



Solidarity

For a
workers'
government

For social ownership of the banks and industry

No 335 10 September 2014 30p/80p

www.workersliberty.org

Reduce borders, don't raise them!



See
pages
5-7

The socialist case against Scottish separation

What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

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

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

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

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

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

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

We stand for:

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

Contact us:

● 020 7394 8923 ● solidarity@workersliberty.org

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

● Printed by Trinity Mirror

Get Solidarity every week!

- Trial sub, 6 issues £5
- 22 issues (six months). £18 waged
£9 unwaged
- 44 issues (year). £35 waged
£17 unwaged
- European rate: 28 euros (22 issues)
or 50 euros (44 issues)

Tick as appropriate above and send your money to:
20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG
Cheques (£) to "AWL".

Or make £ and euro payments at workersliberty.org/sub.

Name

Address

I enclose £



Defend Iraqi and Kurdish socialists!

On 5 September US president Barack Obama announced a "game plan" to wear down the "Islamic State" movement (ISIS), which has seized a large swathe of Syria and Iraq and imposed Sunni-sectarian ultra-Islamist rule.

On 8 September US Secretary of State John Kerry hailed the formation of a new Iraqi government in Baghdad.

The US will bomb more. (Obama ruled out ground troops). There is much less "breakthrough" than claimed.

Although every government in the region fears and dislikes ISIS, so far the USA has only been able to sign up Turkey to its "core coalition". US bombing may help the armed forces of the Iraqi Kurdistan regional government hold their own or make slight advances, but it has no prospect of pushing back ISIS in a large way. (Remember what 13 years of US bombing have done in Afghanistan—rebuilt a political base for the once-shattered Taliban, not defeated it).

The new government in Baghdad is, as the Iraq Oil Report website says, "nomi-

Land grab in West Bank

By Tom Harris

The Israeli government has declared over a thousand acres of territory in the occupied West Bank to be "state land", making the construction of Israeli settlements legally possible.

The declaration, coming soon after the recent war on Gaza, has been condemned by Palestinian and Israeli peace groups as a land grab and a provocation. US and British government ministers have also urged the Israeli government to reverse its decision.

The seized land is in Gush Etzion, a cluster of Jewish settlements south of Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The area is a significant one, both historically and in terms of where the boundaries of a Palestinian state might be drawn. Gush Etzion had been a site of Jewish settlement before the declaration of the Israeli state, but the Jews there were massacred by the Arab Legion in the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, making its later reconstruction and mainte-



Refugees fleeing the town of Amerli

nally inclusive". But then so has been every recent Iraqi government. Nominally. So far this one is shakier than its predecessors, not stronger.

It has no Interior Minister or Defence Minister. The allies of Hussain al-Shahrastani, former deputy prime minister, oil minister, and acting foreign minister, have threatened to boycott the administration. Kurdish politicians have set a slew of demands and threatened to withdraw if they are not met within three months.

On the ground, the resistance to ISIS is a sectarian mosaic. Its biggest triumph has been the reconquest of the northern-Iraq town of Amerli on 31 August. That was surely a relief to the

Turkmen townspeople.

But Greg Jaffe reports:

"As the Kurdish peshmerga fighters approached the city to greet the residents they helped save... 'peshmerga forces are not allowed to enter this city!' yelled a Shiite militiaman with Kataib Hezbollah, an Iraqi group. He waved his rifle at them and the peshmerga retreated..."

"After being turned away from Amerli, the peshmerga fighters returned to their base, just three miles away, passing through a half-dozen other Shiite militia checkpoints. Some belonged to the Badr Brigades, others to Saraya al-Salam and Asaib Ahl al-Haq. Each flew their own militia flag; the Iraqi flag was nowhere to be seen..."

"On the side of the road near Amerli, lined up in a row, were the bodies of about a dozen Shiite men killed in June during the first wave of assaults by Islamic State insurgents in the area... With the Islamic State fighters gone, it was finally safe for the local residents to

exhume the mass graves...

"A few hundred yards away was the Sunni village of Suleiman Beg, once home to about 10,000 people and now completely abandoned... No one had any idea what would happen to the empty city. The peshmerga and Shiite militia fighters agreed that Sunni Arabs couldn't be trusted to return". (Greg Jaffe, Washington Post, 5/9/14).

Qasem Sulaimani, the head of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards' elite "Jerusalem Brigade", was at the Amerli front coordinating with Shiite forces. So in fact the US was bombing to help the Iranian Revolutionary Guards ...

ISIS can be efficiently defeated only by a secular and democratic Iraq, and a secular and democratic Syria. It will be a long struggle to win those.

In the meantime, we must work to defend Iraqi and Kurdish socialists against both the ISIS threat, and the sectarianism and war fever mobilised against ISIS.

Violence against children

By Gemma Short

One girl in 10 from around the world has been raped or sexually assaulted by the time she is 20.

This amounts to 120 million girls worldwide. These horrifying facts come from a new UN report on violence against children, *Hidden in plain sight*.

It also reported that 95,000 children and teenagers were murdered in 2012 alone and six out of 10 children aged between 2-14 are physically punished by their parents or carers.

In many countries violence against children and young women is socially accepted or tacitly condoned. In the countries surveyed nearly half of all

girls aged 15-19 believed that a husband was justified in hitting his wife under certain circumstances.

As with the Rotherham scandal, reported in *Solidarity* 335, violence is disproportionately suffered by poor, vulnerable and working-class children. Often authorities understand or care little about these children.

The report categorically condemns physical punishment of children by their parents or carers. Research in the report further emphasises that violence is "detrimental to all aspects of a child's growth... with sometimes lifelong repercussions."

Children have a right to grow up without being subjected to violence of any sort.

Solidarity with Calais migrants

By Ira Berkovic

Migrants and solidarity activists demonstrated in Calais, France, on Sunday 7 September, in opposition to fascist and other anti-migrant racists who mobilised in the town to protest the presence of migrants in Calais.

The racist demonstration was organised by "Save Calais", a local right-wing coalition. Prominent fascists addressed the demonstration, including Yvan Benedetti, whose banned L'Oeuvre Française group was implicated in the 2013 murder of anti-fascist activist Clément Méric. Many demonstrators displayed white supremacist symbols and slogans, and gave Nazi salutes. Fascists began a planned weekend of action by attacking a 15-year-old student outside her school on Friday 5 September.

