



For a  
workers'  
government

# Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

No 344 19 November 2014 30p/80p

[www.workersliberty.org](http://www.workersliberty.org)

## FIGHT BACK AGAINST UKIP



See page 5

**Tax the rich, reverse cuts,  
welcome migrants!**



## 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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● Printed by Trinity Mirror

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# Council tax squeezes thousands

By Will Somers

The Citizens' Advice Bureau and Step Change Debt Charity say that council tax arrears are now the main reason people contact them for debt advice, overtaking credit cards and loans.

In the first three months of 2014, the CAB helped 27,000 people with council tax arrears. In 2013 Step Change helped over 45,000.

The rise in arrears follows the Government's abolition of council tax benefit for working-age people in 2013. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation estimated that some 2.4 million low-income households would have to pay.

In April 2014 the rules governing bailiffs were



changed. Renamed Enforcement Agents, bailiffs became able to add £310 for sending a letter and visiting a property to accounts passed to them by local authorities. You can also be charged upwards of £150 for having court summons and a liability order issued against you.

Of the 19,000 summonses issued in 2013-2014, 6,000 were to households who

had previously not paid the tax.

Many people now face a continual build-up of arrears while being threatened by bailiffs or having deductions taken from wages or from already severely cut welfare benefits. Many people fall behind year-on-year and become unable to pay other bills.

One council in Yorkshire has almost £20 million owed

to it in council tax in the current financial year.

Council Tax is a regressive tax. Band A properties — anything from a houseboat, caravan, flat to a small terraced house — pay a third as much as the rich in the highest-valued (Band H) dwellings. The whole system should be scrapped and replaced by progressive taxation.

The movement against the bedroom tax has taken up the cases of thousands of people now under threat because of council tax arrears. Mass appearances at court hearings and direct action have helped to draw attention to the situation.

**We should force Labour councils to stop mean debt-recovery measures and fight the cuts from central government.**

## NUS leaders wriggle out of backing demo

By Beth Redmond

Two weeks before NCAFC's 19 November demonstration for free education, the National Union of Students leadership undemocratically decided to withdraw its support.

This was on the basis that the organisers had not adequately dealt with NUS's risk assessment questions, meaning the demonstration

was "too dangerous" for their students to attend.

Emails exchanged between NCAFC, Toni Pearce and Megan Dunn have since been leaked which prove the NUS have been bending the truth to liberation officers in order to suit their own right-wing agenda. Pearce argued strongly against free education in favour of a graduate tax at NUS conference 2014, but lost the vote overwhelmingly.

To us organising this

demonstration it has become clear that the NUS apparatus is far from the be all and end all of the student movement, and in fact has little relevance to the majority of activists on the ground. But these officers need to be held to account. If a select few leaders can overturn decisions voted on and passed by NUS's national executive council when they feel like it, what is the point of the NEC?

Perhaps most confusing

about all of this are the statements NUS have released in the week leading up to the demo, claiming they are "in favour of free education", outlining a "free education road-map" (I'm unsure of what that is too), and explaining education should be paid for by taxing the rich.

**Pressure from the left is working, but the NUS leaders are still untrustworthy scabs.**

## 22% still below living wage

By Gemma Short

On 3 November the UK living wage increased by 20p an hour, to £7.85.

The London living wage increased by 4% to £9.15 an hour. However 22% of workers, 5.28 million, still earn below the living wage, despite the Living Wage Foundation having accredited more than 1000 employers.

Research conducted for consultancy firm KPMG shows 43% of part-time workers earn less than the living wage, compared with 13% of full-time employees. It also found 72% of 18- to 21-year-olds and one in four women earn less than the living wage, compared with

16% of men.

The living wage is now 21% higher than the enforceable national minimum wage.

The Living Wage Foundation, whose chair is also a boss in KPMG, can only go so far in ending low pay for millions of workers. Companies accredited by the foundation do not have to abide by any other workers' conditions to keep their accreditation. They could easily cut jobs to "afford" the living wage they promise to pay whilst not hitting profits.

**Workers organisation and strikes as taken by workers at the Ritzy cinema will be the only way to win a living wage for many.**

## ALL THE RAGE 2015 a socialist feminist conference

Women have never enjoyed equality: in pay, politics or society. And capitalism is trying to push us back even further.

Women in Workers' Liberty are organising a conference to celebrate and learn from women's struggles in Britain and around the world, and to consider how socialist feminist ideas can make a difference.



[fb.com/alltherage2015](http://fb.com/alltherage2015)  
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**Saturday  
February 28  
UCL, Gower  
Street,  
London**



# Italy: strikes rally revolt

By Hugh Edwards

Italy's radical metalworkers' union FIOM struck on 14 November, sharpening and deepening conflict with the government of Matteo Renzi over workers' rights and protections.

It followed a million-strong demonstration in Rome on 25 October, called by the CGIL union confederation.

The strike also testified to the emergence of jointly-coordinated action by FIOM union and a number of the smaller and more radical BASE unions, especially in the public sector, and with a broadening spectrum of campaigns and movements embracing the unemployed, migrant workers, the "precarious", Social Centres, students, etc.

In 25 cities, workplaces and large sectors of the transport system were seriously disrupted; and a rash of mass demonstrations, sit-ins, sit-downs, and symbolic occupations underlined the anger.



The organised heart and strength of the day's action was in Milan, where FIOM leader Maurizio Landini and CGIL top Susanna Camusso addressed 80,000 workers in the city's main square.

Earlier in the week Camusso had declared an all-out one-day general strike by CGIL on 5 December. Camusso and Landini assumed an air of rhetorical aggression against Renzi.

Renzi had persuaded the gutless "left" of his Democratic Party to abandon their opposition to his measures,

but Landini denounced that as "taking the piss out of the workers of the country by a collection of people only concerned with preserving their comfortable and secure jobs".

Camusso declared that "no vote of confidence by any parliament will alter by a millimetre our direction or our initiative to reject these measures".

The national scenario is still of dark foreboding. Racism and the racist or neofascist Northern League steadily advance everywhere, as illustrated in the

Roman suburb of Tor Sapienza, where in mid-November a building housing migrants was pelted with stones for three consecutive nights.

But the clash between the trade unions and the government is increasingly becoming the focal point of all the anger, frustration, and despair of millions.

Already thousands of call centre workers across the country have announced they will strike on 21 November, the second day of the FIOM-led action.

**The task for revolutionaries could not be more imperative – propaganda and agitation for the necessity to forge the most massive democratic working-class led force with the aim not just of going beyond the compromising leaders and defeating Renzi on this front but of going for an all-out general strike and for a government of the working masses which poses concretely the question: who rules? Them or us?**



Cameron at the G20 summit in Brisbane

## "Red warning" on economy

By Martin Thomas

**Prime minister David Cameron has used the occasion of the G20 summit of big-power governments in Brisbane to declare that "red warning lights are once again flashing on the dashboard of the global economy", as in 2008.**

"The eurozone is teetering on the brink of a possible third recession... Emerging markets [like Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa...] are now slowing down... [There is] instability and uncertainty".

It is not a dispassionate scientific opinion. Cameron wants to use "global warning lights" to square the circle of justifying the Tories' cuts frenzy while also claiming that the last four years of Tory policy have brought a splendid recovery.

Things are going well, he says, so it's fine that the rich are raking it in, and it's all right to cut taxes for them. But uncontrollable global threats mean that the Tories must "stick to our long-term plan" (i.e. continue cuts and pay freezes), "not waver on dealing with debts" (i.e. ditto), and "back business by scrapping red tape" (i.e. scrap protections for workers).

The most likely focus for a new financial crash like 2008 is China, where over-investment and bad debt have ballooned. A crash there has been a possibility for some time. There is no special reason visible why it

should happen soon, but no guarantee that it won't.

More likely than a crash, in fact almost certain, is continuing dull depression. Even in the USA, where output is expanding fairly well, working-class living standards are falling.

The eurozone is stuck on a manic policy of cuts all round which is justified as making countries' economies more "competitive". It can't possibly make them all more competitive relative to each other, but it will make them all more depressed — just as Tory education minister Michael Gove's demand that all schools become "above average" (bit.ly/gove-aa) could only make them all more stressed.

Tory Britain is not an island of recovery threatened only by external factors beyond its control. In London, as globally, the free-wheeling financial profiteering which led to the 2008 crash has not been curbed. The drastic government intervention, nationalisations of banks and so on, done in the crisis days of 2008 is being unwound as fast as the governments can manage. New regulations for banks have been introduced, but only mildly and slowly.

And working-class living standards are still being squeezed.

