" or "anti-imperialism".

CORRUPTION

Of course, rejecting the slogan "troops out" did not mean supporting the US, any more than being dismayed at the ISIS advance means endorsing Maliki.

The sudden collapse of the Iraqi army as the relatively small ISIS force advanced shows how corrupt and discredited the state has become.

Nadia Mahmood explained: "Soldiers from Mosul were saying that even when ISIS were still far away from the city, the leaders of the army took off their military clothes and

left the soldiers. The Mayor of Mosul told the soldiers are saying that there was a deal".

The knock-on effect of the ISIS victories is a sharpening on the other side of Shia sectarianism. As Nadia Mahmood says: "Now the Shia political parties are becoming closer to each other and calling for resistance. There is a sectarian agenda against the Sunni". Aso Kamal adds: "Sistani and Maliki are also calling for a holy war. This is taking Iraq back centuries. It could become like Somalia. That will destroy the working class. It is a very dark scenario".

Workers' Liberty believes that defence of the labour movement in Iraq, which will be crushed wherever ISIS rules and in grave danger where the Shia Islamists are mobilising, should be a main slogan now, alongside the call for a secular state.

"ISIS", says Aso Kamal, "have announced what they are going to do. Women must stay at home. Nothing must be taught in schools outside the Quran. There will be no freedom of speech. They are like the Taliban".

"I'm not sure how ISIS came to Iraq", says Nadia Mahmood, "and whether they are popular even amongst Sunnis. Maybe they are allied with the Ba'athists. But are there more Sunnis supporting them? Many Sunnis seem very scared and oppose ISIS.

"It is horrible what is going on". But, now they have power and access to big arsenals, "ISIS may keep hold of the Sunni cities, such as Mosul and Tikrit, for some time. It's obviously not the same for Baghdad.

"Bringing in Iranian groups to fight ISIS will

only encourage sectarian discourse and maybe accelerate Shia-Sunni polarisation. Already Maliki is accused by ISIS, and by the Ba'athists, of being an Iranian agent. Whether Iranian intervention calms the situation or it worsens it is unclear.

"Many people in Iraq would prefer the United States to attack ISIS. They have come all the way from Mosul to 60 km outside Baghdad, killing in their wake. I don't know if they stay longer how many crimes they will commit, how many tragedies are going to happen. People in Baghdad feel very scared now".

That doesn't mean endorsing US bombing. The US's 12 years of bombing in Afghanistan have not installed a secular state, but rebuilt a base for the once-discredited Taliban.

As Aso Kamal explains: "The Americans have a common front against ISIS now. But the Americans are playing with both sides. They do whatever they think will stabilise the region and the markets, and ignore the future of the people. In reality, they are supporting reactionary forces in Iraq.

"The effect of the developing sectarian war will be to inflame nationalism in Kurdistan. Already the KDP and the PUK [the main parties] are asking people to support them in order to keep the territory which Kurdish forces have conquered".

For the Worker-communist Party of Kurdistan, "the main issue is to keep Kurdistan separate from this war. We say there should be a referendum and independence for [Iraqi] Kurdistan".

Ukraine: talks and tanks

By Colin Foster

On 13 June newly-elected Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko and Russian president Vladimir Putin spoke for the first time on the phone.

The Russian government has, for now, rejected calls from the pro-Russian separatists in control in Donetsk (eastern Ukraine) to send Russian troops into Ukraine.

Yet in several respects a negotiated settlement looks somewhat further away.

Russia has stopped gas supplies to Ukraine, citing unpaid bills. Ukraine has lodged a counter-claim for a refund on gas purchases for which, it says, it paid too high a price.

Ukraine says it has enough gas in stock to last some months, and both Russia and Ukraine say that supplies of

Russian gas through Ukraine to Western Europe will continue.

The Kiev government continues small-scale military action to regain territory in the east, and claims to have regained control in Mariupol. More people have died in the fighting.

The Ukrainian government, backed up by US authorities and partially by NATO, which has published satellite photos, claims to have spotted three Russian tanks in operation in eastern Ukraine.

Putin's aim is probably a deal giving Russia guarantees over the whole of Ukraine, but the separatist regime in Donetsk is useful to him as a fallback and bargaining counter.

We support the right of Ukraine to national self-deter-



mination; seek to help the frail Ukrainian left to unite workers in Ukraine, east and west, against all the oligarchs; and demand that the West gives Ukraine real help by cancelling debts.

Planning for May 2015

Workers' Liberty
By Martin Thomas



Solidarity and Workers' Liberty activists will seek in the May 2015 general election to work with other socialists in the Labour Party and in the labour movement to create a clear socialist voice within the campaign to win a Labour government.

As against Ukip, the Tories, the Lib-Dems, possible Tory-Ukip or Tory / Lib-Dem coalitions, or a possible Labour / Lib-Dem coalition, we are in solidarity with the broad labour movement and its desire for a Labour government.

Yet Labour leaders say they will continue cuts, and are designing policies for government through unaccountable ca-

bals rather than democratic debate in the labour movement.

A campaign is also necessary to promote working-class and socialist measures, as demands for the labour movement to press upon the Labour leaders, and as policy for working-class struggle under and against a new Labour government. We will ask other socialist groups to join us in this campaign.

The campaign does not rule out Workers' Liberty, or other groups within the campaign, supporting good non-Labour left candidates where they can advance socialist ideas and not help the Tories.

However, the prospects on those lines are poor. Despite investing much effort and money, the TUSC coalition run by the Socialist Party and the RMT union had poor results on 22 May. That was true even in areas like Lewisham and Coventry, where before 2010 the Socialist Party had for two decades had a number of councillors, who stood as socialists and not just on the minimal anti-cuts platform of TUSC.

No2EU did very badly (0.2%), and on a platform which we consider not left-wing. Left Unity did little on 22 May. It looks like doing little in May 2015, and that little on a blurred "broad left" platform.

On the basis of experience in previous elections, we believe that for socialists to go out seeking sponsors, getting motions in support through labour movement bodies, producing leaflets, asking trade-union bodies to use their text and their demands in communications to members around the election, and running street stalls, while backing a Labour victory, is the best way to get socialist ideas heard at election time.

A basic decision on these lines was made by a national Workers' Liberty meeting on 14 June. We will now set about discussions with other socialists about how best to shape and launch the effort.

Vladimir Derer, strategist of Labour's left

In the early 1980s, the forerunners of *Solidarity* and *Workers' Liberty* both worked closely with Labour left strategist Vladimir Derer, and debated sharply with him. Here we print a tribute to Vladimir, who died on 10 June, by Jon Lansman, a self-described "Dererite".

By Jon Lansman

Vladimir Derer, who was the leading figure in the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) for forty years after its foundation in 1973, has died at the age of 94.

Although almost unknown other than amongst Labour activists, he was the Labour left's leading strategist at the height of its influence in the 1970s and 1980s. His strategic vision made CLPD, the most effective organisation on the Labour left through to the New Labour years and the present.

Tony Benn was rightly regarded as the Labour left's outstanding leader and communicator of the period but he was often wrongly credited with being the architect of the movement for democratic reform within the party. That role was performed by Vladimir Derer.

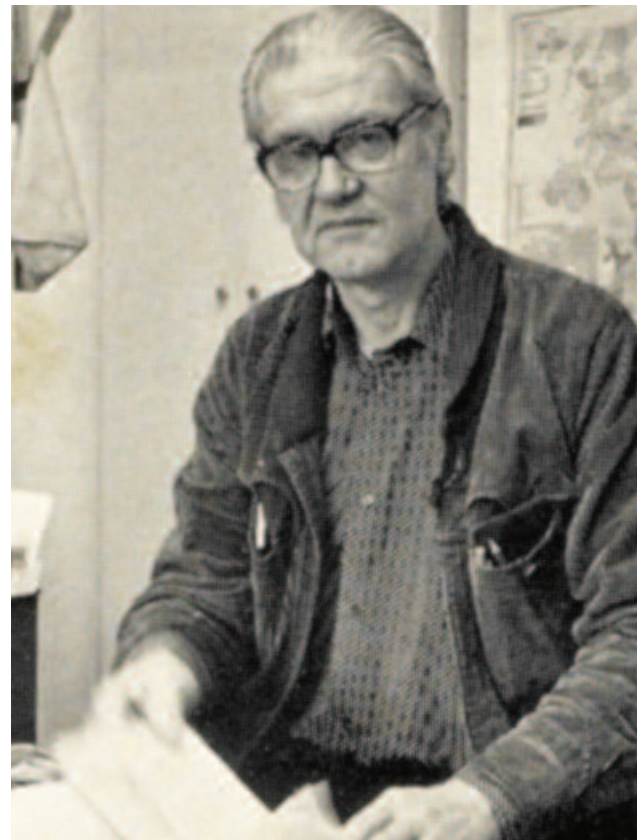
Without Vladimir, there would have been no mandatory reselection of MPs, no electoral college in which Tony Benn could come within a whisker of winning the deputy leadership of the party and in which Ed Miliband was to win the leadership. Those two reforms together with the unrealised objective of Labour's manifesto being determined by its elected executive were CLPD's core objectives through the 1970s.