150 activists, migrants, and local residents participated in a football tournament organised to promote solidarity and anti-racism. 100 marched in a counter demonstration against the racists. The right-wing demonstration mobilised around 150.

Natacha Bouchart, Calais' UMP (Tory) mayor, called on Calais citizens to blockade the port in order to pressure the British government into dealing with the problem.

Around 1,500 migrants currently live in Calais, with more in other towns on France's northern coastlines. Migrants live in abandoned buildings, or in makeshift squats and camps, sometimes called "jungles". Many migrants hope to board vehicles crossing the English Channel in order to enter Britain. In increasing desperation, migrants have tried to storm passenger ferries or stow away in individual tourists' cars.

According to Calais Migrant Solidarity, "UK immigration law makes it near impossible for the vast majority of non-nationals to enter the country, since you need a visa to do so, for which you need money and must satisfy a strict criteria.

"Unless you are already in the country on a visa, you cannot claim asylum from abroad. British law therefore necessitates illegal entry to the UK for almost all those who want to claim asylum. This forces migrants, most of whom have survived war or human rights violations — and many of whom are very young — to risk their lives making clandestine entries in or under the lorries that travel to the UK."

France, Germany, and Sweden all receive a far greater number of asylum claims than Britain.

The far left cannot re-



Migrants oppose fascist demo in Calais

spond to the right only by asserting that the scale of the migrant "problem" is not so great as imagined. We must respond by changing the terrain of the debate, and reframing entirely how the "problem" is understood.

To racist, anti-migrant policy in both Britain and France, we must counterpose a working-class social programme, including abolition of immigration controls. If France abolished its immigration controls, and embarked on a meaningful programme of welfare reform and job creation, many migrants might choose to freely settle in France.

The risk of migrant labour undercutting indige-

nous labour in Britain, much hyped-up by left-nationalists in the labour movement, can be dealt with not by restricting immigration but by working-class organisation and struggle for higher wages.

The migrant "problem" is not an individual but a social one, a question of how civilised society allows human beings to starve and die on its margins, rendered "illegal", when there is enough wealth to provide a decent life for everyone.

The historical task of socialists is to build a world where no-one is "illegal".

• More information: calaismigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com

US casts round for Syrian allies

By Stephen Wood

Six and a half million Syrians are now internally displaced. Two and a half million have fled to Turkey, Jordan and the Lebanon.

After up to 200,000 deaths since mass protests against the regime began in 2011, the use of chemical weapons against his own people, and the attempted starvation of civilians in opposition controlled areas, Assad still remains relatively firmly in control of a rump Syrian state.

Some politicians in the USA and Europe are even starting to recommend an alliance with Assad to stop ISIS (the "Islamic State" movement).

However, direct links are unlikely to begin anytime soon. Working with Assad

and by extension Iran and the Lebanese militia Hesbolah would have a very negative impact on the USA's relations with Turkey, the Gulf states, and the Sunni Arab population in Iraq that NATO and its allies hope to turn against ISIS.

Former US ambassador to Syria Robert Ford has called for greater support to the more moderate Free Syrian Army as a bulwark against ISIS.

Over the last few months there has been a small but emerging opposition to Assad from amongst the Alawite minority from which he comes. Many of them have suffered sectarian attacks from the Sunni dominated opposition, but they have also suffered under the increasingly grim and siege-like conditions of Syrian government-controlled territory.

Ford argues that were the opposition to become more open and less obviously sectarian, then the US could provide it with support to remove Assad from power and become a key ally in fighting ISIS.

However, the FSA is a loose movement. Its nominal leaders, "hotel revolutionaries" outside Syria who attend conferences and take part in failed negotiations, have little control over it.

Several brigades have worked with the Al-Nusra Front, the official Syrian Al Qaeda affiliate, and some have defected to the "Islamic State" itself.

The US and its allies see the Kurds as the main bulwark against the growth of ISIS, but remain sceptical about the PYD, the main Syrian Kurdish group, which has close ties with the Turkish-Kurdish PKK.

The PYD and its armed battalions, the YPG, have fought ISIS longer than any other opposition group within Syria. ISIS has targeted them because of the oil rich areas which fall under their control in Northern Syria, and because of its sectarian hatred for Kurds.

From the beginning, in 2011, Arab chauvinists in the Syrian opposition have cold-shouldered the Kurds. They were excluded from the early official opposition that formed the FSA.

The YPG's role in beating back ISIS at Mt Sinjar in Iraq and their increasing collaboration with some other militias has improved their image with the Western powers; but the de facto anti-ISIS alliance remains uneasy.

Putin keeps his options open

By Dale Street

Battered by superior Russian firepower, the Ukrainian government signed a ceasefire with the pro-Russian separatists on 5 September.

Only a fortnight before the Ukrainian military hemmed separatists into three small enclaves, albeit at the cost of thousands of fatalities.

But then Russia jacked up the military backing it had given to the separatists from day one. Three offensives were launched from Russian territory, Russian troops took part in those offensives, and yet more Russian military hardware was handed over to the separatists.

Ukraine's military was no match for what was effectively a Russian invasion.

On both sides there are strong factions who regard the ceasefire as no more than a breathing space before new war.

Some hardliners in Russia and the "People's Republics" want a "Novorossiya" ("New Russia") covering much of Ukraine, even stretching to Romania, reducing Ukraine to a small rump.

Last weekend leaders of the Donetsk and Lugansk "People's Republics" announced that they would be demanding full independence, not specifying for which territory, at the next round of talks. If there was no agreement on that, they said, the ceasefire would be called off.

On the Ukrainian side far-right factions rail at "betrayal".

PRO-WAR

Russian president Putin and Ukrainian president Poroshenko are both under pressure from pro-war factions.

One of Putin's key goals was to keep Ukraine out of NATO. Until a few months ago, that was a very distant prospect. It is still distant, but the "common sense" view in Ukraine now is that military expenditure should be increased and Ukraine should join NATO.

Neighbouring countries which are already NATO member-states, such as Poland and the Baltic states, are calling for more support from NATO.

In the "People's Republics" there is now what amounts to a Russian-backed military dictatorship.

Although the "People's Republics" have their own "Supreme Soviets", these are unelected bodies consisting of handpicked loyalists whose only function is to rubber-stamp decisions made elsewhere. Real power lies with the military commanders.