**The ills of the global economy are a reason for rejecting capitalism, not for supporting the Tories' "long-term plan".**

# Combat ISIS but defend civil rights

By Simon Nelson

**Around Kobane, the Kurdish-majority Syrian city near the Turkish border besieged by ISIS ("Islamic State"), Daesh), US airstrikes have significantly increased.**

Kurdish forces (Iraqi-Kurdish peshmerga, and the Syrian-Kurdish YPG, linked to the Turkish-Kurdish PKK) have now begun to re-take territory.

1200 people have now been killed in the siege.

Fuad Hussein, chief of staff to the KRG (Iraq-Kurdish) president Massoud Barzani, says that the CIA's figure of 31,000 ISIS fighters is a big underestimate, and the Iraqi government National Security Adviser concurs.

ISIS continues to recruit internationally. It showed fighters from a number of different nations, unmasked, in its latest video showing the killing of US hostage Abdul Rahman Kassig.

There seems to be an increasing number of ISIS recruits from Europe, often young men who unlike the Chechen or Indonesian re-

cruits have no previous experience of jihadist warfare.

In the *Guardian* (bit.ly/henl), Jon Henley has reported on a program run by police in Aarhus, Denmark, to engage, integrate, and de-radicalise returning fighters and to convince others not to follow them to Syria or Iraq.

The program seeks to provide basic life skills, help in applying for jobs, and continuing education, as well as discussion and debate about religion and politics.

The initiative is very limited and will not cut the roots of ISIS ideology; but it is vastly more useful than that put across by London mayor Boris Johnson, Tory MP David Davis, and former Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey.

They have called for passports to be seized, and a screening process to select who can return and when. And never mind that the UN bans nations from making their citizens stateless. Never mind that this is heavy punishment without charge or trial.

David Cameron has not gone that far, but is sympathetic. The Quilliam Foun-

dation think-tank said in response to his speech in Canberra:

"The majority of the... suggestions will only tackle the symptom of the problem and not its cause. We should not develop legislation that assumes individuals are guilty until proven innocent... [The Government should] avoid placing too much emphasis on counter-terrorism legislation, which many will interpret as undemocratic."

Home Secretary Theresa May says that a new counter-terrorism bill will be pushed through Parliament and come into effect by February. It will include further powers to restrict online material that may serve as recruitment propaganda.

Proving criminal activity in such cases is difficult. In Aarhus no one has been prosecuted successfully.

A British Muslim doctor, Qanta Ahmed, quoted in the *Guardian*, has said that too many people fail to tackle Islamist politics for fear of being labelled "Islamophobic", and that not enough is done to help critical voices among Muslims and people from immigrant populations



Theresa May is introducing a new counter-terrorism bill

speak out against medievalist, misogynistic and violent interpretations of Islam and in favour of secularism and other values.

The \$400 a month offered by ISIS may be attractive in Iraq and Syria, but westerners who join ISIS are not likely to be in it for the money.

**Only by taking on the ideas of clerical fascism and defeating them, rather than by suppressing civil rights or banning access to literature, websites, or debate, can the ideologies of ISIS be exposed and defeated.**



# Don't panic about computers

## Letters



In her book *Mind Change*<sup>1</sup> (reviewed by John Cunningham in *Solidarity* 342), Susan Greenfield says “We may be living in an unprecedented era where an increasing number of people are ... learning a new default mind-set ... one of low grade aggression, short attention span and a reckless obsession with the here and now”. The key word in that statement is “may”!

The dangers of digital technology have become a major theme of Greenfield's but what is less known is that this is way outside her area of expertise.

This matters because Greenfield is a “public intellectual”, one who is listened to. A prominent populariser of science, she was the first woman to give the Royal Institution Christmas lectures in 1994, and actually became Director of the RI in 1998. She received a CBE for services to the public understanding of science and was made a baroness in 2001. These rewards follow a career researching factors in the development of Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases.

As a role model for women aspiring to become scientists, she bears a responsibility to lead by example. How has she measured up?

In the last decade or so, she has become known for her theory of “mind change”, the supposed detrimental effects on brain development in young people of digital technology. She has expressed the view that social networking sites and video games could lead to dementia and autism in the young. This is a completely unrelated to her research which has focused on diseases of older age.

When the illogicality of linking increased internet use (usually in teenage years) with increased diagnoses of autism (usually around age two) was challenged, she claimed to be merely pointing to the increase in both and not really linking them at all. This reminds me of the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster's linking the decrease in the number of pirates with the increase in global warming. In *Mind Change*, she has now introduced her own definition of autism to get round the objection.

What evidence does she give for her theories?

In a *New Scientist* interview<sup>2</sup> Greenfield refers to two studies that she claims support her fears about children's brain development. Only one looks at brains (Yuan et al., 2011),<sup>3</sup> those of a small number of young adults said to have “internet addiction.” Differences were found but there is no way of knowing if these were caused by internet use or even whether they are detrimental.

The other (Bavelier et al., 2010)<sup>4</sup> points to both positive and negative effects of using digital technology but says nothing about changes in brain structure. Greenfield's evidence is, to say the least, rather thin.

A more measured view comes from Choudhury and McKinney (2010)<sup>5</sup> who refer to Socrates' doom-laden prophecies about the new-fangled technology of writing that was becoming popular with the young 2500 years ago. He spoke of the inability of written words to “speak for themselves nor teach the truth adequately to others.” C&M see modern fears about digital technology as not different from similar fears about other new technologies, such as the printed mass media. The difference now is that the latest “moral panic” about adolescents is dressed up in a cloak of neuroscience.

Greenfield has been criticised by other scientists for her unsubstantiated claims. Dr Ben Goldacre (of Bad Science) asked in 2011: “Why won't Professor Susan Greenfield publish this theory in a scientific journal?”<sup>6</sup>

Psychology professor Dorothy Bishop<sup>7</sup> pointed out in an open letter to Greenfield the illogicality of linking autism and internet use and challenged her to actually do some research. She said it was unkind to add to the burden of parents already accused of causing autism in their children. The National Autistic Society described Greenfield's claims as “speculative” and “unhelpful”.

When Greenfield repeated her claims in *Mind Change*, Bishop felt impelled to write ‘Why most scientists don't take Susan Greenfield seriously’.<sup>8</sup> In this, she looked at Greenfield's “500 peer-reviewed papers in support of the possible problematic effects” and found far fewer, many of which were newspaper articles or else irrelevant. Few claimed ad-



Susan Greenfield says digital technology has detrimental effects on the brain development of young people

verse effects from digital technology. The ones about brain plasticity did not mention digital technology. Bishop also looked at four papers that Greenfield gave as support for her autism hypothesis. These were at best irrelevant and at worst frankly weird (one linked autism prevalence with rainfall — because kids would stay indoors when it was raining and watch cable TV).

In *New Scientist*, Greenfield says “we should be planning a 3D environment for our children...instead of putting them in front of a 2D one”. Bishop asks whether we should therefore discourage book reading.

Asked why she didn't do research in this area, Greenfield said that if someone gave her some money she would be happy to do it. But Greenfield was given some money, \$2 million, by the Templeton Foundation in 2005 to fund the Oxford Centre for Science of the Mind. No details are available on its activity. Greenfield says “It's not really for Dorothy [Bishop] to comment on how I run my career.”

**But scientists have a duty to look to the evidence and to look for it. As the great cosmologist and populariser of science Carl Sagan said, “Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.” Sadly, we do not seem to have any evidence at all.**

Les Hearn, north London

### Notes

1. Mind change: How digital technologies are leaving their mark on our brains. Random House, 2014
2. [www.newscientist.com/article/mg21128236.400-susan-greenfield-living-online-is-changing-our-brains.html#](http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg21128236.400-susan-greenfield-living-online-is-changing-our-brains.html#)
3. [www.plosone.org/article/doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0020708](http://www.plosone.org/article/doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0020708)
4. [www.cell.com/neuron/abstract/S0896-6273\(10\)00678-1](http://www.cell.com/neuron/abstract/S0896-6273(10)00678-1)
5. [www.academia.edu/3670620/Digital\\_media\\_the\\_developing\\_brain\\_and\\_the\\_interpretive\\_plasticity\\_of\\_neuroplasticity](http://www.academia.edu/3670620/Digital_media_the_developing_brain_and_the_interpretive_plasticity_of_neuroplasticity)
6. From his book I think you'll find it's a little more complicated than that. Fourth Estate, 2014
7. <http://deevybee.blogspot.co.uk/2011/08/open-letter-to-baroness-susan.html>
8. [deevybee.blogspot.co.uk/2014/09/why-most-scientists-dont-take-susan.html](http://deevybee.blogspot.co.uk/2014/09/why-most-scientists-dont-take-susan.html)

\* Perhaps the peer who reviewed them was Baroness Greenfield!

## Nothing to be done about Miliband

‘Labour needs anti-cuts policy, not a Blairite new leader’ by Jon Lansman (*Solidarity* 343) might have been appropriate for the comment section in the *Guardian* or the *Observer*, it was not appropriate for a revolutionary newspaper.