Immediately after the victories on mandatory reselection and the wider franchise for the election of the leader, the 1980s, CLPD was, at Vladimir and his wife Vera's instigation, the first organisation on the Labour left to take up the representation of women and BME communities within the party, and amongst its candidates for public office.

In the long period from 1981 until 2010 in which the gains of the Labour left were gradually reversed, in which internal party elections and selections gradually replaced socialists with careerists, it was Vladimir's tenacity and strategic leadership which kept CLPD going. Although the left was in a depleted state by the end of Blair's premiership, demoralised and driven into opposition to the disastrous Iraq war, to privatisation and to neoliberalism, it was not nearly as weak as it would otherwise have been. In 2010, it helped Ed Miliband to victory over his brother.

Although Vladimir's leadership of CLPD was never disputed, that is not to say that his views went unchallenged or without debate — a process that Vladimir would always encourage. Encouraging debate, however, did not mean that he accepted criticism easily.

One of Vladimir's most consistent themes related to the need for the Labour left to focus upon and win the support of Labour's centre ground — the support of Labour loyalists who often held contradictory positions, supporting left policies whilst also being loyal, deferential even, to Labour's leadership. He criticised other left groupings because, he said (in the CLPD Bulletin of January 1986), they: "do not attempt



to win the support of the majority, or if they believe that is what they are doing, the methods they choose to adopt to pursue their basic aims ensure they are not realised."

"The basic problem of the Left [is] ... its unwillingness and therefore inability to come to terms with the political environment of bourgeois democratic institutions which constitute the framework for activity... [and have] displayed a degree of stability quite unexpected by those who prophesied their inevitable collapse.

...[Their survival] cannot be put down just to the 'betrayal' of the leaders of mass working class parties ... the fact that the great majority of members of these parties chose to follow reformist leaders rather than 'revolutionary' critics was not accidental".

Vladimir rejected both the traditional left reformist faith that radical change was possible through socialist activities within the Labour Party, and the faith of those to the left of Labour in the transformational potential of "mass movements, springing up spontaneously in places of employment and within working class communities. Such movements would create [their] own organs of political power, by-pass representative parliamentary institutions, come into conflict with them and ultimately replace them."

Instead, Vladimir believed the left should take parliamentary democracy seriously but needed to focus on winning the support of the Labour Party membership to a socialist programme by building a rank and file organisation which was:

"opposed to the leadership but built on a programme that at any given time is acceptable to the mass of the party's individual and affiliated membership."

If the Labour Left doesn't do that, then, like the left outside Labour, they are relying on "being rescued from their chronic political impotence by spontaneously arising mass movements." A radical reforming government, however, elected on such a programme, pushing beyond the limits of a capitalist framework, will provoke a crisis which will create the potential for radical change. Where this disappointed others on the Labour left was the requirement to put aside campaigning objectives which were not capable of winning a majority. There is no purpose to generalised socialist propaganda.

Going beyond what the majority are capable of accepting, given their existing level of consciousness, only serves to alienate people and results in a failure to win that majority.

DERERITES

Many of us who worked with Vladimir came to share this outlook. We may call ourselves Bennites, but in many ways we are really Dererites.

The over-riding priority in intra-party campaigning is creating the organisation necessary to win a majority of the party to the required programme. Sometimes this did create some tension between Vladimir and Tony Benn, whose outlook was rather different. It was the conflict between on the one hand a preacher, a prophet, essentially a Christian socialist, who had "lived in the oral tradition, learning from listening and watching rather than from reading, and communicating by speaking rather than writing"; and on the other hand a strategist, an organiser, essentially a Marxist, who was steeped in political theory and the organisational requirements for socialist transformation. But Vladimir was one of a tiny number of people Tony trusted who would also express strong disagreement with him.

Vladimir Derer, like Tony Benn, was the son of a cabinet minister. His father, van Dérer, had been a Social Democratic minister in various Czech governments from 1920 until the Munich agreement between Hitler, Chamberlain et al in 1938. He was involved in the anti-fascist resistance in Prague and interned in Theresienstadt as a result but survived to chair the Czechoslovakian Labour Party until the Communist Party consolidated its control in 1948.

Vladimir, himself, a nineteen year-old with Trotskyist sympathies at the time, escaped in 1939 via Poland to Britain. His Jewish girlfriend and other friends with whom he travelled were denied visas, and Vladimir was able to obtain one only because of his father's reputation.

Following military service, working as a translator and as a courier, he didn't settle into a life of political activity, supported by his second wife, Vera, until well into his middle years. Although he was active in Trotskyist politics in the late 1940s, he was politically inactive for many years until he joined the Labour Party in the early 1960s. Thereafter, it became his life's work.

• Abridged. Full article: bit.ly/v-derer

End the pay freeze!

Senior bosses in the NHS have enjoyed an average pay rise of 6.1% over the last two years. Some have also received bonuses of up to £40,000, more than double the annual salary of many frontline NHS staff.

A *Daily Mirror* study showed the overall increase in non-basic pay (bonuses, overtime, and other perks) for senior NHS staff in 2013 was 36%. Meanwhile, Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt has refused to follow the advice of the NHS Pay Review Body and give frontline workers a pay increase. The Review Body was recommending just one per cent. Even that was too much for a government committed to driving down working-class living standards.

The announcement should give added impetus to the developing public sector pay dispute. Unison, the biggest public sector union, meets in Brighton this week (15-20 June) for its Local Government sector and National Delegate Conference, where a fightback on pay will be discussed. Its local government members have already been balloted for strikes, with results due back on 23 June. Members of the GMB, Unite, PCS, NUT, and FBU across the public sector are expected to join a mass strike on pay on 10 July.

Unison's May 2014 Health sector conference also voted to ballot for strike action on the issue. The union has dragged its feet on preparing the ballot and cannot now bring NHS members out to join the 10 July strike. Activists in the NHS should push for that ballot to take place as soon as possible, and organise local actions such as lunchtime rallies in support of the 10 July strike.

NHS bosses are far from unique in the public sector. The Chief Executives of some local councils are paid nearly £300,000 per year, more than 16 times what a council worker earning the "London Living Wage" rate of £8.80 an hour would earn.

Transport for London Commissioner Peter Hendy is paid more than £650,000 per year, 4.5 times more than the Prime Minister, 22 times more than a London Underground Customer Service Assistant, and 35.5 times more than a cleaning worker. When Tube unions proposed cutting senior management pay as a way to avoid the alleged necessity to close ticket offices and cut staffing levels, they were told by bosses that TfL and LU management pay wasn't high enough!

The low pay crisis is a key terrain of class conflict in the Tories' austerity Britain. Workers face the longest wage squeeze since records began in 1964. Politicians of all political parties pay lip service to backing the "Living Wage": even Boris Johnson's City Hall proclaims its commitment to the



idea. But their words ring hollow when the Tory government blocks even meagre pay increases for NHS staff, and Labour leaders can't bring themselves to back national strikes for decent pay.

As huge pay hikes for top bosses further expose growing inequality, the labour movement must make 10 July the beginning of an ongoing fightback against low pay. The knowledge that our bosses receive more in bonuses than many of us earn in an entire year is a powerful impetus for protests and fights.

Build 10 July public sector strike

Up to a million workers may be on strike on 10 July. The strike could include Unison, GMB and Unite members in local government, the National Union of Teachers, the Fire Brigades Union and Public and Commercial Services union (PCS).

This is no small thing, either in numbers or significance. This will be the first time there has been a large scale public sector strike involving more than one sector since the 2011 pensions dispute. That battle ended in defeat, and activists in public sector unions will need to organise to ensure this strike does not meet the same fate.