As German academic Margarete Klein recently wrote: "Putin's long-term goal is clearly to exercise influence over all of Ukraine, ideally through the federalisation and neutrality of Ukraine. If he cannot achieve that, then he will go for controlled destabilisation. The problem is that the process cannot be controlled with 100% certainty.

"Right now it looks like Russia's plan is the Transnistrian scenario, a "frozen conflict". A de facto separation of parts of Ukraine but which are not annexed into Russia would ensure that Moscow can continue to exercise influence over Ukraine". (Transnistria is a segment of neighbouring Moldova, nominally independent but actually Moscow-dominated).

"Russia could add weight to its core demands – neutrality and federalisation of Ukraine – through the permanent possibility of the threat of escalation. This explains why more and more highly placed figures from Transnistria have recently taken up leading positions in the 'Donetsk People's Republic'."



Poroshenko meets Obama and Cameron at Nato this week

Support the Scottish socialist republican campaign!

Letters



The arguments on Scottish independence are simple and clear for me. There is just one question on the ballot paper “Should Scotland be an independent country?” The answer is, yes or no.

Salmond wanted a third way / more devolution (devo max) option but Cameron refused this. Now the Tories are panicking and offering all sorts of goodies if Scotland votes “no”. We don’t believe they will deliver.

So most of the left here is for yes and there has been a shift in the political landscape for the last few years. Everyone is involved in this, young people especially as they have a vote. Whichever way the vote goes, nothing will be the same again. This is most definitely *not* a diversion from the class struggle; a new constitution (and we’ll fight for a republican one) will set the scene for all class struggle in future in Scotland.

Most or all of Workers’ Liberty’s arguments are economic, but there is more to this than the economy; Of course that is important but for us is not the central issue.

The main point is one of democracy, we want to vote for the people who govern us and not vote left and get a load of Tories as we do now. I know outside Scotland that’s also true, I have much sympathy for your predicament, having lived in Doncaster. The difference is Scotland has been a country before and can do that again.

A yes vote may be not socialism or liberation of course, but it can open doors which are closed now e.g. no anti-union laws — we’ll certainly fight for that. Marx said that every reform is a victory for the working class and this will certainly be a progressive reform.

By the way, no one here is talking about erecting borders between England and Scotland. That’s not important to us. I don’t believe there will ever be a concrete border there like the one between Israel and Palestine. Any system of crossing borders will be very simple and is yet to be decided on by the new government we’ll elect after a possible yes vote.

Most of us have family in England and we do want to still relate to them as well as the English, Welsh, Irish north and south (the Welsh and Irish working class were missed out from the latest “pro union/no” argument in *Solidarity*) and international working class.

Also to put unionists in quotes in your articles (that is “unionists”) is very telling. It’s a wee bit embarrassing perhaps to be aligned with Ian Paisley (junior) David Cameron, Gregory Campbell, Nigel Farage etc. But that’s exactly who AWL is aligned with by advocating “no”. There’s Orange Order and UKIP marches here in a Scotland soon to support the UK union. Will AWL be supporting them, against us?

I hope you’ll print this to give the debate some much needed balance.

Pauline Bradley, Dumbarton



Raising aspirations, confronting vested interests

Maria Exall remembers Tom Cashman, who died last month

I am missing Tom, both as a friend and as a comrade.

As a comrade, what I miss most is the chance to engage with his perceptive insights into the class struggle now, and his analysis of the history of the class. He had a deep understanding of the British (and Irish) labour movements. Tom was a highly intelligent man who used his great abilities to promote the interests of the working class, this purpose being at the centre of his life all the time I knew him.

Tom was extremely confident in his political analysis, which meant he took no prisoners in an argument. But this was combined with a security in his own opinion which meant he had nothing to prove. He offered his analysis up as it was — he was never aggressive or hectoring.

When I first got to know Tom I was somewhat bemused that a focus of his union involvement was trade union education, something I had never seen as a particular priority for socialist activists. As I got to know him better I understood why. Tom had a massive commitment to raising aspirations of the class at the same time as accepting where you start

from. He was never patronising — he just expected more.

Tom and I used to meet up to discuss the nature of the trade union bureaucracy and the state of the link between Labour and the unions. We would exchange stories of the many absurdities of the trade union movement and the Labour Party. These would be discussed by Tom with acute analysis and dry humour.

Tom got elected to the Unite Executive and took the opportunity to put into practice his commitment to an industrially based but political trade unionism at a national level. He worked for the important reforms undertaken by United Left supporters to make the union workplace focused and democratically accountable. This meant he had to confront vested interests not only in the bureaucracy but also within the left. He always did this in a well thought out and principled way. I met many Unite activists who disagreed with him, but also respected and had an affection for him.

It is hard to take on board that someone with Tom’s great insight and understanding is gone. His influence lives on in those of us who had the privilege of knowing him.

The man who would be leader

By Jon Lansman

The Labour MP for Streatham and Shadow Business Secretary Chuka Umunna was interviewed in the September issue of GQ:

“Gordon Brown dealt a blow to Labour’s economic credibility by wrongly giving the impression in his final year as prime minister that the party failed to understand the importance of tackling Britain’s unprecedented peacetime budget deficit, the shadow business secretary, Chuka Umunna, has suggested.”

What he is quoted as saying amounts to:

“My view is that the seeds were sown under the last government and Gordon [Brown] – for whom I have a lot of respect. His refusal to use the word ‘cuts’ in trying to frame the economic debate as investment versus cuts gave the impression we didn’t understand that debt and deficit would have to be dealt with.”

The tactics are pretty standard. Don’t say too much. Include something contradictory (his “respect” for Gordon) and leave the real punchlines to the spin doctor.

But kicking Brown and underlying the need for cuts is not enough for this positioning exercise for a future leadership candidate. He has to seek positive identification with his target audience:

“I do think we need to talk more proudly about our record. We do need to explain and rebut this notion that we crashed the car ... My main argument in my conference speech was that we did not crash the car. Labour left the country in a far better state, and I say it all the time.”

The combination of stressing the importance of being “proud of our record” whilst kicking Brown makes clear that it is the Blairite record of which we must be proud.

The Blairites wanted austerity [in 2010] and they want it now.

And Chuka Umunna is making clear that he is the candidate to take on the task should one be needed anytime soon.