Firstly, it should be noted that despite the headline the article does not argue for an anti-cuts policy, simply for not replacing Miliband as leader.

Secondly, in as much as we agree that Miliband junior is the least worst bourgeois politician on offer to lead the Labour Party, what do we propose that activists should do about it?

Move motions of support in their labour movement bodies extolling the virtues of the current leadership? I would strongly suggest we shouldn't do that. The current leadership of the Party is not what we want and we should take no responsibility for it, it is simply that the available alternatives are worse.

In addition the motions would almost certainly have no effect as the decision to topple Miliband will be made by the Parliamentary Party, without consulting the rest of the party let alone the labour movement.

The whole issue puts into stark relief the problems for revolutionaries in their approach to the Labour Party at the moment. I can't remember another point in the past twenty-five years when we wouldn't have welcomed the opportunity a leadership election would have afforded us to make the case for a left-wing programme and a genuine left candidate.

That Miliband can be removed by the MPs, that the labour movement can have virtually no influence on this and that there is no better option than Miliband practically available to us, tells us all we need to know about how the Blairite reforms have altered the party.

**We need to step up our fight for a genuine working-class politics and a workers' government.**

Duncan Morrison, Deptford



# The socialist answer to UKIP

Tory defector Douglas Carswell became UKIP's first elected MP on 9 October, and another Tory defector, Mark Reckless, may win on 20 November in Rochester and Strood. *Solidarity* examines UKIP's manifesto.

## IMMIGRATION

**UKIP: "Migrants are a drain on UK resources, including benefits and NHS"**

**Solidarity:** Researchers at University College London ([www.cream-migration.org](http://www.cream-migration.org)) report that European migrants pay out far more in taxes than they receive in state benefits, totalling a net contribution of £20 billion between 2000 and 2011. This is true for migrants from the "new" EU members such as Poland, Romania and Bulgaria as well as the "old" EU countries.

Of 1.44 million people claiming Job Seekers' Allowance in 2011, 8.5% were non-UK nationals. Fewer than 38,000 claimants (approximately 2.6%) were from EU countries. Job losses and redundancies hit migrant workers as well as UK-born workers.

In the NHS, 11% of all staff for whom data are available are not British; 14% of professionally qualified clinical staff; and 26% of doctors. The NHS would collapse without migrant workers ([bit.ly/nhsmigr](http://bit.ly/nhsmigr)).

The real "drain on resources" is into the pockets of the rich. Just 10% own 44% of all household wealth.

The real clash of interests is between workers (British-born or migrant) and bosses (British-born, or oligarchs from overseas).

Workers, both British born and migrant, should unite to benefit from the mass migration which is a by-product of capitalist globalisation, and stop bosses using it to undercut conditions and super-exploit vulnerable migrant workers.

**UKIP:** "The country is now having to face an unsustainable level of net immigration of 225,000 each year" and "businesses should be able to discriminate in favour of young British workers"

**Solidarity:** 225,000 is 0.3% of the population. Historically many thriving countries have had much higher net migration rates; lots of countries, from Sweden and Norway through Switzerland to Singapore, have much higher rates today ([bit.ly/netmigr](http://bit.ly/netmigr)).

Only about half the UK's population growth is due to migration ([bit.ly/pop-gro](http://bit.ly/pop-gro)). If UKIP were really concerned about Britain becoming "overcrowded", they'd be campaigning against babies!

There are 845,000 empty homes in Britain, not including flats above shops and properties which need renovation to be habitable ([bit.ly/empt-h](http://bit.ly/empt-h)). Britain suffers more from inequality of housing than from absolute shortage of housing.

What is unsustainable is cuts to services, landlords' profiteering, unemployment and pay freezes. The wealth of the 1,000 richest individuals in the UK increased by 15% last year alone, there is enough to provide for everyone, UK-born or migrant.

UKIP attempts to appeal to UK-born workers by giving them a scapegoat — the migrant worker taking their job. But everyone who wants one should have a decent job.

Local authorities should build and renovate houses. Hospitals and schools and libraries and social services should be better staffed. Job cuts are being made in those sectors, not because of immigration but because of Government policies to favour the rich.

**UKIP:** "Those coming to work in the UK must have a job to go to and must speak English." "Official documents will be published in English and, where appropriate Welsh and Scots Gaelic."

**Solidarity:** The 2011 census found that only 1.6% of the UK population could speak English only poorly or not at all.

8% of the population have a first language other than English, but most of those speak English okay, well, or even fluently!

If there's a problem, it's that the Government is cutting funds for the teaching of English to speakers of other languages, not that migrants don't want to improve their English. Adult education has suffered a 34% cut over the last few years and another 9% cut in 2014-5.

60% of migrants from western and southern Europe arriving in the UK, and 25% of those from eastern Europe have a university degree, compared to 24% of the UK-born workforce.

Publishing official documents in multiple languages is important to prevent migrants being exploited and enable them to claim their rights. Publishing them in English only is just petty. UKIP members benefit from signs in English in many non-English-speaking countries when they go abroad!

Stipulating rules which mean new migrants must first have proof of a job in the UK to travel here gives further power to unscrupulous "work agencies" who promise to set up employment and exploit workers charging huge agency or accommodation fees, or paying below the minimum wage.

## TAX AND WELFARE

**UKIP: "UKIP supports a simplified, streamlined welfare system and a benefit cap."**

**Solidarity:** UKIP will not just attack migrant workers, it will continue with Tory benefit cuts for all workers.

A 2013 Ipsos Mori poll found that the majority think that £24 of every £100 of benefits is fraudulently claimed. But official estimates are that just 70 pence in every £100 is fraudulent, that is, about the same as the amount overpaid due to officials' error, and much less than the amount of benefit due but unclaimed because of bureaucratic and other obstacles.

Official figures for benefit fraud show it running at only one-tenth the level of tax fraud. And outright tax fraud, in turn, is much less than the amounts of tax avoided by big corporations gaming the rules.

We think that whilst jobs are being cut and not created, society should tax the rich to provide a decent standard of living for those unable to find a job or unable to work.

**UKIP: "Inheritance tax will be abolished"**

**Solidarity:** Inheritance tax is levied on inherited amounts over £325,000 per individual (£650,000 for a married couple). This is not a tax that mostly hits workers. It is a tax that mostly hits the rich.

But not very hard: the rich find many ways of avoiding it. In 2011/12, the tax was paid on only 19,000 estates, only three per cent of all deaths.

UKIP says abolishing inheritance tax helps the "squeezed middle". The "squeezed middle" is a fallacy, based on assuring one section of workers that they are better than others. UKIP, like the Tories, would abolish inheritance tax as a symbol that they want to favour the rich while squeezing the worse-off.

## SOCIETY

**UKIP: "UKIP will cut the foreign aid budget by £9 billion pa, prioritising disaster relief and schemes which provide water and inoculation against preventable diseases."**

**Solidarity:** In 2013 the UK spent just 0.7% of its gross national income on foreign aid. That's £11.4 billion. To cut that by £9 billion would leave only £2.4 billion, about 0.14% of the gross national income.

Over the centuries Britain's well-off raked in vast "overseas aid" by squeezing and exploiting the people of Britain's colonies. Not to redistribute a little back to poorer countries — and it is only little, and with many strings — would be shameful. Tax the rich who continue to exploit the world's workers to redistribute the wealth!

**UKIP:** "UKIP will abolish the Department of Energy and Climate Change and scrap green subsidies. There will be no new subsidies for wind farms and solar arrays."

**Solidarity:** If there is no concerted governmental effort to tackle climate change, the poorest will suffer quickest. The poorest live in the most flood-prone areas of the world and have least ability to move away from rising sea levels. They rely on sources of food likely to be affected by changing cli-



Farage and Reckless

mates.

In fact, whole future generations will suffer.

The top five oil companies alone — BP, Chevron, ConocoPhillips, Exxon Mobil, and Shell — earned a combined total of \$93 billion in 2013, or \$177,000 per minute. Yet UK tax breaks for the oil, coal and gas companies continue.

Government subsidies for green technologies should not be scrapped. The big energy companies should be taken into public ownership and redirected towards planet-saving technologies.

**UKIP:** "UKIP supports the principle of Free Schools; existing schools will be allowed to apply to become grammar schools and select according to ability and aptitude."

**Solidarity:** Even the outgoing Ofsted boss, Michael Wilshaw, says: "Grammar schools might do well with 10% of the school population, but everyone else does really badly".

Around 18% of school students across England are eligible for free school meals; in grammar schools, only 2.7%. The grammars are, as Wilshaw says, "stuffed full of middle-class kids".

"Free schools" set up by parents and small businesses in richer areas are just another way to separate off their children from the majority.

We argue for well-funded comprehensive education: increasing staff in schools, decreasing class sizes, and breaking the tyranny of the exam boards.