In 2011, workers were mobilised for one-off strike days, separated by months of inactivity and relatively little communication between unions and members about developments in negotiations.

In some unions this pattern continues until this day. The remedy to that is not merely to strike for more days, converting one-day protest strikes into two-day protest strikes, but to make strikes part of ongoing programmes of action (including selective action as well as all-out strikes) directed

by local strike committees and discussed by members.

Strike funds should be levied at both local and national level to ensure the lowest-paid workers are supported in taking the sustained and escalating action that will be necessary to push the government back.

Workers in every sector should formulate clear demands for their disputes.

On the strike day activists should work to ensure the maximum participation of members, so they are not merely the foot soldiers of the union leaders.

In 2011 activists in some cities successfully held strike day members' meetings prior or after rallies. At these meetings members can discuss the dispute, the tactics, and what to be done next.

Socialists and trade unionists should use the opportunity of up to a million workers being mobilised for strike action to build confidence, win the argument about why and how we should fight, and start to organise local disputes so members are not demobilised between national strike days.

Boris's water cannon aimed at protests

Mayor of London Boris Johnson has bought three water cannons for the Metropolitan Police despite the use of these weapons not yet being authorised by the government.

Johnson claims that the use of water cannons could prevent disorder such as the London riots of 2011; it will allow the Met to counter-act any rioting this summer.

Water cannons are ill-suited for use on fast-moving groups of looters. Indeed, during the London riots, senior Met officers dismissed the usefulness of water cannon for preventing looting or vandalism. Water cannons are only really effective against stationary crowds, as a means of dispersing a static or slow-moving demonstration.

While Johnson plays on public fears about smashed shops and burnt high streets, the real targets of the Met's water cannon will be political protesters.

Water cannons are presented as a *safe* means of forcing a crowd to disperse, as a *compromise* enabling police to force people to retreat without physical harm. This is nonsense.

The cannons work by firing highly-pressurised water at sufficient speed to make people flee or be knocked from their feet. Any weapon capable of knocking people to the ground has the potential to cause serious injury.

In 2010, pensioner Dietrich Wagner was blinded whilst protesting in Stuttgart, his eyes knocked out of their sockets by water cannon. The cannon that did the damage was the same model that Johnson has bought.

Many London Assembly members opposed the acquisition of the cannons. Of the 25 members of the Greater London Authority (not including the Mayor) 20 voted against the purchase. Considering that Home Secretary Theresa May hasn't even granted police the power to use water cannon in England and Wales, Johnson's behaviour is not only undemocratic, but a gamble.

The media have speculated that the Mayor may be trying to force the May's hand, or to pose as being tougher on law-on-order, so that he can outmanoeuvre May in a Tory party leadership challenge. He is playing a dangerous game — but with our safety and our right to protest.



Riot police used water cannons to disperse people protesting after the Soma mine disaster that killed 301 miners in Turkey in March this year.

Art and Anarchy

Charlotte Zeleus and Dave Hetherington review *Comics Unleashed; Art and Anarchy in the UK* an exhibition now running at the British Library.

According to the curators Paul Gravett and John Harris Dunning and artistic director David McKean, the exhibition explores the British Library's collection of comics and plumbs the depths of private collections, to show the history of British sequential art, as well as its writers and artists. It partially succeeds.

The curators wanted to show the political history of comics, the medium's ability to subvert, and its role as a medium for analysing class, sexuality and ethnicity, not to mention the many occasions when it has become the subject of political battles.

The exhibition has some very interesting items in it but the curators tried to cover too much in one exhibition. By trying to be a comprehensive portrayal and analysis of both the political nature of comics and the history of British comics, the exhibition ultimately detracts from both.

Many will recognise the Guy Fawkes mask as a symbol of the Occupy movement, originating in Alan Moore and Dave McKean's dystopian graphic novel *V for Vendetta*. The exhibition plays on this to great effect. Every corner seems to be hosting its own 4-chan convention. Perhaps this highlights a flaw in the nature of the exhibition; if the intent is to explore the depth and variety of material, why concentrate so much on texts such as this and *Watchmen*? Moore himself has expressed dissatisfaction that the medium has moved on from what he once memorably described as "a bad mood I was in fifteen years ago."

Thankfully the curators do look at other comics and graphic novels that either reflected and analysed social and political situations of the time or subtly explored and parodied them through representations of all too familiar dystopian or utopian futures.

The savage (and often unnoticed) satire of 2000AD is represented by the seminal Judge Dredd fighting rival burger chain worshipping communities in a storyline so near the knuckle that publisher IPC allegedly had to run a free advert for Green Giant Corn in order to escape a lawsuit. This history is linked to the massively influential *International Times*, published from the 60s to early 90s.

Better still, the curators publicise the work of lesser known political comics, such as AARGH! (Artists Against Rampant Government Homophobia) which was published as anti Section-28 propaganda. The exhibition also includes a very interesting piece which tells the tale of a police officer who attended the Brixton Riots and examines his conflicting feelings about his role.

Another example of what's missing - some pages from Grant Morrison's legendary, long running classic *The Invisibles* were on display but barely anything was made of the fact that this was a book exploring political, sexual, psychological and gender transformations. For an exhibition that sets out to examine the relationship of comics and politics, much is missing.

Historically comics and graphic novels have been a medium where otherwise marginalised groups have been able to express themselves and represent their lives. Yet it is still a medium that is male-dominated.

The exhibition identifies and gives examples of the history of racist and sexist representation of oppressed groups in comics. For example an issue of *Heroine*, a 70s comic edited by Suzy Varty is shown. However this does little to address the ongoing debate about representation of women in comics, or the battle that women artists and writers still face getting published. And little of the revolutionary and innovative work by women representing themselves through comics is presented.

It's a little disappointing that the exhibition misses a trick here; mainstream comics aren't merely male dominated,

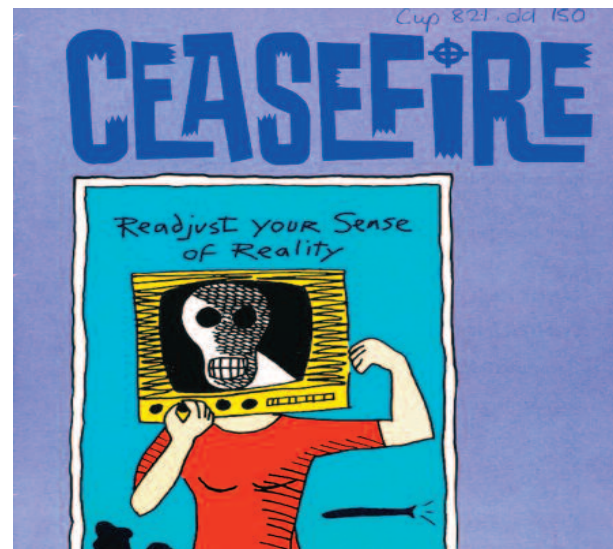
they're the product of an industry riddled with misogynistic attitudes, as regularly documented by the excellent Comics Alliance website.

We were excited to see the "Lets talk about sex" section, expecting to see examples and analysis of comics that have explored gender and sexuality from a liberatory and critical angle. However the exhibition focuses much more on the use of comics for erotica written by men for men, largely in the 1970s.

Whilst we do not cheerlead for the prudish anti-sex brigade, we feel the concentration on this material marginalised and patronised the ever-expanding number of comics about sex written by women about their own sexuality. In a different section, a copy of *Ceasefire* magazine, published by the (mainly) women's publishing group Fanny was ironically shoved in a corner. The same collective published an anthology called *Voyeuse: Women view Sex* which was not featured. Much of this material is rare but there is at least some to choose from. However the exhibition did feature a copy of *Sourcream*, a comic published by women from the late 70s that often featured feminist sex education and commentary.

There is an immeasurable wealth of material out there, from some of the first positive representations of working-class people, through the boundary-pushing late 1960s and into the anti-nuclear sentiments of the 1980s.

The last 25 years have seen British comics reach a similar standing to that which they're held in France and Japan. Comics continue to be a wonderfully amenable medium for analysis of class, gender, sexuality and ethnicity.



Ritzy campaign

A socialist who works at the Ritzy Picturehouse cinema in Brixton, South London and is involved in the workers' struggle for a Living Wage spoke to *Solidarity* in a personal capacity.

What's the nature of the workforce at the Ritzy?