You would have thought that eight months from a general election and so soon after the Tories have suffered their worst and most damaging setback for sometime with the defection to UKIP of Douglas Carswell was not the time to be publicly preparing your future challenge for Labour’s leadership.

Still, at least Chukka isn’t quite as “intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich” as his friend Peter (to whom he is “intensely relaxed” about being compared), at least not yet, anyway:

“I have nothing against people who earn large amounts of money for creating jobs and wealth and taking risks in our country,” Umunna insists, “but I didn’t feel that giving 14,000 millionaires a £40,000 tax cut was the right priority for us at this juncture [my emphasis - JL].”

Meanwhile, as reported in the Times (2 September) Umunna has accepted and received a donation of £2,500 for the running of his personal office from chartered tax advisers Signature Tax.

The company’s website describes its services as “a progressive tax planning boutique delivering tailored tax solutions to individuals and organisations internationally”.

According to their website, Signature Tax provides specialist advice on off-shore tax arrangements such as those Chuka has previously advised Barclays bank to close down, to clients who are subject to HMRC investigations, and on structures designed to avoid HMRC’s Disclosure of Tax Avoidance Schemes regulations.

LEFT

In the period before he was elected as an MP in 2010, when he presented himself as on the left, Chuka Umunna described tax avoidance as “daylight robbery” and pushed for an end to the tax loopholes whose promoters now fund his activities speaking for Labour on business, innovation, trade and regulation.

His office (like those of Ed Balls and Jim Murphy) has also “benefited” in the last year from the secondment of research assistance by Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) to the value of over £60,000.

Given that Chuka Umunna has previously been accused of double standards because his family home had been purchased through a trust based in Jersey which Chuka has himself described as a “well-known tax haven”, you might have expected more discretion.

When it came to taking money from the trade unions, Chuka Umunna told the Today programme on Radio 4:

“I think undoubtedly ... we’re going to take a hit in terms of our finances... We will see [how much], but that doesn’t mean that it isn’t the right thing to do.”

But when it comes to taking money from those who help the tax dodgers dodge their tax, “doing the right thing” doesn’t seem to count for as much.

• From www.leftfutures.org, 1-2 September.

Reduce borders, don't raise them!

Borders divide the working class more than they divide capital. That is the core socialist argument for voting no to separation in Scotland's referendum on 18 September.

The core argument can be overruled where one nation is conquered and ruled to ruin by another. Then, the national oppression creates divisions as evil as any border. Separation lifts the oppression. Workers are better united by a common struggle in which the workers of the oppressor nation side against their own ruling class's sway over others.

But Scotland has been an equal partner in British capitalism for centuries. Scottish capitalists were equal partners with English in ruling the British Empire, not victims of it. The core argument applies.

Already Scottish workers will stand outside the big strike on 14 October, because public sector pay terms are a shade different in Scotland.

Some will say that's all right, because Scottish terms are a shade better than England. But a united struggle could win much better than that shade of not-quite-as-bad.

It is still true today, as when Marx wrote the *Communist Manifesto*, that "the struggle of the proletariat [working class] with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle".

The first move in workers' struggles is almost always against conditions, settlements, and laws within the borders where they live. Working-class liberation can be won only by a struggle which unites workers across the world around common aims, transcending those local details. Each new border creates a new hurdle to jump in the effort to unite workers globally. It can be jumped; but it is a new hurdle.

Global capital, however, flows across borders easily. It uses borders to its advantage, by imposing a race to the bottom. Governments compete to win and keep global capitalist investment, by offering lower and lower tax rates for the rich and for business, easier and easier regulation, and more and more beaten-down workforces.

Individual workers move across borders. But often with difficulty: look at Calais, a border within the EU! Even where individual workers can move easily, whole working classes can't move.

Working classes cannot threaten a government with losing its working class to a neighbour unless it cedes better conditions to workers. Yet global capitalists threaten governments with capital-flight unless they match their neighbours' sweeteners.

The Scottish National Party promises that in a separate Scotland the NHS will be safer and the Trident nuclear submarines will have to be moved to England.



We will win more by fighting together

But it makes no sense to set up a new national frontier on the strength of those promises. It makes no sense to rank such unstable promises above the fundamental, long-term truth that the working class benefits from borders being reduced and removed.

The SNP used to promise that a separate Scotland would join the "arc of prosperity" of small states on the edge of Europe: Iceland, Ireland, Norway, Finland.

Then Iceland, Ireland, and Finland were among the hardest-hit by the 2008 world economic crash and its sequels. Norway is better off only because of its huge oil reserves. Separation will not stop the decline of the North Sea Scottish-British oil reserves, or make the exploitation of declining reserves eco-friendly.

Scottish separatists used to mock socialists who opposed separation on the grounds that we were implicitly defending the British monarchy, NATO, and the British financial system.

Now the SNP says that its separate Scotland will still have the British monarchy, NATO, and the British financial system. Socialists and democrats who oppose separation do not

defend the status quo.

Our arguments — against increased nationalism and creating borders — are a world away from the official "no" camp. We have no truck with UKIP types who want to keep the status quo and the Act of Union out of "patriotic" commitment to the United Kingdom.

Will Hutton, no socialist but clear-headed on this issue, put it well in the *Observer* of 7 September:

"If Britain can't find a way of sticking together, it is the death of the liberal enlightenment before the atavistic forces of nationalism and ethnicity — a dark omen for the 21st century..."

"[But the only alternative is] to trump half-cock quasi-federalism with a proper version... a federal Britain... a wholesale recasting of the British state..."

"The first casualty would be the Treasury, which would... become a humbler finance ministry. The next casualty would be the House of Lords..."

For united working-class struggle within a democratic federal Britain, within a democratic federal united Europe!

What happens if Scotland votes yes?

Despite what some on the left pretend, the debate on Scottish separation has been defined by the main movers, the SNP, entirely in terms of a separate Scotland allowing a better capitalism.

Given that Scotland is a net gainer from the British budget, that oil and gas revenue is declining, and that one of Scotland's main industries after oil and gas is high finance, likely to move away from a separate Scotland, all the "better capitalism" arguments are dubious.

Economically, the most certain result is "tax arbitrage" between England and Scotland, leading to pressure to reduce taxes for the rich and big business.

The SNP plan for independence in March 2016 if they win the referendum. Experts say that the negotiations, sure to be bitter, about what currency Scotland will use and on what conditions, what share of accumulated British government debt it takes, whether it can get into the EU, and so on, will almost certainly force delay.