**UKIP:** "UKIP recognises and values an overarching, unifying British culture, which is open and inclusive to anyone who wishes to identify with Britain and British values, regardless of their ethnic or religious background".

**Solidarity:** British "national culture" is the result of centuries of outside influence. These islands would be a dim, dull backwater if it were not for successive waves of immigration.

Why should "British culture" be defended against further outside influences, now, in the 21st century?

Isn't a good thing we now listen to rap music and Beethoven, read Australian novels and watch US films, see foreign players in British football teams? Why would anyone expect us to listen and read without also being influenced and somewhat changed by the experience of these "outsiders"?

Not all "foreign culture" is good, and not all "British" bad. And vice versa. Culture should be assessed critically. If there is something oppressive or violent in a national culture, be it domestic violence, female genital mutilation, "gay bashing", or the back-to-the-1950s narrow-minded chauvinism of UKIP, it should be challenged.

The idea that "values" are valuable because they are "British" is as stultifying as the claims by the few mathematicians who remained in Germany after 1933 that their maths was good because "German intuition" was superior to "French" logic.



## SCOTTISH LABOUR PARTY LEADERSHIP POLL

# Unions back Findlay and Clark

By Dale Street

In an article published on LabourList on 13 November ([bit.ly/mccl-jm](http://bit.ly/mccl-jm)), Unite General Secretary Len McCluskey summed up the prospects for the Scottish Labour Party (SLP) if Jim Murphy is elected SLP leader. The ballot opened on 17 November and closes on 10 December.

“Jim Murphy is the candidate of the past and the candidate of division. His victory would be all the SNP’s Christmases come at once.

“He was a strong backer of the disastrous Iraq War. He backs extending privatisation in the public services. He is a pioneer of tuition fees for students. He supports austerity and ‘economic credibility’ with the City of London.

“At a time when Scottish Labour desperately needs to reconnect with its social democratic roots, he is the candidate of a reheated Blairism which in my view will be a sentence of political death for many Scottish Labour MPs, and for the prospect of a Labour victory next May.

“There is absolutely no future in a politics which aims to put Labour to the right of the SNP in Scotland.

“All the working people of Britain need a Labour government come next May. Ed Miliband offers that prospect. He will put social justice at the heart of governance, and Neil Findlay in Scotland would work with the grain of that agenda.

## RECONNECT

**“That is why I am delighted that Unite Scotland has decided to back Neil Findlay. He has the commitment to social justice and a progressive agenda essential to reconnect Labour with what were its natural supporters among working-class communities across Scotland”.**

The assessment of what a gift a Murphy-led SLP would be to the SNP was 100% accurate.

When the Executive Committee of Scottish Labour Youth nominated Murphy last week, its Twitter account was immediately awash with tweets from supporters of the SNP and the 45:



Neil Findlay

“You hasten Scottish Labour’s demise. Well done!”

In *The Scotsman* (14 Nov) Brian Wilson launched a broadside against McCluskey ([bit.ly/bw-mccl](http://bit.ly/bw-mccl)). Ironically – given that McCluskey is a current General Secretary whereas Wilson is a very ex-Labour-MP – the article was headed: “Blast from the Past Hits Labour Race”.

Wilson attacked McCluskey for “treading on Scottish territory – apparently, he hasn’t heard of devolution”. But the decision to back Findlay (and Katy Clark for deputy leader) had been taken by the union’s Scottish Region Political Committee.

“The noble cause of trade unionism is ill-served by bombast”, Wilson bombastically continues, “and the sooner the Labour Party ceases to be in any way hostage to McCluskey’s general flakiness, the better”.

Wilson nowhere responded to McCluskey’s arguments against a vote for Murphy. Without even quoting any of the examples of Murphy’s track record cited by McCluskey, Wilson declared that Murphy was being “singled out for disparagement on grounds that do not hold the slightest basis in reality”.

## BASIS

**With nominations for leader and deputy leader now closed, it is clear where the basis of Murphy’s support lies.**

The only trade union nominations Murphy could muster were from USDAW (which depends on partnership with Tesco for survival) and Community (small, and right-wing). Findlay and Clark, on the other hand, are backed by ten unions, including Unite, GMB, Unison and the CWU.

Murphy is ahead amongst MPs, MSPs, Euro-MPs and local councillors. Murphy also has a two-to-one lead in Constituency Labour Party nominations. But attendance at such meetings has often been barely double figures – such is the state which the SLP has been reduced to by Murphy’s New Labour policies – and is not necessarily a reflection of how the broader membership of the SLP will be voting.

The real bedrock of Murphy’s support is the media, which anointed him the “favourite” as soon as he announced that he was standing.

But if Murphy is elected SLP leader, the same media will turn on him at election time and shine a spotlight on his political record (and “creative” approach to parliamentary expenses).

**Labour in Scotland, like in the rest of the country, needs to re-connect with its working-class base. The two candidates who can achieve this are Neil Findlay for leader, and Katy Clark for deputy leader.**



Katy Clark

# A “New Labor”

By Ira Berkovic

**Before the tragic discovery that she has a brain tumour, Chicago Teachers’ Union president Karen Lewis, the public figurehead of the CTU’s 2012 strike against the city’s Democratic mayor Rahm Emanuel, was preparing a mayoral campaign for next year’s election.**

Lewis’s national union, the American Federation of Teachers (the country’s biggest), had pledged \$1 million. A *Chicago Tribune* poll from August 2014 put her ahead of Emanuel by 43 to 39%. Her victory, or even, perhaps, her campaign, would have been the most significant act of self-assertion by US labour in the political sphere for decades.

In a September 2014 article in *Salon*, Edward McClelland argues that Lewis typifies the contemporary US labour movement, which, since the 1970s, has become “feminised, professionalised, politicised and regionalised.”

McClelland writes: “According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the most unionised job category is ‘education, training and library occupations’ at 35.4 percent. That’s a field dominated by women, many with master’s degrees. (In fact, the Center for Economic and Policy Research predicts that by 2020, a majority of union members will be women.)”

He argues that deindustrialisation, and the relocation of heavy industrial manufacturing to America’s south, “a region hostile to unionism”, has meant that the archetypal unionist of yesteryear – a white man working a “blue-collar” industrial job – is now more likely to be anti-union. The archetypal trade unionist of 2014 is a graduate, a woman, probably black (unionisation rates amongst black workers are higher than those amongst whites), and in a “white-collar”, “professional” job.

McClelland also cites a political shift and realignment from the 1970s onwards; where unionised, working-class voters in America’s industrial heartland provided a base of support for Richard Nixon’s 1972 landslide victory (in which he ran what he called a “blue-collar strategy”), now membership of and support for unions is “just another blue state [Democratic] trait”.

## VOLKSWAGEN

**The statistics in McClelland’s article are stark. In early 2014, in a Volkswagen plant in Chattanooga, Tennessee, the United Auto Workers (UAW) lost a ballot for something akin to union recognition by 712 votes to 626.**

In a separate campaign amongst graduate workers in administrative jobs at New York University, UAW won the ballot 620-10.

McClelland’s article is an observation extrapolated from those statistics, and not a comprehensive study. But even as an observational sketch, there are some important details missing from the picture.

If there is a “New Labor” in contemporary America, it must surely include not just the graduate white-collar employees but also the precariously-employed workers in industries like cleaning, hospitality, retail, and fast-food, whose recent strikes for higher wages have won both material victories and widespread media interest. Many of these workers don’t have college degrees, and working for McDonald’s can hardly be considered a “white-collar”, “professional” job. Their employment is unstable, in some ways more similar to the precarious, piecemeal employment of migrant garment workers whose mass strikes were the highpoint of the early 20th century American labour movement.

That instability, and the vastly smaller workplaces, have meant that the fast food workers’ campaigns have not resulted in mass increases in union membership in the way an organising drive in a large industrial plant might once have done. But “New Labor” is adaptive, and has developed a range of organisational forms – workers’ committees, community organising caucuses, labour-movement NGOs, and others – to attempt, sometimes to imperfectly, to address that very issue.



# bor” in America?



The “Fight for \$15” has perhaps been strongest and most successful in “blue” areas – New York, Chicago, Seattle – but it has by no means been limited to them.

So, while the black or Latin American, precariously-employed McDonald’s worker is perhaps not as likely as the graduate “white-collar” professional to be a *member* of a union, their struggles are key to the development of the contemporary American labour movement and its relationship to the wider working class. It’s curious that they don’t appear in McClelland’s sketch.

But even notwithstanding this, the central problem he identifies still remains. The defeat at Chattanooga was a huge blow for US labour, and for anyone interested in building working-class power in America, the question of how to break through anti-union hostility amongst industrial workers in the South is a real one.