Almost everyone is part-time; a lot have other jobs or projects they're working on. Some people have been there as long as 15 years, and then it's a huge range downwards. A lot of us haven't been there very long; me less than a year. But compared to many workplaces the Ritzy is an okay place to work, so people tend to stay.

We're mostly young. There are people from loads of different countries, mainly in Europe. The workforce is gender balanced and it's the only place I've worked where I've not experienced sexism. A lot of the managers are women.

The bulk of the workforce — front of house, bar workers, projectionists and office staff — are solidly organised. The people we don't have are outsourced workers, mainly security and the workers on the phone lines. They don't have union recognition. I guess this is something we need to work on. There are some managers who are sympathetic to the workers, but they're not the ones making decisions — or I should say implementing decisions. These are people who if we had democracy at work could do a decent job in cooperation with the workforce, but obviously that is not how things work under this system.

By the way, when the Living Wage dispute began, management suspended recruitment, but they've now started hiring again.

How has the Living Wage struggle developed?

I started working at the Ritzy in November, about a month after the dispute began. There were repeated meetings between the company, BECTU [the broadcasting and entertainment union] officials and our reps, and various so-called compromise proposals were floated. What's good is that there were frequent report backs and discussions at membership meetings, with the workers taking decisions.

The offers involved different permutations of performance-related pay. We oppose this for a number of reasons. One is that, even with these schemes, we wouldn't have come all the way up to £8.80 an hour. In any case, as a basic minimum, we want the full Living Wage as a right — for ourselves and for all Picturehouse workers.

Also, the performance schemes involve ridiculous assessments of how hard we're pushing various offers onto customers. I don't think it's good for customers when we are constantly pushing more stuff and the most expensive options. It reminds me of when I worked at WH Smith and we had to irritate everyone by offering them a discount bar of chocolate.

That's capitalism, isn't it? It's not what's best for workers or customers but what's best for making a profit.

Eventually it became obvious the negotiations were in an impasse, and we moved to strike action. We've had six strike days, I think, plus days when we didn't strike but organised protests. The strikes have been solid and effective, closing the cinema each time, with well-attended, lively picket lines.

Since the strikes began, management have cut off negotiations. They also refused to give us the pay rise other Picturehouses have had — 29p an hour, which is about four percent. Last week, we were supposed to have negotiations, but they cancelled them at the last minute and imposed the pay rise. But it didn't weaken us: it feels like they're in disarray and also the rush of back pay means workers feel more confident to carry on. It's nice to see management tripping over their feet!

Is this your first strike? What has it been like?

Yeah, this is my first strike. It's my first experience of workplace organisation. My mum's a teacher and has been on

n: “unleashing passion and creativity”



strike lots of times, and obviously I know all about exploitation from my previous jobs — mostly in shops. As a socialist, I pieced it together, and in fact my dissertation at university was about exploitation and inequality at work. But until I had the experience of getting organised, it was all a bit abstract.

I'm aware how lucky I am, in a way. How many socialists of my generation have been able to take part in a vibrant working-class struggle? Even most young workers in established organised sectors like public services don't have that experience.

The main thing that has struck me is the strength and depth of the relationships built between Ritzy workers during the dispute. It's far more intense than the ordinary experience of just working together. And also the unleashing of people's passion and creativity when they try to gain some control in their workplace. Up and down the country there are people bitching at watercoolers, but they don't see how it's political or imagine they could do anything to change things. When you get organised, it's different.

I was lucky but there's nothing special about the Ritzy. Everyone needs to think about how they can begin to organise at work.

Has it been a politicising experience?

This has confirmed my convictions, strengthened them and made them far more concrete.

I think working-class politics starts with the relationship between workers and management. If you can organise and make demands on management, why not the government? After all, we are the majority and we produce the wealth that makes society run. And workers' organisation, when it's strong, gives a workable model of how democracy could be made far more real than it is under capitalism.

There's another thing I think is interesting, which is the idea that you can — you should — have a decent and fulfilling life regardless of what you do. We're constantly encouraged to think we're going to strike it rich in the future, or at least that we're going to move on to something better. And that works very well for capitalism, obviously, because it prevents people from organising collectively for more and better where they are right now. I recently told someone I just worked in a bar, and he told me — don't say that, there's nothing wrong with working in a bar. Be proud. He was absolutely right. Getting organised at work is a big part of that.

If all workers were organised, then far more people would be politically engaged, and engaged in the direction of left-wing politics.

A few of the older workers were involved in a previous attempt to unionise the Ritzy and improve our wages, but the big majority of us have never been involved in a workers' struggle before. So most people aren't necessarily starting from a political place but of course the dispute has been politicising. Having a goal like the Living Wage means that there's a much easier starting place for thinking about politics.

Workers have got used to socialist groups visiting our picket lines, and are interested, though the heavy sell we get from the SWP is quite alienating.

What problems has the Ritzy struggle encountered?

I think the main one is stamina, keeping people going. Although it's been a wonderful experience, it hasn't been easy. This was my first workplace with a union, but before the dispute it was the first time I didn't feel like I needed one. Now that's changed. Management have us under pressure, and it's tough. We're doing well at supporting each and looking after ourselves while keeping the momentum. One thing that helps is the knowledge that this isn't just about us. It's part of a wider struggle for all Picturehouse workers and in fact all low paid workers.

How have you found BECTU?

Really good. It seems to me that Ritzy workers have been steering our own struggle, and we've got support rather than obstruction from our full time officials. I know there are horror stories in some other unions, but we've not had anything like that. I don't know if this is because BECTU's size makes grassroots control easier or what.

There seem to be the first shoots of progress in terms of spreading the union to other Picturehouses. We've made links at other cinemas in London and at at least one other Picturehouse in the north. Whenever we go to another cinema, we strengthen our links. Protests and leafleting by supporters must help too.

What do you think it will take to win?

I sometimes think it's a bit of a mystery why management haven't caved yet — surely they could save themselves money and trouble by giving in to what is actually a very modest demand. But I suppose they are afraid of us setting a “bad example” to other Picturehouse workers and they want to hold the line against the union and the threat of unionisation. After all, they have a lot of profits to lose!

The sale of the Picturehouse chain to Cineworld shows the

attitude of the people running it — they trade on the artsy, even pseudo-ethical, Picturehouse brand, but what they're all about is money. Cineworld will be harder to crack, because it's bigger and more corporate, but we can do it. We need to keep the action going, get more solidarity and stay determined. We've also decided call for a boycott of Picturehouses, so actions outside the cinemas can help spread that.

We've had very positive coverage in the *Evening Standard* and we're even using Boris Johnson's support for the Living Wage to embarrass our bosses.

More importantly, we've had great support from customers, from the community in Brixton and from other unions, particularly in Lambeth. The links with UCU and Unison at Lambeth College and the council have been particularly important: the Lambeth College dispute has had a real impact on Ritzy workers.

The more solidarity we get and the more we give the more confident we'll be. So please invite a speaker, spread the word and help us win.

Boycott Picturehouse!

Workers at The Ritzy, the Picturehouse Cinema in Brixton, South London, have been striking over the company's refusal to pay staff the London Living Wage.

The company likes to portray itself as progressive and radical, nurturing independent talent and the arts — yet nothing could be further from the truth. Picturehouses sold to Cineworld in 2012, netting Managing Director Lyn Goleby £9 million, and the group made £31 million in profits. Yet they say they cannot afford to pay a living wage to their staff.

The Ritzy has now imposed a 4% rise, leaving wages below the poverty line. Almost all Picturehouse staff are paid below the poverty line.

As a result, BECTU has called for a national boycott of Picturehouse Cinemas until they resolve the dispute and agree a deal with workers at The Ritzy.

Activists are organising a week of petitioning and leafleting from 13-21 June.

Yes, Russia is imperialist!

By Dale Street

At critiqueofcrisistheory.wordpress.com, Sam Williams has written 16,000 words to claim that Russia is not imperialist, even when its tanks are rolling through other nations.

He describes the old Stalinist states “the former socialist countries of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.” In those days there was “no true Soviet imperialism”, claims Williams, because “wealth was not accumulated in the form of capital, and therefore not in the form of finance capital — there was not a single kopeck of finance capital.” Any other view is down to “imperialist Western propaganda and its bought and paid-for historians.”