However, the March 2016 date, even as a possibility, will weigh on politics in the meantime.

If Labour wins the (all-UK) general election in May 2015, a resulting Labour government will be a lame-duck administration from the start. It will be set up to fall in March 2016, or whenever separation comes, because it will lose its majority with the loss of MPs from Scotland.



What would the SNP deliver?

The Tories got 292 seats in England in 2010, as against 191 Labour, 43 Lib Dems, 1 Green, 1 Speaker. Without a swing much bigger than Labour even dreams of for now, the Tories will still have a majority in England and Wales after May 2015.

In the longer term that Tory majority could be shifted — Labour had the greatest number of seats in England in 1997, 2001, and 2005 — but not in 2015.

Paradoxically, Scottish separation, assuming that the separate Scotland manages to negotiate EU membership, might reduce the drive for Britain to leave the EU. No bourgeois would want a non-EU rump Britain stuck between continental EU and EU Scotland. Separation would also reduce Cameron's ability to get concessions from the EU, so it would sharpen the battle in Tory and UKIP circles over the EU.

Even if separation is defeated, there will still be big implications for British politics, since all the main British parties have now signed up to much more radical devolution. There will be some of the same tax arbitrage effects, and there will be unstoppable pressure for reform of the Westminster parliament if even more of its legislation concerns only England. There will be some pressure for more autonomy for Wales.

Socialists should reinvigorate our agitation for a democratic federal republic.

Paradoxically, narrow defeat in the referendum may help the SNP more than victory. If they are defeated, they will still be seen to have won much more radical devolution, and they will have a strong hand in the negotiations about details. Any shortcomings they can blame on the shortcomings of those details.

If they win separation, they have a tricky road to navigate, and they will incur the blame for problems.

A German soldier's peace poem

War Poems



From *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 29 June 1918

A poem was found on the dead body of a German soldier. The British authorities reproduced it in facsimile and threw it from aeroplanes into the German lines.

Some of the copies were blown into the British lines, and a British soldier who caught one sent it to the New-York-based magazine *Flying*. The editor of *Flying* wrote: "Its value for propaganda purposes is a matter of opinion. The sentiment is of the class that Americans describe as 'mush'."

The *Workers' Dreadnought* commented "we disagree with the editor of *Flying*. This German soldier voices our own view."

I was a soldier, but only by compulsion
When they enlisted me a feeling of revulsion
Obsessed me, as away from those who cared
They drove me to the barracks like the common herd
Yes, from the homestead and those I loved so dearly
I had to vanish, and now I feel sincerely
The pangs of longing for the home I blessed
And anger's passion surges in my breast

I was a soldier, but only one unwilling;
I hate the tunic, and all the life of killing,
A simple stick's enough for my defence,
To battle's fearful orgy must I hence
To slaughter hapless, blameless brother men
Who had not hurt me — I was a soldier then!

I was a soldier, in discipline saluting,
Instead of freedom, 'midst a world of shooting
Instead of working with its life and joys,
I saw the reckless courage of our boys,
Oh! tell me why you need these soldiers, truly,
The people want to live in peace and ruly:
'Tis but your ever gnawing lust for power —
But come, let's live again the Golden Hour

Brothers, arise, whatever be your nation,
Hungarian, Frenchman, Danish, or Alsatian,
Whate'er your colours, whatever be your land,
Instead of lead shoot forth the brotherhand,
And mimic warfare let us hasten toward,
And from their troubles all our people free,
Those who want war let them alone go forward -
A freedom soldier I will gladly be.



German and British soldiers together on Christmas Day 1914, during a temporary ceasefire.

Which "us", which "them"?

"There are five million of us in Scotland, but sixty million in the rest of Britain. We'll always be in a minority. That's why we'll never get the government we want."

That's the SNP case for a 'yes' vote on 18 September. Anyone who has attended referendum debates will have heard this argument – word-for-word – from SNP MSPs.

Even if not always expressed in exactly the same terms, that's also the argument being fired back on the doorsteps by people who are saying that they will vote 'yes' on Thursday of next week.

That argument also explains why socialists should oppose a 'yes' vote.

"We in Scotland", from a socialist perspective, are not in a minority.

The "we" that counts for socialists are the working class: people who work, the unemployed, those retired after a life of work, and their families. They are the majority of the population in Scotland, and they are the majority of the population in the rest of Britain.

This is not a coincidence or some transient state of affairs. Capitalism, by definition, is a society based on massive inequalities of wealth and power. A small minority lives off the wealth created by the majority of the population.

That is why, for socialists, it makes no sense to say that "we" are in a minority or to accept that argument from other people. In England, in Scotland, in Britain, "we" are the overwhelming majority of the population.

We might not, and do not, get the government we want.

But that is not because we live in a state called Britain. It is because of the checks and controls over elected government which exist in every capitalist country (and which would also operate in an independent Scotland).

And, more importantly, it is because of the lack of democracy and accountability in the trade union and labour movement.

This has allowed successive Labour governments to rule

in the interests of capital while making, at best, only minor concessions to the trade unions which created the Labour Party and which still control 50% of the votes in the party's decision-making processes

But the SNP, like any nationalist political formation, categorises people according to their nationality and national identity, not their class. And because there are more English in Britain than there are Scots, it concludes: "we will always be in a minority."

Different groups of people certainly do have different nationalities and national identities. We recognise that and defend their right to define their own national identity.

Right now in Ukraine, for example, we defend the right of the Ukrainian people in the face of claims, backed up by force of arms, by Russian fascists and ultra-nationalists that they are "really" Russian and therefore "belong" in the Russian Federation.

Though Alex Salmond praised Putin earlier this year for "restoring a substantial part of Russian pride and that must be a good thing!"

But the SNP does not merely define people according to national identity (us in Scotland – them in England). It seeks to mobilize people politically on the basis of their national identity. It does that because that is what nationalism is all about as a political project.

And that is why the case for a 'yes' vote on 18 September is inherently nationalist:

We Scots are so different from those English that our voting patterns will always be different. Therefore, we Scots have to break away from the larger state unit in which we Scots are a minority. Otherwise, we Scots will never get the government we Scots want.

Socialists can have no truck with such an argument, based as it is in seeing the world in terms of national divisions rather than class divisions.