Racism, and racial privilege, looms large here. White workers are still much better off than black workers in America – a 2011 study found that “in 2008, the median hourly wage for black male full-time workers was \$14.90, while the median for white male full-time workers was \$20.84, nearly \$6 higher”. When unions failed to fight, or even supported, racism, exclusion, and segregation, white workers could see them as defenders of the racial privilege that guaranteed them better wages and conditions than their black counterparts. As official racism, exclusion, and segregation have been pushed back, and as battles against them have been won in the labour movement, that relationship of unions to white workers’ racial privilege has shifted.

But McClelland’s framework and chronology is, ultimately, a little too simplistic. To paraphrase it: “Once, ‘Old Labor’ was strong in the industrial heartlands in the south. Workers were union members even if they supported the Republicans on social issues. Then free-trade agreements and deindustrialisation by both Republican and Democrat governments ‘vanquished Old Labor as a political force’, and now ‘white men hate unions’”.

Much is elided. As Meredith Kleykamp and Jake Rosenfeld show in their *Democracy* article, “How the Decline of Unions Has Increased Racial Inequality”, black workers were more likely to be unionised than white workers as early as the mid-1970s. This was before the US labour movement’s historic peak, in terms of membership, in 1978 (its peak as a percentage of the workforce was much earlier, 26.9% in 1953). And, as

McClelland himself concedes, it is far from clear-cut that white, southern hostility to unions is entirely new. He writes: “When I heard a Sheet Metal Workers business agent from Syracuse theorise that Southerners dislike unions because ‘the name reminds them of the Union Army,’ I thought he was nuts. Since Chattanooga, I think he may have been on to something.”

Elsewhere, Harold Meyerson wrote: “In much of the white South, particularly among the Scotch-Irish descendants of Appalachia, the very logic of collective bargaining runs counter to the individualist ethos [...] It was no great challenge for UAW opponents to depict the union as the latest in a long line of Northern invaders.”

“Native” workers in the US South have, at various times, exploded that identity. In 1929, a strike wave of textile workers in Tennessee and North and South Carolina prompted James P Cannon to write: “The present strike wave helps to demolish a popular capitalist myth, proclaimed in a million dollars’ worth of advertisements, a myth not without influence even in the ranks of the left wing of the labour movement—about the docility of the 100 percent American workers of the South and their immunity from strikes and labour unionism.”

## MYTH

**But those moments of explosion have been relatively rare, and the “popular capitalist myth”, backed from that day to this by millions of dollars of advertising money (starkly so in the anti-union campaign at Chattanooga), has deep roots, and many believers.**

The fractured, contradictory, and often racialised identities of workers in the American South have always presented a challenge, and often a barrier, to class politics. The challenge cannot be met, except politically. US labour needs to assert itself confidently in both the political and industrial spheres, winning workers to a progressive, anti-racist, class identity that confronts and rejects both aspirational-middle-class “American Dream” liberalism and various social conservatisms. US labour needs a party – both in the “big P” sense of a formal political organisation based on and accountable to the movement, but also in the “small P” sense of seeing itself as a tendency, a force, in society that is both of and for itself, with a political programme of its own, independent of the political agendas of other classes.



Currently, the leadership of the US labour movement is wedded politically to a thoroughly ruling-class party, the Democrats, which, at best, offers scraps from capital’s table. On the other hand, and without an assertive class identity to contend with, it is relatively easy for US capital’s other wing, the Republicans, to confiscate white working-class political allegiance for a politics of hostility to black and Latino workers, particularly immigrants.

A Karen Lewis challenge to Rahm Emmanuel would have contributed hugely to the repositioning of labour as a force of and for itself in American society. Similar opportunities should be looked for. The ongoing struggles of fast food workers are another contribution. And so, too, are campaigns like the UAW’s at Chattanooga. Even when such campaigns end in defeat, they will leave behind memories and experiences that can be put to use in coming battles and struggles.

**There will be future explosions that “demolish capitalist myths”: if revolutionaries in the US labour movement can help develop, prepare, and win hegemony for that independent working-class political identity, a future moment of demolition can be made permanent.**

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# Gramsci defies a “terrible world”

Martin Thomas reviews *A Great and Terrible World: Gramsci's pre-prison letters 1908-1926*, edited by Derek Boothman.

**Antonio Gramsci was a leader of the Italian Communist Party in its early days, when it was a real revolutionary party, and is now famous for the *Prison Notebooks* he wrote when jailed by Italy's fascist regime between 1926 and just before his death in 1937.**

In this new collection of his letters from between when he was 17 and living away from home in order to study for entrance to university, and his jailing in 1926, the longest section is from just six months, between December 1923 and May 1924.

Gramsci was then in Vienna, working with the Communist International (Comintern) to construct a new centre for the Italian Communist Party (CP), which was crippled in its functioning within Italy by repression after the fascist coup of October 1922.

By then Gramsci had been convinced, through many discussions with Russian revolutionary leaders like Trotsky, of the Comintern's argument that revolutionary socialists should use united-front tactics to win over social-democratic workers, and propose to those workers a joint battle for a “workers' government”.

The pivotal letter of 1923-4 is one to other CP leaders of 9 February 1924, already available in other collections.

In it Gramsci sympathises with the Trotskyist opposition in Russia, established in 1923. “By demanding a greater intervention of the working-class element in the life of the Party and a reduction in the powers of the bureaucracy, they basically want to safeguard the working-class and socialist nature of the Revolution”.

He states that even before the CP's Rome Congress [of March 1922] he “declared in favour of the united front right up to its normal conclusion of a workers' government”. He had accepted the Rome Theses, hostile to the political united front, out of deference to the CP's outstanding leader Amadeo Bordiga, but now the time has come for change.

He disputes Bordiga's thesis that “consciousness and will [are not] faculties that may be attained by or expected from single comrades, since they are realised only through... a collective unitary organism”.

That thesis, he says, has led to a conception of Party organisation as focused on “the creation of an apparatus of functionaries who [are] orthodox as regards the official

conception...[as if] the revolution depends solely on the existence of just such an apparatus”.

He counterposes “a dialectical process” of interaction between the party's training of activists who are educators on every level, responses to the spontaneous struggles of the working class, and the formation of policy.

He discusses “East” and “West”, but to dispute Bordiga's claim that the West (Italy) demanded qualitatively-different tactics from the East (Russia).

Other letters around that time show that Gramsci's doubts about the united front were intertwined with doubts about the question of merger of the Communist Party with the “terzini”, the left-wing faction of the Socialist Party from which the CP had split in early 1921. The Comintern pushed for merger with the “terzini”; Gramsci was long sceptical.

The editor has entitled the volume *A Great and Terrible World*, because that phrase is used by Gramsci again and again in his letters to his wife Julia Schucht, living in Russia. Gramsci, in turn, got it from Rudyard Kipling. Kipling, despite his right-wing and imperialistic views, was one of Gramsci's favourite authors.

## ANXIOUS

**In Kipling's *Kim*, a story about a British boy who grows up as Indian in India, and then teams up with a Tibetan Buddhist teacher (lama), “a great and terrible world” is a catchphrase of the lama, signalling a presumed wise old man's dismay at hustle and bustle.**

“Now,” said [Kim], when the lama had come to an anchor in the inner courtyard of a decent Hindu house behind the cantonments, ‘I go away for a while — to — to buy us victual in the bazar. Do not stray abroad till I return’.

“Thou wilt return? Thou wilt surely return?” The old man caught at his wrist...

“Be comforted. Think how far thou art on the road — an hundred miles from Lahore already’.

“Yea — and farther from my monastery. Alas! It is a great and terrible world’.”

Partly, I suppose, Gramsci is expressing empathy with Julia, an anxious and moody person. But his recitals in his letters to her of his own anxieties suggest that he empathised with the lama, too.

Wrestling with the impact of the surge of reaction in Italy on activists who been ardent revolutionaries in 1919-20, he writes:

“I am now receiving lots of letters from the Italian comrades. They want faith, enthusiasm, willpower, strength from me. They think I am an inexhaustible source... They are demoralised and feel lost.

“Sometimes I get a feeling of anguish. I have received a letter from a Russian comrade living in Rome who was a comrade of Rosa Luxemburg's and of Liebknecht's, and who then... escaped the massacre [by right-wing gangs in cahoots with the Social-Democratic government, who murdered Luxemburg and Liebknecht in early 1919], and she too has written to me, discouraged and disillusioned...

“In our Party they are all young, and reaction has worn

down their nerves and will, instead of strengthening them...”

His answer is to turn the CP out for effective education and agitation. The core of activists who have stayed loyal must be educated, trained, consolidated.

“Schematically, I would pose the problem in these terms: encourage, at least, the training of three hundred comrades with the ability necessary for directing the work of an entire province... Encourage the formation of at least three thousand elements suitable for becoming good Party branch secretaries”.

He works on publishing education materials, and organising correspondence courses and day schools.