And Russia retains its non-imperialism even after it has unambiguously reverted to capitalism. “Has the military-feudal imperialism of pre-1917 Russia been restored?” asks Williams. No, it’s not feudal. (But it was not the feudal residues in Tsarist Russia which made Marxists of the time classify it as imperialist. It was its domination and exploitation of other nations).

“What about a modernised Russian imperialism based on the rule of monopoly capitalism and finance capital?” He rejects this argument as well: Russia is “very poor in finance capital. ... (Therefore) today’s Russia is very far indeed from becoming an imperialist country.”

This is really just a re-run of Williams’s denial of Stalinist imperialism. There was no finance capital in Stalin’s USSR, and therefore no Stalinist imperialism. Today’s Russia is “very poor” in finance capital, and therefore there is no Russian imperialism.

However, Williams’s equation of “imperialist” with “rich in finance capital” obliges him to classify Taiwan, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland and New Zealand as imperialist powers.

Conversely, a state which oppresses and loots other nations remains benignly non-imperialist, provided only that its financial sector lags. (Like Japan or Italy or Spain or even the USA in the era of “high” imperialism before World War 1). Whatever Russia does in Ukraine, it can’t be imperialist.

This pseudo-theoretical quackery serves as a licence for Williams to ignore Ukrainian reality.

The Maidan protests are dismissed by Williams as a homogenous right-wing reactionary mass. They had “a pro-imperialist, pro-Empire character from the beginning.” Participants in the protests had an outlook “similar to the mentality of the Tea Party in the USA.” The “leaders of the movement” were “Right Sector thugs.”

Williams omits any mention of the interventions into the Maidan protests by anarchists, the far left and women’s groups. Williams has read a translated article by Volodymyr Ischchenko — but that seems to be the sum total of his reading of left analyses of the Maidan.

Russia’s “annexation” of the Crimea (scare-quotes Williams’s) could not be imperialist. Russia, being poor in fi-

nance capital, simply cannot be imperialist.

The fact that a majority in the Crimea voted in favour of being part of an independent Ukraine at the time of the break-up of the Soviet Union. The fact that Russian troops seized airfields and other military installations in March. The fact that Russian ships blockaded the Ukrainian navy. The fact that the “referendum” merely rubber-stamped a fait accompli by the Russian state - all these facts are ignored by Williams. Instead, just as he blames German imperialism for Stalin’s mass deportations, so too he blames the Kiev government for Putin’s annexation of Crimea:

“When the Ukrainian far right wing came to power and Kiev made clear its plan to turn the Russian-speaking people in Ukraine into a persecuted minority and scapegoat, the Putin government felt it had no alternative but to allow the predominately Russian-speaking Crimea to join the Russian Federation.”

On May’s presidential election in Ukraine, Williams writes: “It seems that all anti-Maidan candidates were effectively banned”. They were all banned — apart from Petro Symonenko, Mykhailo Dobkin, Serhiy Tihipko, Renat Kuzmin and Oleg Tsaryev. Tsaryev stood down of his own accord, but no anti-Maidan candidates were banned, “effectively” or otherwise.

“No vote was held in regions where anti-Maidan sentiment is strongest, such as Donetsk”, continues Williams, “there was a very low vote in the Donbass as a whole. This was anything but a free election.”

But the limitations on the freedom of those elections, and “the very low vote in the Donbass as a whole”, were both the product of the same phenomenon: the threat of violence (and actual violence) from Russian separatists made it physically dangerous or impossible to staff polling stations; voting papers were confiscated.

Williams notes that the far-right candidates of Svoboda and the Right sector each scored only around 1%. But that does not lead him to question the Russian separatists’ incessant description of the Kiev government and President as a “Nazi junta” which is currently committing “genocide” in the south-east of the country at the behest of “imperialism”.

“The US-EU-NATO imperialist empire is taking full advantage of the traditions of the Ukrainian ‘Whites’ during the civil war that followed the 1917 Revolution,” writes Williams.

In fact, Russian-separatist anti-Maidanists so admired by Williams stand in the tradition of the Whites.

Strelkov-Girkin, the separatists’ nominal military commander, is a self-proclaimed admirer of Denikin and the White Army. Borodai, “Prime Minister” of Donetsk, is a Russian nationalist and white-imperialist. Gubarev, “Peo-



ple’s Governor” of Donetsk, describes himself as “a Russian nationalist” involved in a battle for “the true Russian-Orthodox-Slav cause.”

The ideological patrons of the Russian-separatist movement are Alexander Prokhanov and Alexander Dugin: ultranationalists if not outright fascists, anti-semitic, and admirers of a fascistic strong state combined with an “ethno-social Cossack way of life.”

Prokhanov and Dugin are founding members of the Izborsky Club, an ultra-Russian-nationalist “think tank”. Last week a branch of the Club was set up in Donetsk — with Gubarev as its president.

Williams concludes:

“What many of the workers involved in the anti-Maidan movement really want is the restoration of the USSR. This is shown by the Soviet flags that compete with the tri-colour flags of the bourgeois Russian Republic and the double eagles of the Russian nationalists.”

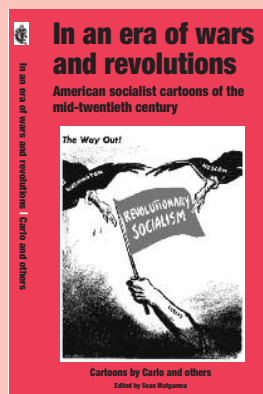
But it makes little or no sense to talk of an anti-Maidan “movement”. The Maidan protests brought tens and hundreds of thousands onto the streets. It was a genuine political movement. But in the south-east the protests have always been small, and firmly controlled by the separatist paramilitaries rather than having a political life of their own.

In reality, the anti-Maidan “movement” in the south-east is essentially a military organisation consisting of bodies of armed men, with a few self-proclaimed political leaders acting as their mouthpiece. They are fighting for the restoration of imperial Russia, not the restoration of the USSR, but.

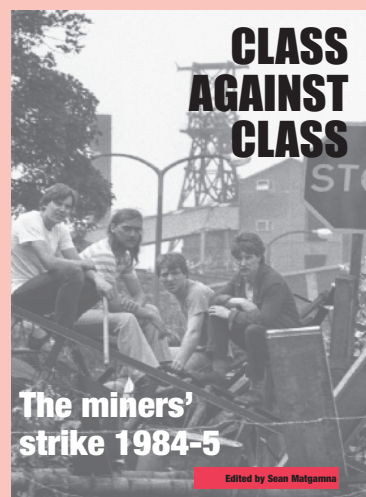
That’s why the new political party launched by Gubarev is called: “Novorossiya”, after the old Tsarist-imperialist term for south and east Ukraine.

Contrary to Williams’s claim, waving old Soviet flags is not in “competition” with this political project. In fact, Stalinist rule is seen by Russian ultra-nationalists as a historical highpoint of Russian imperialist glory. And Stalin’s anti-semitism reinforces their sympathies for him.

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A critique of “Orientalism” through the spirit of Marx

By Camila Bassi

“Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, “us”) and the strange (the Orient, the East, “them”).” Edward Said

Edward Said’s 1978 book *Orientalism* is a retort to his conceptualisation of a dual camp schema of the world. It effectively inverts this dual camp schema.

Said opens his book with a quote by Karl Marx: “They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented.” As if Marx wrote those words to condemn the Orient! In fact, as we’ll see, Marx wrote them about something else altogether.

Said thus sets himself up as presenting a necessary antidote to a paternalistic and patronising western system of political representation and domination, of which Marxism is a part.

Said attributes three interdependent terrains to Orientalism: the academic discipline of Orientalism and its research on the Orient and the Occident; a particular style of thought that differentiates, ontologically (on the nature of being) and epistemologically (on the theory of knowledge), “the Orient” and “the Occident”; and, commencing from the late eighteenth century, the corporate institution that deals with the Orient “by making statements about it, authorising views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it”.

Said reviews Orientalism as a western-style discourse employed first by British and French imperialisms and later by US imperialism, to dominate, restructure, and have authority over the Orient.

Orientalism is seen to be heavily imbued with geography, that is, imaginary spatial prejudices infused with power and exploitation, and a western-centric notion of development and progress. Said goes as far as describing Orientalism as a delusion of exaggerated self-importance: “[p]sychologically, Orientalism is a form of paranoia”.