That deceptively simple but profoundly divisive national-

How the pro-Yes left argues

An example of the argument. From *Socialist Worker* 19 August 2014

Socialist Worker supports a vote for independence. We are in favour of the break up of the imperialist British state and weakening its ability to join US military adventures and illegal wars around the world.

Independence would be a blow to both sides of the so-called special relationship.

A Yes vote would also call into question Britain's status as a leading nuclear state and raise the possibility that it may be forced to abandon its nuclear capabilities altogether.

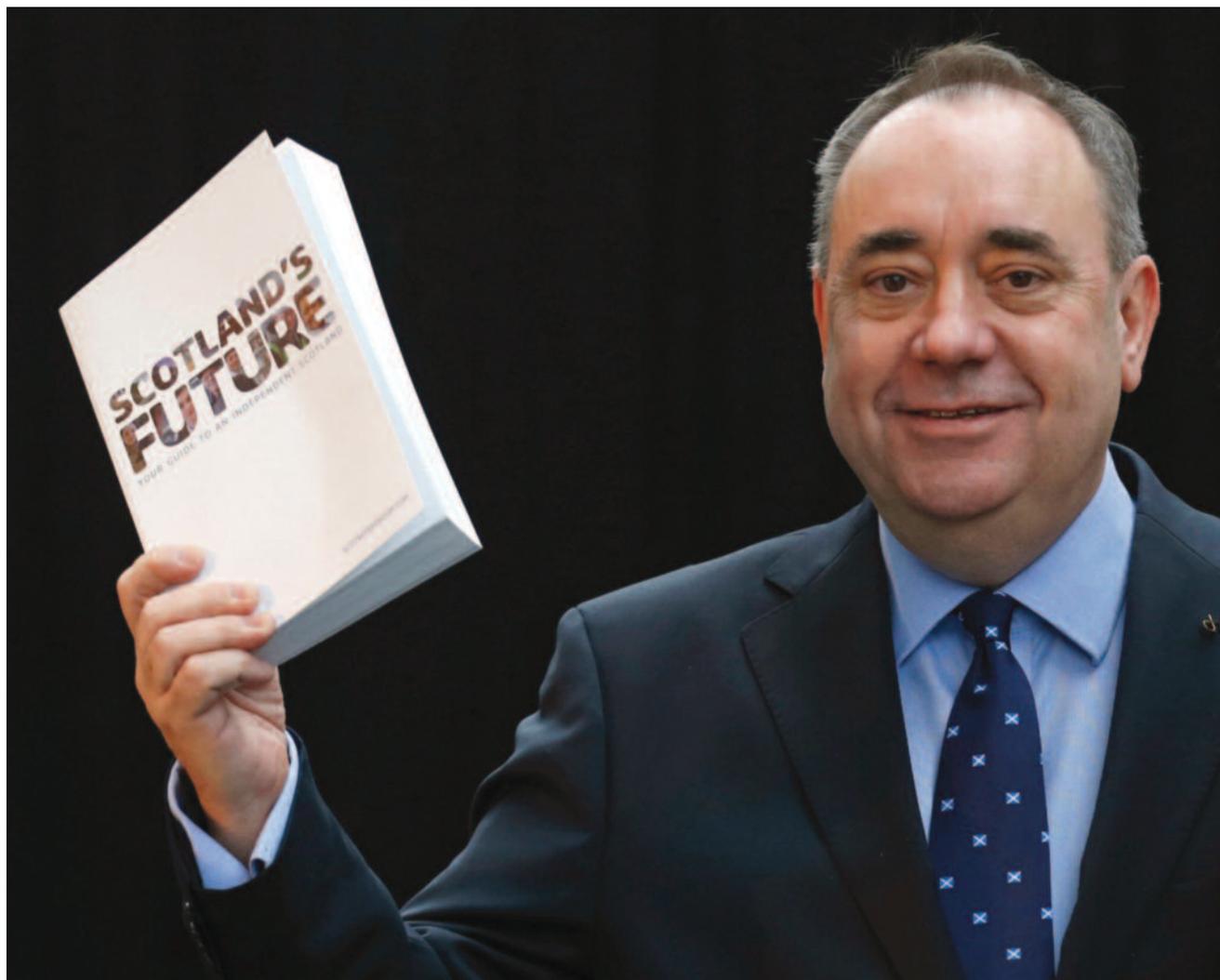
We should have no illusions that a Yes vote will bring a socialist Scotland. In an independent capitalist Scotland there would still be bosses wanting cuts and politicians willing to implement them.

We will still need to make sure the SNP leadership does not get its wish to keep Scotland in Nato. A Yes vote should be a vote against war and nuclear weapons. We cannot rely on the SNP to win it.

Anti-austerity and opposition to war and poverty motivate thousands of independence activists. We have to argue for a vision of real change to inspire working class voters to be a decisive force on 18 September.

Whatever happens, ordinary people's raised expectations of change will be hard for our rulers to put back in a box. But we still should throw all our efforts towards trying to make Britain history.





PROTEST AT TORY PARTY CONFERENCE

The Tory Party is holding its conference in Birmingham. The TUC has called a demonstration at the start of the conference.

**Assemble 11:30
Saturday 28 October,
Victoria Square, Birmingham**

**For more information, see here:
bit.ly/1uua9DF**

For information about the student bloc, see here: bit.ly/1CNhsv6

ist mantra of “us the Scottish minority and them the English majority” is the real core of the real case being put forward for a “yes” vote on 18 September. Everything else is just window-dressing.

Whatever happened to “Scrap All Immigration Controls!”?

Whatever happened to “All Borders Are Illegal!”?

Whatever happened to “No Gods, No Borders!”?

To call for a “yes” vote on 18 September is to call for the creation of another border.

And once a border exists, certain corollaries follow automatically. Immigration rules to define who can, and who cannot, cross it. Immigration officers to maintain those rules. Penalties to deter rule-breaking. And enforcement agencies – the police and the courts – to impose those penalties.

The pro-independence left cannot call for a “yes” vote on 18 September and then object in principle to the state powers needed to maintain the border which will be created in the event of a majority “yes” vote.

The pro-independence left cannot call for a new border on 18 September, and then, if there is a “yes” vote on the day, call for that border to be scrapped on 19 September.