Gramsci candidly recognises his “anguish” and his feeling that he needs “to be very, very strong, but how can I, if you [Julia] are not here...?” This suggests to me an explanation of a puzzle. After backing the Left Opposition in 1923, and while never backing Stalinism, why did Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks* write senseless criticisms of Trotsky, conflating Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution with the “theory of the permanent revolutionary offensive” popular in some Communist Parties in 1920-1?

Whatever he wrote in 1924 about his views in early 1922, in fact for all practical purposes in early 1922 Gramsci deferred to Bordiga's ideas. He did not feel strong and confident enough to challenge them.

In 1924-6, too, he did not feel strong and confident enough to challenge the ideas developed around the Comintern's Fifth Congress in September 1924, when at the time Trotsky saw no alternative but to wait quietly for a new chance to confront Stalin. Deferring to those ideas, Gramsci must have absorbed a dose of the anti-Trotsky polemics of the time.

The letters show that at the time he accepted the Comintern's slogan of “Bolshevisation”, which was in fact a code-name for suppressing minority rights and free debate in the Communist Parties.

He must have been doubtful about the blustering verbal revolutionism of Zinoviev and the Comintern leadership, but never explicitly challenged it.

One letter is a report of a meeting he had in 1924 with the Croatian peasant leader Stepan Radic. Alliance with Radic was a keystone of the new Comintern policy, a mess of revolutionary demagoguery which regarded peasant and national rebellion as equivalent to or a substitute for independent working-class politics.

Gramsci notes that Radic had previously looked warmly towards fascism, and is plainly aware that he is not to be trusted. (Radic would join the monarchist Yugoslav government in 1925, and be assassinated in 1928. Out of the current around him would come forces for the future Ustashe who governed Croatia as puppets for the Nazis during World War 2).

Yet the letter never questions the new Comintern orthodoxy.

**In his later *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci signals that he has rethought “Bolshevisation”, but there is no polemic against Stalin's Fifth-Congress-period slogan of “workers' and peasants' parties”.**

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Antonio Gramsci was a leader of the Italian Communist Party in its revolutionary days, and spent almost all his last years in Mussolini's fascist jails. His *Prison Notebooks*, though often quarried to justify reformist or liberal politics, are a powerful contribution to the working-out of revolutionary working-class strategy.

This second, revised, edition of *Antonio Gramsci: working-class revolutionary*, published in 2012, summarises Gramsci's life and thought. It presents the major ideas from, and engages in debate with, Peter Thomas's big study, *The Gramscian Moment*; disputes the “post-Marxist” readings of Gramsci; discusses the relation between Gramsci's ideas and Trotsky's; and, in this new edition, includes a “Gramsci glossary”, critically reviewing concepts and terms from Gramsci now widely used or misused in political discourse.

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# Tribute to Alan Turing

Omar Raii reviews 'The Imitation Game', on general release.

**Films about scientists are a rare occurrence and films about mathematicians are even rarer; it's not hard to see why.**

For every 'Good Will Hunting', there are many more films that are quite unbearable to view, such as the vastly over-rated 'A Beautiful Mind' about the life of John Nash. But the Imitation Game is a surprisingly well-made take on the life of the father of computer science, Alan Turing.

Predictably the film was lacking in the concrete mathematics, with only vague references to how exactly the Enigma machine worked, or how Turing's machine was able to crack the code. The film can't be faulted too much for such an absence as it's always proved to be rather a tricky thing to show on screen.

Portraying the life of a person in love with the beauty of mathematics is surely difficult enough without also accurately portraying the maths behind it. The film does just about enough (though it could probably have tried a little harder) to pique the interest of those who would otherwise have been unaware of Turing's work.

One suspects that the release of the film will lead to many more visits to Bletchley Park, where the code-breaking was done, and that can only be a good thing.

There is often a temptation with biopics to compare the film's adaptation with the real life figure's story, and it's impossible not to do so here. Benedict Cumberbatch is well cast as the film's Turing character. The inaccuracies and artistic embellishments, such as Joan Clarke's appointment by way of her achievements at crossword puzzles (she was in fact chosen because of her accomplishments at university) and Turing's reclusiveness and implied autistic tendencies (while in real life he is known to have been quite friendly and no evidence exists that he was autistic), are quite numerous for those who insist on looking out for them.

However the movie does not claim to be a documentary, and it would be unfair to judge the film's merits on the basis of these uses of artistic licence.



As ever with films set during war, in particular the Second World War, the filmmakers can't resist trying to arouse a sense of national pride, in Turing's achievements if not the whole British war effort. It is an odd addition to the film and it appears all the more laughable when the film also shows the way the British state treated Turing after the war.

Turing's homosexuality, a subject of some criticism of the film by those who felt it was too downplayed, is dealt with sparingly. At a time, however, when homosexuality was a criminal offence in this country, this is probably reflective of the way Turing himself saw his sexuality. There was no evidence that he was ever ashamed of his sexuality. Overall, the

film probably accurately reflects the matter-of-fact way in which Turing himself saw it, as something that was part of who he was but very much part of his private life.

The film couldn't help but continue the hackneyed tradition of portraying scientists as odd loners whose genius no-one around them can understand — something that is in general as untrue for most geniuses as it was in fact for Alan Turing.

**But it is a portrayal charming enough that it can be regarded as a fitting tribute of sorts to one of the twentieth century's most enduring mathematical figures.**

## The Russian dolls of inequality

**Rich and Poor**  
By Matt Cooper



**In Capital in the Twenty First Century, Thomas Piketty argued that the very richest in society are accumulating greater and greater wealth.**

As more wealth is handed down from rich parents to their heirs, as governments do less to tax this wealth, an increasing proportion of society's resources become concentrated in the hands of the few, the 0.1% of the very richest.

Mainstream economists have criticised this idea, but now a study of wealth in the USA has suggested that, if anything, Piketty has underestimated the degree to which the wealth of the US's ruling class is growing.

Wealth is hard to measure, not least because the rich endeavour to keep their private world private in order to avoid paying tax. In a new study of income tax data since 1913, economists Gabriel Saez of Berkeley and Emanuel Zucman of the London School of Economics estimate how the wealth of the richest in the USA has changed over the last 100 years.

This is about wealth, not income, so the data does not include the wealth-free half of the population who throughout the period had net wealth of approximately nothing. In many cases they have net debt, negative wealth.

The study is about the shifts in wealth between what might be called the middle class and the ruling class (although Saez and Zucman avoid talking about class).

The middle class are those who have some wealth. It is predominantly in the form of the houses they live in, pension funds and some savings. It is not wealth that can be used for

conspicuous consumption, but assets that bring a limited buffer of security.

The very richest have their mansions and yachts, but their main form of wealth is the ownership of means of production, distribution and exchange: the factories, lands, banks, shops, along with the increasingly thick slice of privatised public services.

The most telling points about Saez and Zucman's study is that it shows not only how wealth has shifted from the ordinary middle class (roughly those in the top 50% but not the top 10%), and how wealth has shifted within the top 1% in US society.

Prior to the stock market crash of 1929, the top 10% in US society owned a big bulk of the wealth, around 85%. That crash wiped out much of their wealth, but stopped the expansion of the middle-class. After some government redistribution (particularly through inheritance tax) took effect, the top ten per cent's share fell to around 64% in the 1980s. Since then, the share of this group has crept back up to nearly three-quarters of all wealth.

However, wealth distribution within the group is not even. Those in the 90%-99% group who did well in the economic boom the USA experienced in and after the Second World War, holding about 45% of the wealth by the 1970s, have seen their share reduced to 35%. A proportion of their wealth has shifted to the top 1%.

Picture now a set of Russian dolls. With each smaller percentage group, each smaller doll, the rate at which the wealth is increasing becomes greater.

The bottom nine-tenths of those in the 1% (that is those in the 1% of the 0.1% wealthiest) held over a quarter of all wealth before the 1929 crash, but by the 1970s only 15%. Since

then their wealth has recovered to 20% of wealth.

The wealth of the top 0.1% was a quarter of the total before 1929 fell, but fell to only 6% by the 1970s. They have now recovered to 22% of total wealth (the same proportion as the entire bottom 90%).

Even within the top 0.1% there is no equality. The top 0.01% have the lion's share. This group consists of the 16,000 wealthiest families in the USA. They have seen their share of wealth increase from less than 1% at the start of the 1980s to over 11% now. They have over half the wealth of the top 0.1%.

Imagine if there were 10,000 people in the USA. The bottom 5,000 would have no wealth. The next 4,000 would have an average of average wealth of about \$190,000 each (probably in the form of a house), about a fifth of the total.

The next richest 900 would have an average wealth of \$1.3 million, about a third of the total.

The next ninety would have wealth of \$7.3 million each, collectively holding about a fifth of the total.