NEAR EAST, ARAB WORLD, AND ISLAM

“Not for nothing did Islam come to symbolize terror, devastation, the demonic, hordes of hated barbarians. For Europe, Islam was a lasting trauma.” (Edward Said)

There is nothing, in and of itself, problematic about the above statement; its intended meaning is understandable even outside its related paragraph, chapter, and book, and yet Said’s *Orientalism* has given birth to a climate on the left for such statements to be all-too-swiftly labelled as “Islamophobic” and racist.

The depiction of the Near East, the Arab world, and Islam by the contemporary Orientalist lens is regarded by Said as especially bad, for four reasons:

1. The weight of history in respect to anti-Islamic and anti-Arab prejudice;
2. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict, or rather “the struggle between the Arabs and Israeli Zionism, and its effects upon American Jews as well as upon both the liberal culture and the population at large”;
3. A cultural vacuum that makes it impossible to discuss Islam or the Arabs in a way that identifies with either or is composed;
4. “Because the Middle East is now so identified with Great power politics, oil economics, and the simple-minded dichotomy of freedom-loving, democratic Israel and evil, totalitarian, and terroristic Arabs, the chances of anything like a clear view of what one talks about in talking about the Near East are depressingly small.”

The historical relationship of Orientalism to Islam is explained as follows:

“To the West, [...] Islam was militant hostility to European Christianity. To overcome [...] the Orient needed first to be known, then invaded and possessed, then re-created by scholars, soldiers, and judges [...]”

In the contemporary hegemonic Western (specifically, American) popular culture of film and television, Said states, “the Arab is associated either with lechery or bloodthirsty dishonesty. [...] Lurking behind all of these images is the menace of jihad. Consequence: a fear that the Muslims (or Arabs) will take over the world.”

The possibility of an independent vantage point and independent class politics is simply ruled out, since, “when Orientals struggle against colonial occupation, you must say (in order not to risk a Disneyism) that Orientals have never un-



Said sees “Orientalism” in Marx’s analysis of British rule in India. Above 1857 Indian Rebellion

derstood the meaning of self-government the way “we” do. When some Orientals oppose racial discrimination while others practice it, you say “they’re all Orientals at bottom” and class interest, political circumstances, economic factors are totally irrelevant. [...] History, politics, and economics do not matter. Islam is Islam, the Orient is the Orient, and please take all your ideas about a left and a right-wing, revolutions, and change back to Disneyland.”

But what does Said have to say of independent working class agency and self-government in the Marxist tradition? This leads us back to the quote at the start of *Orientalism* and to the substance of Said’s rebuke of Marx and Marxism.

SAID AND MARX

Three sources of Marx are directly referenced in Orientalism as the basis for Said’s critique of Marxism: *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, *The British Rule in India*, and *The Further Results of British Rule in India*.

One sentence from *The Eighteenth Brumaire* is out plucked twice: “They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented”. I will show just how much Said departs from, and subsequently exploits and distorts, the original meaning of this sentence.

Quoting briefly from Marx’s *The British Rule in India* and *The Further Results of British Rule in India*, Said problematise what he describes as the puzzlement of Marx’s paradoxical position on colonialism and the Orient. A puzzle, that is, until Said expounds that the Marxist discourse is inseparable from the Orientalist discourse:

“Karl Marx identified the notion of an Asiatic economic system in this 1853 analysis of British rule in India, and then put beside that immediately the human depredation introduced into this system by English colonial interference, rapacity, and outright cruelty. In article after article he returned with increasing conviction to the idea that even in destroying Asia, Britain was making possible there a real social revolution. Marx’s style pushes us right up against the difficulty of reconciling our natural repugnance as fellow creatures to the sufferings of Orientals while their society is being violently

transformed with the historical necessity of these transformations.

“[...] Marx’s economic analyses are perfectly fitted thus to a standard Orientalist undertaking, even though Marx’s humanity, his sympathy for the misery of people, are clearly engaged. Yet in the end it is the Romantic Orientalist vision that wins out

“[...]The idea of regenerating a fundamentally lifeless Asia is a piece of pure Romantic Orientalism, of course, but coming from the same writer who could not easily forget the human suffering involved, the statement is puzzling.

“[...] It is as if the individual mind (Marx’s, in this case) could find a precollective, preofficial individuality in Asia — find and give in to its pressures upon his emotions, feelings, senses — only to give it up when he confronted a more formidable censor in the very vocabulary he found himself forced to employ.”

Rather than accept Said’s verdict that Marx incoherently and inconsistently abhors British imperial rule in India but ultimately welcomes it as a progressive force for necessary regeneration due to his heart being beaten by his head, which is inescapably arrested by the discourse of *Orientalism*, I will argue that Marx’s analysis and conclusion are not problematic.

THE EIGHTEENTH BRUMAIRE

Marx’s *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* is a brilliant polemic written in the aftermath of the 1848 revolution and Louis Napoleon’s seizure of power in France in December 1851. It is an exploration of the relationship between class politics and the state.

Marx’s first theme is a general one, that of the connection between the force of human agency and the force of human history:

“[Humans] make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past.”

Marx issues a warning that revolutionary upheaval may dangerously and manipulatively dredge up the past, which the energy of a genuinely social revolution must resist. In this respect, he distinguishes between bourgeois revolutions and the critical praxis of proletarian revolutions:

“Bourgeois revolutions, like those of the eighteenth century, storm swiftly from success to success; their dramatic effects outdo each other; men [sic] and things seem set in sparkling brilliants; ecstasy is the everyday spirit; but they are short-lived; soon they have attained their zenith, and a long crapulent depression lays hold of society before it learns soberly to assimilate the results of its storm-and-stress period. On the other hand, proletarian revolutions, like those of the nineteenth century, criticise themselves constantly, interrupt themselves continually in their own course, come back to the apparently accomplished in order to begin afresh, deride with unmerciful thoroughness the inadequacies, weaknesses, and paltrinesses of their first attempts [...]”

Marx’s second theme is specific to the events proceeding the 1848 revolution, up to and including Louis Napoleon’s coup d’état of 1851, and the consequent banishment of the former gains of the revolution, such as “liberté, égalité, fraternité”:

“...All has vanished like a phantasmagoria before the spell of a man whom even his enemies do not make out to be a magician. Universal suffrage seems to have survived only for a moment, in order that with its own hand it may make its last will and testament before the eyes of all the world and declare in the name of the people itself: All that exists deserves to perish.”

The third theme is where Said’s quote from Marx — “They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented” — is located, and it concerns the nature of Louis Napoleon’s state and the interrelated nature of its demographic base, the small-holding peasants:

“The small-holding peasants form a vast mass, the members of which live in similar conditions but without entering into manifold relations with one another. Their mode of production isolates them from one another instead of bringing them into mutual intercourse. The isolation is increased by France’s bad means of communication and by the poverty of the peasants.

Continued on page 10

"[...] They are consequently incapable of enforcing their class interests in their own name, whether through parliament or through a convention. They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented. Their representative must at the same time appear as their master, as an authority over them, as an unlimited governmental power that protects them against the other classes and sends them rain and sunshine from above. The political influence of the small-holding peasants, therefore, finds its final expression in the executive power subordinating society to itself."

Marx's conclusion makes especially clear his assessment of the state from the perspective of independent class politics; and it underlines the inappropriateness of Said's plunder to support his allegation of Marxism-as-Orientalism:

"Bonaparte would like to appear as the patriarchal benefactor of all classes. But he cannot give to one class without taking from another. [...] He would like to steal the whole of France in order to be able to make a present of her to France or, rather, in order to be able to buy France anew with French money, for as the chief of the Society of 10 December he must needs buy what ought to belong to him."

So when Marx wrote the line, "They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented", it directly refers to an analysis of the isolated nature of the social base of Louis Napoleon's anti-democratic, bureaucratic state (the small-holding peasants); a state that Marx critiqued as a violation and a ruination of the relative gains of the 1848 French Revolution.

But when Marx's quote is used by Said in *Orientalism*, it reads as an unambivalent reference to an Orientalist dual camp position that the poor and downtrodden Orient cannot represent itself, thus "us" Marxists must do this job for "them".

BRITISH RULE IN INDIA

To understand more, it is necessary to point out the inherent characteristics of Marx's general methodology and critique of capitalism.

Dialectical materialism is a means to understanding societal change, for history is not linear but thrusts forward in a tense and fitful manner — reminiscent, for example, of Marx's discussion of revolutions in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. As Friedrich Engels reminds us about dialectical philosophy in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (1886):

"Nothing is final, absolute, sacred. [...] nothing can endure before it except the uninterrupted process of becoming and of passing away [...]"