“All Borders Are Illegal, Apart from the Scottish-English One” is not a very snappy slogan. And even if the immigration controls in an independent Scotland were to be more liberal than the current controls, “Our Borders Are Better Than Yours” is not a very good slogan either.

The pro-independence left has retreated into a fantasy world in which the referendum is not about what it is actually about in the real world.

The referendum, supposedly, will be a mighty blow against imperialism. “The workers of the world,” as one leading member of the SWP put it at a recent Unite debate on the referendum, “want to see a ‘yes’ vote on 18 September. It will be a body blow to the British Empire.”

Is it not a little strange that the only people who believe that there is still a British Empire are *Daily Telegraph* readers and members of the SWP?

The referendum, supposedly, is a way to fight austerity. How strange, therefore, that this fight against austerity should be led by a party which is committed to a cut in corporation tax and a refusal to increase the top income-tax-rate to even 50p.

And in this supposed “anti-austerity campaign” there is not even a picket-line or strike in sight! So is the SWP maybe now going to tell us that change does come through the ballot box after all, not through rank-and-file working-class action?

“We can’t wait for Labour!” used to be a favoured slogan of the SWP: Workers should not wait for a Labour government to be returned but should fight Tory cuts right now. But now, it seems, the answer to austerity is to wait for an independent Scotland in 2016 and beyond.

The referendum, supposedly, is some kind of settling of scores, as one Radical Independence Campaign speaker put in a recent referendum debate, with “300 years of imperialism and colonialism.”

If it was, then Scotland, given its role as part of the imperialist metropolitan centre, would surely be barred from voting on the grounds of “vested interest”.

The referendum, supposedly, will lead to a true, “higher”, form of solidarity with English workers as Scotland creates an austerity-free, nuclear-free, wars-free country. In the meantime, though, “us Scots” simply cannot live in the same multi-national unit as “them English”.

Isn’t this argument a bad case of cod-dialectics?

The negation of the negation as the transcendence of itself: The existing unity of the British working class must be negated so that at some later unspecified date that negation can in turn be negated and class unity be recreated on a higher level?

The referendum, supposedly, is about whatever the Radical Independence Campaign happens to think it is about.

Adapting a metaphor used many years ago in a rather different context, the pro-independence left is like a little boy with a tin-whistle turning up for a performance of “The Flower of Scotland” by the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

“I’ll join in with the Orchestra on my tin-whistle for the first few bars so that they think that I’m really one of them,” says the little boy to himself, “and then I’ll switch over to the “Internationale” and they’ll all change tune as well and follow me.”

So the little boy starts playing “The Flower of Scotland” on his tin-whistle. But when he switches to the Internationale, the Orchestra, of course, carries on with “The Flower of Scot-

land” and drowns out the Internationale.

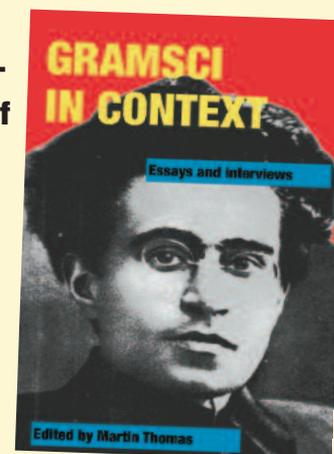
And the little boy is left standing there. A rather sad sight, no more than an unwanted add-on to an orchestra that is not only not playing his tune but also drowning it out by playing a tune of a diametrically opposed content.

The forces of the left in Scotland are weak. They will not get any stronger by hanging on to the coattails of nationalism and pretending they are leading the struggle against world imperialism.

The pro-independence left should throw away its tin whistle, let go of the coattails of nationalism, and stop deluding itself, and trying to delude others, that there is something positive – or even revolutionary – about being cheerleaders for SNP nationalism.

GRAMSCI IN CONTEXT

A revised and 50%-expanded edition of the 2012 booklet Antonio Gramsci: working-class revolutionary, summarising Gramsci’s life and thought.



£6, or £7.60 including postage from www.workersliberty.org/payment.

Chun Tae-il: a life of struggle

Beth Redmond reviews *A single spark*.

I finished reading this book within three days of buying it. When I'd finished, I asked everyone I knew what they knew about Chun Tae-il — no one could tell me much. This surprised me because his story struck me as hugely significant to both the working classes (the “minjung”) of his time, and to the struggles we face today.

The author of this biography, Cho Young-rae, could for his own safety only be identified after his death. The first versions of the book were inevitably banned by the South Korean authorities. It has since been turned into both a film and a play.

Chun Tae-il set himself on fire in 1970 at the age of 22, in protest against the cruel and inhumane working conditions imposed on thousands of people in a local garment factory, known as Peace Market in South Korea. He has since been named “the father of democratic trade unionism” in Korea.

Chun was born into poverty, and as a result received no formal education. He spent the majority of his childhood selling newspapers by day and sleeping on the streets by night. He left home on several occasions because his father violently misunderstood Chun's passion for learning.

Chun convinced himself that he would earn enough money to go to school selling newspapers and shining shoes in the city. In fact, he barely made enough money to buy a bowl of noodles every other day.

From the day he was born, every moment of his life was a struggle for survival — he had never known anything but misery. After his father died, Chun's guilt over leaving his family overwhelmed him, and he returned to his family home in Seoul. He started working in the local garment factory and dedicated the rest of his life to transforming the working conditions of garment workers in South Korea.

There was a hierarchy of workers in the garment factory, which took years to move up — if you were lucky enough to get work in the first place. The lower ranks, jobs which were mostly occupied by young women and teenagers, had 16-hour working days in rooms with no natural light, so small the workers could not stand up. Workers suffered many and often fatal ailments.

This book captures the desperation of workers in a way that I had not experienced before; people working all day for little, or often no, money just to survive. That's it, that's their whole life. Women who had been working in the factories since they were 13 were not even considered good enough to marry, because the conditions have made them so unwell and unfit for bearing children. Often they died within a few years of starting work anyway.

Chun had to quietly organise in his workplace, holding secret meetings in his mother's living room and producing surveys and bulletins to hand out in the factory.

In his last breath, after dousing himself with petrol and setting himself on fire on a picket line he had organised, Chun was screaming “we are not machines”.

The death of Chun Tae-il reignited the workers' movement in South Korea, and workers and students began organising demonstrations highlighting labour issues which were reported in the press on a daily basis, something which had never been seen before.