It is not until the next nine are reached that we enter the world of the "ultra-high net worth individuals" with luxury yachts, and perhaps at the very top end the odd private jet. This group would hold on average wealth of \$40 million each, which would add up a little under 11% of all the wealth.

**The richest person, indicative of the very richest group that which might well be called the Croesus Fraction, would have \$321 million, more than 11% of the total. These inequalities are increasing.**

• Source: gabriel-zucman.eu/files/SaezZucman2014.pdf



# Don't ban the SWP! Challenge and protest!

The Left



By Cathy Nugent

In recent weeks there have been attempts to ban the Socialist Worker Student Society at Edinburgh University, Sussex University and Goldsmiths, University of London.

The motion to ban at Edinburgh was withdrawn when the SWP threatened to sue the student union. The motion at Sussex failed by a large majority. As we go to press we do not know the result at Goldsmiths.

In their handling of allegations against Martin Smith from start to finish, and up until today, the SWP have utterly disgraced themselves: brushing aside two extremely serious allegations, setting up a deeply compromised process of "investigation", manipulating votes to legitimate that process, trying to shut people up... At the end of the "process" the person at the centre of the scandal was allowed to resign before he could face up to a judgement by an SWP committee that there was "a case to answer".

However disbanding their student society is wrong in principle and likely to have counter-productive consequences in practice.

The SWP is — and has been for many years — a tightly-run and intolerant sect.

Those on the left who have been its critics are not tolerated. Workers' Liberty has often found itself prevented from speaking in SWP meetings; we have been subjected to tirades, lies and abuse; we have even been physically attacked.

Even more serious was the major crisis which engulfed the SWP where they put the narrow organisational concerns of their "party" far above the what should have been the ordinary rights of members.

We are profoundly sympathetic to the women in the SWP, the ex-members of the SWP, who have been abused, and to anyone who has been affected by their crisis.

## SOLIDARITY AND EQUALITY

**There cannot be absolute freedom of speech in a student union. It is a community and has the duty to ensure there is a secure environment for all its members. It has the responsibility to promote solidarity and equality.**

But the limits on freedom of speech in a student union have to be clear and robust. Beyond the imperative that we never allow the far right any kind of platform in our institutions ("no-platform"), we often make other "restrictions" on free speech.

We have high standards, and not everything goes. We should not allow members or societies to say things, or print things, that are likely to stir up hatred against oppressed and marginalised groups. There are many kinds of "hate speech,"



and misogynistic encouragement of sexual harassment and assault is one. Recently the LSE's Rugby Club was disbanded because it issued a leaflet inciting sexual harassment. Quite right, we agree.

However, SWSS societies are not producing materials advocating anything remotely similar. If members of SWSS harass people then, like anyone else, they should be asked to behave better, and dealt with according to the rule of the student union.

Of course it is a concern that people may join the SWP without knowing what they are about. That is, in fact, a good reason to keep them "in plain sight" — to challenge their views and to distribute materials with accurate information and sources of information to the people whom they are meeting and talking to.

Part of the background to these moves is that the internal fight within the SWP is now over. Many will rightly feel sore that attempts to hold the SWP to account failed. It is up to those of us, and in the first place the left, to renew a campaign of pressure. We should hope that we can improve gender politics across the left and through that reassure survivors and others affected by the crisis that the situation for them will improve.

But if we ban SWSS we are using our power to limit free speech in an inappropriate way.

A student union is also a political body, there to represent students in the institution and in the wider society on matters that affect and concern the student body. It needs freedom of speech!

Rosa Luxemburg once said that "without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life, in which only the bureaucracy re-

mains as the active element".

She could have added that democratic freedoms are important to the most exploited, marginalised and oppressed. And her point, that curtailment of freedom has an inescapable effect of "hollowing out" democracy, that it never stops with this or that other restriction, is an important one here.

A knee-jerk culture of always acting violently against people who are appalling in their views without thinking whether they can be convinced to give up those views is very prevalent and we should be aware of that. Cameron's response to Islamist fighters in Syria, Iraq and Kurdistan is to jail and exclude; we say, discuss and argue.

## PRECEDENT

**The movers of these motions say they are only interested in disbanding the SWP, but successful attempts are unlikely to be an act that stops there. Others may come along and decide to use these moves as a precedent. Who will be next?**

Perhaps someone will decide to campaign against the Catholic chaplaincy's presence on campus (because of the enormous series of abuse scandals). That would be both sectarian (against Catholics), and a blow to freedom of expression.

Or what about trying to stop Lib Dems from speaking (because of Lord Rennard's behaviour, and the unwillingness of the Liberals to deal with it)? Or banning Tories from having a stall at Freshers (because of Brooks Newmark's behaviour)? Depressingly, there will be no shortage of such examples in the future.

There is no doubt whatsoever that the SWP has been guilty of rape apologetics, of denying the complaints of rape by women in their organisation (they do not, of course, say rape is acceptable). Many members minimise these abuses. Why?

Some in the SWP have not read about and do not know what happened. Some believe the SWP is truly fighting for socialism. They are completely misguided, but we should demand they explain themselves; we should try to discuss with them.

Bans can only prevent us from discussing and arguing. Moreover they poison any open, democratic, political culture; the very idea of discussing will suffer. And we risk giving the SWP publicity and the opportunity to rally people around themselves using the banner of free speech.

Many survivors are finding the strength to speak up. That's an unequivocally a good thing. The BBC, the Catholic Church, Sinn Fein and other organisations are being shaken by the voices of those that have been abused.

We do not want anyone to feel they are fighting alone; we have to play our part. Yes, the SWP should be held to account and punished for their behaviour. But the best way to hold them to account is to protest outside their meetings, to argue with its (small number of) activists, and produce dossiers of evidence which expose its past activities.

**We can win these arguments!**

## Left Unity's second conference

By Sacha Ismail

**About 300 people attended the conference on 15-16 November of the Left Unity group set up by Andrew Burgin and Kate Hudson in late 2012.**

Varied left-wing views on a wide range of issues were debated and voted on in a reasonably comradely way.

However, the conference was smaller than the previous one, and there were very few young or even youngish people there. The document and motions discussed were mostly of the "policies for an ideal government" type. Left Unity has almost nothing in terms of trade-union or student work.

A sort of left-social-democratic viewpoint, as advocated by national secretary Kate Hudson, is in control. There were some votes at the weekend which suggested a desire for a clearer socialist position, but for now there is no well-organised class-struggle socialist pole within the organisation.

The far left was most visible at the conference in pushing

a wild variety of positions on international issues. Workers Power desperately tried to get their pro-Russia stance on Ukraine passed, but it fell off the agenda. A quarter of the conference voted for something like the AWL's position on Kurdistan, while a narrow majority supported solidarity with the Kurds but also voted for a flat "anti-intervention" position from the CPGB/Weekly Worker. A pro-ISIS position got only two votes.

On Sunday the conference discussed "safe spaces" and "codes of conduct", but rejected all the proposals on the table because of reasonable concerns about such policies being used to shut down political debate.

The conference rejected an alliance with the Greens for the 2015 elections, and voted to allow local groups to come to arrangements with TUSC (a grouping run by the Socialist Party and leaders of the RMT rail union).

**A motion calling for support for Labour where there are no viable left candidates was not heard for lack of time.**



# Health workers to strike again

By Todd Hamer

**Health unions will stage a further four-hour strike on 24 November in their ongoing pay dispute.**

If we do not win a decent pay settlement and build a union movement capable of defending our already much degraded terms and conditions, then we will have helped speed on the end of the NHS as a free state-of-the-art health service.

Since 2010 the NHS has been starved of £20 billion. By 2020 the gap between funding and necessary expenditure will be around £50 billion.

But the current strategy of the unions is risible. So far the campaign has involved a four hour strike, four days of not doing unpaid over-

time (so-called “action short of a strike”) and a pause of six weeks. Now another four hour strike and more appeals to stop doing unpaid work for a few days.

No further strike dates after 24 November have been announced.

The unelected bureaucrats who run the unions believe the pay claim can be won through winning public support. That’s important, especially in an election year. But it is not as important as the mass withdrawal of labour or more effective at concentrating the minds of the bosses.

Health workers who think four hour strikes will not be enough, must start to push for an escalation. The campaign must broaden out from short strikes to make



NHS staff on the picket line on October 13

serious headway on issues in health workplaces.

**A serious strategy to win could encourage**

**many more health workers to strike and become part of the movement to save the NHS.**

# Local government workers accept deal

By Dave Pannett

**Local Government workers across England, Wales and Northern Ireland have voted to accept a pay offer which equates to no more than the 1% offer the same group of workers rejected in this year.**

The deal simultaneously ties workers into a 1% pay deal for 2015-16.