With this in mind, Marx and Engels, in the opening chapter of *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), describe the globalisation of capitalism as pregnant with contradictory possibilities and constraints, which give birth to:

- creative destruction — "[a]ll that is solid melts into air";
- social evolution — "all that is holy is profaned";
- social intercourse — "[i]n place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction";
- working class agency — capitalism "produces, above all, [...] its own grave-diggers".

Here Marx and Engels are assessing capitalism's dialectical nature: the closures in its innate, mindless exploitation and inequality, and the openings in its destruction of past reactionary forms of existence and the creative potential of universal internationalism and interconnectedness between human beings. Marx and Engels conclude by recognising the working class — a product of capitalism — as central to overthrowing capitalism.

Turning now to *The British Rule in India* and *The Further Results of British Rule in India*, it is perfectly consistent that Marx should analyse the specific entry and operation of British capital in India as also general to global capital:

"There cannot [...] remain any doubt but that the misery inflicted by the British on Hindostan is of an essentially different and infinitely more intensive kind than all Hindostan had to suffer before. [...] England has broken down the entire framework of Indian society, without any symptoms of reconstitution yet appearing." (*The British Rule in India*)

"The ruling classes of Great Britain have had, till now, but an accidental, transitory and exceptional interest in the progress of India. The aristocracy wanted to conquer it, the moneyocracy to plunder it, and the millocracy to undersell it. But now the tables are turned. The millocracy have discovered that the transformation of India into a reproductive country has become of vital importance to them, and that, to that end, it is necessary, above all, to gift her with means of irrigation and of internal communication. They intend now drawing a net of railroads over India. And they will do it.

The results must be inappreciable.

"[...] The devastating effects of English industry, when contemplated with regard to India

"[...] are palpable and confounding. But we must not forget that they are only the organic results of the whole system of production as it is now constituted. That production rests on the supreme rule of capital." (*The Further Results of British Rule in India*)

It is the following two quotes that actually appear in *Orientalism* and from which Said concludes that Marx is clearly "Romantic and even messianic":

"Now, sickening as it must be to human feeling to witness those myriads of industrious patriarchal and inoffensive social organizations disorganized and dissolved into their units, thrown into a sea of woes, and their individual members losing at the same time their ancient form of civilization, and their hereditary means of subsistence, we must not forget that these idyllic village-communities, inoffensive though they may appear, had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism, that they restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies.

"[...] England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindostan, was actuated only by the vilest interests, and was stupid in her manner of enforcing them. But that is not the question. The question is, can mankind [sic] fulfil its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution. Then, whatever bitterness the spectacle of the crumbling of an ancient world may have for our personal feelings, we have the right, in point of history, to exclaim with Goethe:

"Sollte diese Qual uns quälen

Da sie unsre Lust vermehrt,

Hat nicht myriaden Seelen

Timur's Herrschaft aufgezehrt?"

"England has to fulfill a double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerating — the annihilation of old Asiatic society, and the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia."

There are three things here which Said bypasses:

1. the juxtaposition of an "Oriental despotism" to a dialectical, thus contradictory, social evolution through the globalisation of capital;
2. past, constraining, reactionarism giving way, through creative destruction, to present and future possibilities of social intercourse;
3. no credit to be given to the extremely unpleasant and unintelligent English bourgeoisie who are nonetheless bound up with this revolutionary change.

This final quote, concluding *The Further Results of British Rule in India*, makes plain Marx's independent class politics:

"Modern industry, resulting from the railway-system, will dissolve the hereditary divisions of labour, upon which rest the Indian castes, those decisive impediments to Indian progress and Indian power. All the English bourgeoisie may be forced to do will neither emancipate nor materially mend the social condition of the mass of the people, depending not only on the development of the productive powers, but on their appropriation by the people. But what they will not fail to do is to lay down the material premises for both.

"Has the bourgeoisie ever done more? Has it ever effected a progress without dragging individuals and peoples through blood and dirt, through misery and degradation? The Indians will not reap the fruits of the new elements of society scattered among them by the British bourgeoisie, till in Great Britain itself the now ruling classes shall have been supplanted by the industrial proletariat, or till the Hindus themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the English yoke altogether."

None of this corresponds with Said's thesis of a Romantic and messianic Orientalism ultimately determining Marx's thought.

With reference to Antonio Gramsci, Said makes a distinction between political coercion and non-coercion, and sees the might, resilience, and permanence of Orientalism as non-coercive hegemony. Fatefully, I conclude, in Said's interpretation of Gramsci's hegemony an "anti-dialectical inescapability" takes hold:

"I doubt that it is controversial, for example, to say that an Englishman in India or Egypt in the later nineteenth century took an interest in those countries that was never far from their status in his mind as British colonies. To say this may seem quite different from saying that all academic knowledge about India and Egypt is somehow tinged and im-

pressed with, violated by, the gross political fact — and yet that is what I am saying in this study of Orientalism. [...] he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second."

The absence of class politics is stark. Do we come up against the Orient solely on the basis of our nationality and colonial burden? Does that not intersect with our socio-economic position and class relation (and indeed with our gender, ethnicity, and sexuality), and with our own "independent" politics? Said's *Orientalism* chimes much with the contemporary popularity of privilege theory. Whilst Marxism recognises human consciousness as dialectically shaped by conditions of existence through space and time, privilege theory (like *Orientalism*) is predicated on an unchanging status, i.e., privilege (in this case, as a member of the Occident).

It is worth further exploring Said's application of hegemony, in particular its echoes of Louis Althusser.

Althusser is considered to progress the ideas of Marx on the basis that Marx conceives of a dream-like ideology called "false consciousness", which hides and misleads workers from the exploitation of the economic base. Yet such a term and concept is to be found nowhere in Marx's writings!

For Althusser, in his essay 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', "ideology" (contrary to false consciousness) represents an already existing "imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence". Althusser claims that we are largely unaware of the ideological make-up of our reality, except when or if we come up against the state. Beyond the repressive state apparatus (the police and the army), the individual exists within realities structured by various 'ideological state apparatuses', i.e., non-coercive hegemony:

IDEOLOGY

"What thus seems to take place outside ideology (to be precise, in the street), in reality takes place in ideology. What really takes place in ideology seems therefore to take place outside it.

"That is why those who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology: one of the effects of ideology is the practical denegation of the ideological character of ideology by ideology: ideology never says, 'I am ideological'. It is necessary to be outside ideology, i.e. in scientific knowledge, to be able to say: I am in ideology (a quite exceptional case) or (the general case): I was in ideology."

Notably, the material for Althusser differs in meaning from the material for Marx. For the former, it refers to the ideas and representations that are bound up with practice. For the latter, as Marx (1845-46) explains in *The German Ideology*, material reality is something that can be known (in other words, it is possible to see beyond ideology):

"We do not set out from what [humans] say, imagine, conceive, nor from [humans] as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at [humans] in the flesh. We set out from real, active [humans], and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process."

This Althusserian legacy goes some way to explaining the inescapability of Said's hegemony-ideology-Orientalism (the version of hegemony is a departure from Gramsci) and Said's methodology.

So, on the Orientalist text, Said makes plain that he is not concerned with "the correctness of the representation nor its fidelity to some great original", but rather with "style, figures of speech, setting, narrative devices, historical and social circumstances". And while he concedes the importance of finding present-day alternatives to studying the Orient — "from a libertarian, or a nonrepressive and nonmanipulative, perspective" — this is left, in his own words, "embarrassingly incomplete". And yet this is hardly surprising since his inverted dual camp does not provide space for international-wide, independent working class agency.

I end then with Said's description of the present-day Orientalism of the US, in which those of the so-called Arab and Third World are merely "passive dupes":

"My point is that the relationship is a one-sided one, with the United States a selective customer of a very few products (oil and cheap manpower, mainly), the Arabs highly diversified consumers of a vast range of United States products, material and ideological. This has had many consequences. There is a vast standardisation of taste in the region, symbolised not only by transistors, blue jeans, and Coca-Cola but also by cultural images of the Orient supplied by American mass media and consumed unthinkingly by the mass television audience."

Tube cleaners locked out

By Darren Bedford

Tube cleaners in the RMT union have faced a lock-out as managers sent them home for refusing to use “biometric booking-on” machines.