64% of Unison members voted to accept the deal,

36% to reject

While there was significant opposition to the deal in the regions of North West and London, the leadership of Unison (by far the largest of the three unions) called off the strike action planned to coincide with the TUC week of action and NHS workers’ strikes in October, and refused to call for rejection of the deal.

This meant that outside those two regions many

branches were balloting their members without having properly discussed the implications. Many members understandably felt confused by an offer that was presented as a victory, but in reality meant workers would have been better off having taking the 1% offer after the strike in July.

It is hard to find a silver lining to this clear sell-out, but that just over a third of Unison members rejected

the deal – at a time when there is no rank and file organisation in Unison to campaign for rejection – shows there are some opening to build such a project.

The local government workers website (lgworkers.blogspot.co.uk) is one such initiative.

**As some GMB and Unite branches also opposed the deal, building for cross union links and coordination is important.**

## Defend Julie Davies!

By Gemma Short

**Teachers at two schools in Haringey, London, struck on 12-13 November to defend suspended branch secretary Julie Davies.**

The teachers at Fortismere and Highgate Wood struck for the first time in the dispute on 5 November. Teachers’

union NUT says it will escalate to three days if the issue is not resolved.

On 11 November the *Daily Mail* published a front page article attacking the strikes. Teachers responded in anger, using #hatemail on twitter.

Teachers in two more schools, Park View and Hornsey, are being balloted to join the strikes.

**There will be a lobby of Haringey council at 6pm on 24 November and more strikes to be announced.**

• More information: julie-davies.org.uk



## Train drivers’ pay offer

By Gareth Devonport

**ASLEF members at Northern Rail have voted to strike over pay by 82.2%, on an 82% turnout.**

The company offered a further 0.3% in year one of the deal, plus commitments on “retention” talks for drivers on 17 November. As *Solidarity* went to press the union’s Executive Committee had resolved to hold a referendum on this offer, with full details promised with the voting paper.

This seems an odd choice for the union leadership to make, rather than rejecting what is still a measly increase with a very strong strike mandate backing them up. It is especially worrying as ASLEF’s tends not to put pay deals out for referendum unless it is recommending acceptance.

The referendum closes on 8 December, just three days before the expiry of the strike mandate, meaning ASLEF will need to notify Northern of a strike by 4 December, before voting closes, or be forced into holding another strike ballot.

RMT, the union representing the majority of non-drivers at Northern, has put the company’s previous offer (2.7% in 2014, 2.5% or RPI in 2015) to a referendum of its members, with the message that their reps “strongly [recommend]” acceptance.

**This is a worryingly conservative approach for the union to take, especially when they will almost certainly face massive job cuts after the new Northern Rail and Transpennine Express franchises are agreed in 2016.**

## Waterloo cleaners strike

By Charlotte Zalens

**Cleaners working for contractor Interserve at Waterloo station struck on 17-18 November after a manager claimed “we shouldn’t be employing black people.”**

The strikes follow earlier action on 10-11 November, and a further 24 hour strike has been called starting at 3pm on 21 November.

The RMT union says bosses have refused to address the allegation through agreed procedures. The union also says Interserve has underpaid wages, as well as victimising, bullying and harassing staff.

Cleaners at Waterloo are

not the only ones facing these conditions, or fighting back. Across various contractors, cleaners experience low pay, unsafe and unpleasant conditions, and substitution by agency workers.

Cleaning working on the Bakerloo, Central, and Victoria Lines will be balloted for strikes. The BCV contract was transferred from Initial to Interserve and, predictably, workers have lost out in the process.

Management bullying and harassment has increased, wages are not being paid on time, and RMT reps are being victimised by managers.

**RMT has decided to ballot members for strikes and action short of strikes.**



RMT cleaners on East Coast mainline on strike last year

## Tube drivers ballot to defend colleague

By Ollie Moore

**Tube drivers at the Morden depot on the Northern Line are balloting for strikes to win reinstatement for sacked colleague Alex McGuigan.**

Alex was sacked after failing a breathalyser test that failed to take into account his type-two diabetes, which can give false positive readings, and which failed to test a urine sample for alcohol.

The ballot closed on Tuesday 18 November, as *Solidarity* went to press.

Alex is one of several Tube workers to have fallen foul of authoritarian sackings recently; Vicky Hayward was sacked on the

basis of managers’ testimonies about what they say they

saw on CCTV footage (to which her and her rep were denied access), and Noel Roberts was “medically terminated” despite not missing a day sick in 10 months, and despite everyone from his own GP to his local manager to London Underground’s Occupational Health department declaring him fit for work.

**Tube union RMT is fighting for reinstatement of Alex, Vicky, and Noel.**







## Student solidarity with Qatari workers



Protesters outside the Qatar embassy in London

By Omar Raii

**Working conditions in Qatar, in particular for migrant workers, are at an appalling level.**

Conditions have been recently compared by the International Trade Union Confederation to “modern day slavery”.

University College Lon-

don (UCL) is, along with several other European and North American universities, one of the many educational institutions to have a campus in Doha’s “Education City”. The University and Colleges Union (UCU) has been heavily critical of UCL’s refusal to do anything to ensure that the rights of the workers there,

many of whom are migrants from South Asian countries such as Nepal, are protected.

UCL has not only shirked its responsibility for the outsourced staff at the campus, hiding behind sub-contractors to avoid responsibility, it has also failed to reassure workers on its campus about their labour rights.

On 2 December, UCU and the UCL Students Union will be holding a meeting on the subject of Workers’ Rights in Qatar. Speakers will include the TUC International Policy Officer as well as Shreya Paudel, the NUS International Students Officer (who is of Nepalese origin and whose uncle was recently “disappeared” by the Qatari government for investigating human rights abuses).

Workers and students at the meeting will demand that workers’ rights for the employees at the campus, as well as other civil rights (such as LGBT rights, which are heavily restricted in Qatar) be protected and guaranteed by UCL. There are also calls for the researchers/students in Qatar to be given student representation within the student union.

**UCL as an employer cannot shirk its responsibilities in the face of the Qatari government’s refusal to support decent working conditions.**

UCL students protested at the university buying up council housing in East London last year



## Fight rent rises!

**The housing crisis in London has not bypassed student accommodation one bit.**

Currently students at UCL halls of accommodation in Camden are organising weekly meetings to fight back against worsening living conditions (including no hot water for two weeks) as well as above-inflation increases in rent year by year.

UCL is one of the worst offenders for overpriced student housing, with an average price of £157.77 per week for a basic single room, and many rooms costing more than £200. Many students are having to pay more for their rent than they receive in their student loan.

As well as this, university halls are increasingly being privatised. Companies such as Unite (no relation to the union) and Nido are using students as cash cows, while the university itself can wash its hands of any problems

The move towards privatisation will only mean that profits will take over from students’ needs as the main focus of the preservation of halls.

**Students are now realising that the only way to halt the deterioration of their conditions, and the new neoliberal university agenda that sees students as “customers”, is to organise and fight back.**

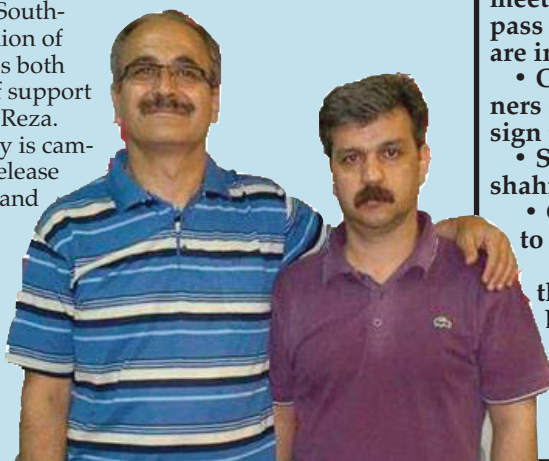
## Free Shahrokh Zamani and Reza Shahabi!

The campaign for jailed Iranian trade unionists Shahrokh and Reza gained support from various trade union branches in the UK this week.

Lewisham and Southwark National Union of Teachers’ branches both passed motions of support for Shahrokh and Reza.

Workers’ Liberty is campaigning for the release of both Shahrokh and Reza, and for all charges against them to be dropped. We aim to collect 10000 signatures by February 11 2015. We have now collected over 1700 signatures.

Thank you to activists from Birmingham who posted us petition sheets this week.



### What you can do to help:

- Take a petition around your union branch meeting, ask your work colleagues to sign or pass a petition around a university lecture you are in.
- Organise a regular street stall; make banners and placards, ask members of the public to sign the petition.
- Share the online petition — [bit.ly/free-shahrokhandreza](http://bit.ly/free-shahrokhandreza)
- Change your facebook and twitter pictures to support Shahrokh and Reza.
- Write to your MP and ask them to sign the Early Day Motion tabled by John McDonnell.
- Join us outside the Iranian Embassy, London on February 11 to hand in our petition signatures.

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