The machines are intended to replace the existing system of booking on by signing in with station supervisors, and by phone. They require cleaners to enter a fingerprint.

The RMT has raised concerns about the use of the machines to collect data on cleaners, many of whom are migrant workers, as well as their possible use as a further pretext for reducing station staffing levels. A ballot of RMT cleaner members working for ISS returned a large majority in favour of boycotting the machines.

Several cleaners came to work but insisted they would only book on using the existing system were sent home by ISS managers. The RMT said it was “in urgent talks” to resolve the situation, and that it would support any member facing a lock out.

RMT members across London Underground are concerned that, if ISS are allowed to get away with using “biometric booking-on” systems, they will soon spread to other contractors and ultimately to directly-employed staff too.

Eamonn Lynch, Secretary of the RMT London Transport Regional Council said: “We are totally opposed to this technology, which we believe is a breach of civil liberties and a threat to jobs.”

Posties boycott the Sun

Postal workers at several offices across the North West refused to deliver the free copy of *The Sun* produced for the World Cup and intended for delivery to 22 million homes across Britain.

The right-wing tabloid is particularly reviled in and around Liverpool, because of its coverage of the 1989 Hillsborough disaster which blamed Liverpool supporters for the tragedy and fabricated reports of their bad behaviour.

8,000 people signed a petition supporting the workers’ action.

TFL strike

Members of RMT, TSSA, and Unite working for Transport for London struck on Friday 13 June in an ongoing dispute over pay and pensions.

Unions are opposed to the introduction of a “Pay for Performance” scheme, which they say will amount to a pay freeze and reduce pensions as well.

Workers picketed at TfL central offices, and demonstrated at City Hall. They will strike again on 10 July, alongside other public sector unions also involved in pay disputes.



Next Tube cuts protest 25 June

By Darren Bedford

The Hands Off London Transport (HOLT) campaign organised a Day of Action on Friday 13 June, with leafleting, demonstrations, and other actions outside Tube stations including King’s Cross, Brixton, Wimbledon, Finchley Central, and Leytonstone.

The aim of the day was to raise awareness of London Underground’s plans to massively reduce staffing levels and close every ticket office on the Tube network. The actions brought to-

St Pancras cleaners to ballot

Cleaners on the Initial contract at St. Pancras International station in London will ballot for strikes over job cuts, and attacks on pay and conditions. A proposed restructure

will see a 30% reduction in staff, re-grading of workers with no protection of earnings, the abolition of two grades, and changes to working hours.

Garden Halls strike solid

By Rachael Barnes

Outsourced cleaning, catering, and security workers at University of London’s Garden Halls (an intercollegiate halls of residence near King’s Cross) staged six solid strikes between Friday 6 June and Thursday 12 June, picketing from 7am to midday each day and holding demonstrations at the University’s Senate House building.

The workers were demanding guarantees of re-deployment following the announcement that Garden Halls was slated for closure, threatening 80 jobs.



The workers are members of the Independent Workers’ Union of Great Britain (IWGB). They are also demanding that the University, and the outsourced contractor GDF Cofely-Suez, negotiates with their union, which organises the majority of outsourced staff.

Currently, it only recognises Unison, which only represents a small minority of outsourced workers.

Solid strike at Lambeth

By a Unison member

Unison members at Lambeth College joined UCU members on strike last week (11 and 12 June) in protest against the introduction of inferior working contracts for new staff.

Despite management’s attempts at turning the unions against each other (the new contracts would have little impact on Unison members), Unison joined UCU who have been on indefinite strike since 3 June.

The Unison branch at the college had not been on

strike for decades previous, but had 35 people on the picket lines last week.

Union branches are calling for members and supporters to lobby the AoC (National Association of College Principals) meeting, on Wednesday 18 June, on negotiations in further education pay.

A student rally has been organised at the Clapham Centre on Thursday 19 June, 12-2 pm for students to find out why their tutors and staff are on strike.

• bit.ly/lam-cs

200 job-cuts at LeSoCo

By Gerry Bates

At least 95 jobs are to be cut by December at LeSoCo (Lewisham College including Southwark College), and three departments face risk of complete closure.

Management have predicted even more slashed to jobs, up to 200, over the next 3 years.

Planned restructuring of the departments and services could result in the jobs of Student Support staff

being cut, which would affect mental health support provided for students.

This time last year, management announced 35 job cuts, severe changes to the floristry and science departments and the closure of two nurseries, resulting in 86% of UCU members who took part in the ballot to vote in favour of strike action.

The UCU branch at LeSoCo has organised a meeting to plan the defence of the community college.

Debate ruled out

By a conference delegate

Unison Local Government Conference (15-16 June) committed the union to fighting the greatest squeeze on wages since the 1870s but was prevented from discussing the tactics and strategy that can win!

Motions calling for a ballot of all school support staff and for ongoing campaigning including action short of strike after 10 July were ruled out by the Standing Orders Committee to avoid

“issues of legality”. Delegates attempted to oppose this but were left to attempt discussion on this as part of the leadership backed main motion on pay.

Two fringe meetings on fighting for fair provided a forum for discussion on how to take the pay campaign beyond a one or two day strike action.

Workers’ Liberty members distributed 500 bulletins and welcomed the opportunity to discuss and debate our ideas with delegates from across the country.

Mitie cleaners win on FGW

By Ira Berkovic

Cleaners employed by Mitie on a First Great Western contract have won a 6.75% wage increase, backdated to March 2013, and an increase to the London Living Wage from March 2015.

The workers, who are

members of the RMT, have struck several times during the course of the dispute.

Mitie made £58.8 million pre-tax profit last year, and paid out £20.6 million to its shareholders (an increase of 11.9% from the previous year). The company’s highest-paid director is paid £1.37 million.

• More: handsofflondontransport.wordpress.com



Ideas for Freedom 2014

Their class war and ours

Across the world, capitalists are waging class war against the living standards and rights of workers and the oppressed. At Ideas for Freedom, the summer school on 3-6 July in London organised by the Alliance for Workers' Liberty (AWL, which publishes *Solidarity*), we will be discussing how we can resist and fight back.

IFF will include lectures, debates, workshops, films and plenty of space for objections, dissent and criticism. It opens with a Thursday night (3 July) Radical Walking Tour of East London and a Friday night (4 July) meeting on "One hundred years of women's struggles, 1914-2014".

The weekend's events are designed to help us "Educate, Agitate, Organise".



ABOVE: Shreya Paudel will speak on migrant struggles in Britain.

BELOW: Camila Bassi, James Bloodworth



EDUCATE

Rosie Woods of AWL will debate "Left Foot Forward" editor James Bloodworth on whether socialists should seek to deal with tyranny and strife by advocating "humanitarian intervention" by big powers. Pat Murphy of AWL and Nigerian socialist Yemisi Ilesanmi will speak on socialists and religion. Jean Lane, Jill Mountford and Pete Radcliff of AWL and others will speak on the 1984-5 miners' strike, and other sessions will cover World War One. Camila Bassi of AWL will speak on Marxism and "intersectionality".

AGITATE

Gemma Short of AWL, John McDonnell MP, and James Elliot of Labour Students for Free Education will debate what demands we should seek to have the unions make of a Labour government. French socialist Yves Coleman, Greek socialist Theodora Polenta, and Matt Cooper of AWL will discuss the rise of the nationalist far right in Europe.

ORGANISE

Ruth Cashman of AWL and Lambeth Unison, Jason Moyer-Lee of IWGB, Holly Fishman-Crook from the Ritzy strike, and author Gregor Gall will discuss how to rebuild the unions. Cathy Nugent of AWL will debate ISN national secretary Simon Hardy and Edd Bauer from Birmingham Anti-Capitalists on the left after the SWP crisis.



LEFT: Jill Mountford
RIGHT: Simon Hardy



There will be many other sessions, nudging 30 in all, on a range of subjects from TV crime dramas to economic theory. A plenary session will anchor the event in its central theme: "Their Class War and Ours".



ABOVE: Pat Murphy

BELOW: Yemisi Ilesanmi

The weekend sessions are at the University of London Union, WC1E 7HY.

A creche and overnight accommodation are available free, and food will be available cheap.

Tickets bought in advance cost £34 waged, £18 low-waged/uni students, £7 unwaged/school or college students.

Book or inquire now at www.workersliberty.org/ideas