“I hate this era where people have become commodities, where a person's individuality and basic aspirations are scorned, where the branches of hope are lopped off. I hate a humanity that chooses to degrade itself into a commodity in return for existence.”



A statue to Chun Tae-il in Seoul

No pill for these ills

Science
By Les Hearn



Few of us can remember a time when people could die from trivial injuries or infections which now respond to antibiotics. The World Health Organisation estimates that drugs like penicillin and streptomycin have added some 20 years to our life expectancy.

Yet antibiotic-resistant bacteria, such as methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) could end our complacency and make even routine operations hazardous. Already, hospital-acquired infections by MRSA and *Clostridium difficile* are a major difficulty. In fact, a scarier problem is that of multi-drug-resistant bacteria or “superbugs”.

In the worst cases, bacteria may be resistant to all common antibiotics, as is the case with some strains of tuberculosis. Some 5,000 people per year die in the UK because they are infected by resistant bacteria. In the US, some two million are infected each year, with 23,000 deaths.

The problem of resistance has been known since the birth of medical antibiotics. It was recently highlighted, by UK Chief Medical Officer Sally Davies in a report [1]. Fifteen months later, David Cameron announced an inquiry into the problem.

The new “Longitude Challenge” has chosen as its focus, after a public vote, the development of a cheap, accurate, rapid, easy-to-use test for infections, so that bacteria may be targeted quickly with the appropriate antibiotic.

But why do we need new antibiotics to keep being found or made? The answer is evolution.

Alexander Fleming, discoverer of penicillin 85 years ago, warned that, if misused, resistance would soon develop and it would become useless. If just one bacterium among a population of trillions mutates to become resistant, it will survive. If not dealt with by the immune system and doubling every hour, its descendants will number trillions again in less than two days. And we will need a different antibiotic as the previous one will not work.

EVOLUTION

The early antibiotics were naturally-occurring compounds produced by moulds or bacteria to inhibit competition from other bacteria. Bacteria did not stand idly by and mutations that conferred antibiotic resistance evolved and spread in nature.

Bacteria have an extra trick — drug resistance can spread not just “vertically” (from parent to offspring) but “horizontally” by exchange of fragments of DNA, within species and even between species. This allows resistance to spread much faster.

The chance of resistance developing is increased if insufficient antibiotic is used, because more bacteria survive and the chance of a resistant mutation is increased. As Fleming said in his 1945 Nobel Prize lecture [2], “if you use penicillin, use enough”. The first patient treated with penicillin died only because there was not enough then available to kill all the bacteria in his bloodstream [3]. Mass production began in 1943 and in only four years resistance began to appear. That was due partly to black market sales of penicillin, where the stolen drug was diluted to increase sales. Art was to imitate life with the 1949 Graham Greene book and film *The Third Man* [4].

There is also over-use of antibiotics. They are frequently prescribed for virus infections, such as colds and influenza, for which they are ineffective. They can also be bought over the counter in some countries and taken inappropriately. This allows resistance to develop among the body's natural skin and gut bacteria.

Subsequent injury allows an infection to occur which can no longer be treated with the antibiotic. Also, if the whole course of treatment is not taken (often because the patient feels better), the remaining bacteria have a greater chance of a resistant mutation.

And enormous amounts of antibiotics are given to farm animals because they enhance rates of growth — more scope for resistance to develop.

We have the greatest global economy ever, with enormously successful pharmaceutical companies, yet no new class of antibiotic has been introduced since 1985. Surely the



Overuse of antibiotics is causing resistance

capitalist market will supply a product for which there is a demand? This is certainly the expectation of those incorrigible optimists at *spiked!*, the website founded by members of the erstwhile Revolutionary Communist Party.

Their correspondent Robin Walsh, a trainee doctor, accused CMO Sally Davies of “farm mongering”: new drugs would rapidly follow if the government would alter its payment policy to the drug companies [5] and boost demand.

Unfortunately, financial incentives are not necessarily going to solve the problem. Drug industry insider Derek Lowe who blogs and writes *In The Pipeline* for *Chemistry World* [6] points out that virtually all targets in bacteria have already been attacked and no new targets have come up. Knowledge of bacterial genomes which has increased, but yielded nothing of use in 20 years.

He ruefully admits that it's easy to come up with drugs that kill all cells but difficult to find those that attack only bacteria. Finally, any new antibiotic would rapidly come up against the same problem of resistance. This is because we are exerting “the most concentrated Darwinian selection pressure on pathogens” which leaves survivors very well-equipped to defeat future attacks. Lowe doesn't think that money is the problem: it's more that resistant bacteria are a very hard target!

This is highlighted by another recent finding — looking at environments across the world, ranging from oceans to soil to human faeces, a French research team found resistance genes relevant to human and veterinary medicine everywhere [7].

In order to generate profits, companies need to sell more of their products at as high a price as possible. That works for chronic illnesses, male impotence, headaches, diseases of the well-off, and so on, but not for bacterial infections. The more antibiotics you use, the quicker resistance evolves in bacteria. Antibiotics need to be used as sparingly as possible — not a recipe for generating profits. And when resistance has developed, there is little incentive to look for new antibiotics when they will be only a temporary solution.

New Scientist magazine is confident that solutions can be found if the free market is replaced by “socially-motivated medicine makers”. This goes against the worship of the market by the main political parties and certainly against extending the role of the private sector in health, as even Labour has done.

Other solutions include much more sparing use of antibiotics in medicine, banning their use in farming, much more rigorous hygiene in hospitals, development of new vaccines, and quicker tests to identify bacteria so that more appropriate antibiotics can be used straight away.

There really isn't “a pill for every ill”.

Notes

1 CMO's 2011 Report, Part 2 (published 2013): www.gov.uk/government/publications/chief-medical-officer-annual-report-volume-2

2 www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/medicine/laureates/1945/fleming-lecture.html

3 Reserve Constable Albert Alexander had developed septicaemia following a scratch from a rose thorn and was dying in an Oxford hospital in 1941. He started rapidly recovering when given penicillin but when it ran out he worsened again and died.

4 The anti-hero Harry Lime (Orson Welles) steals, adulterates and sells penicillin on the black market. Asked about the victims of his crimes, Lime dismisses them as insignificant as scurrying ants. Highly recommended (the film, not Lime's views!).

5 www.spiked-online.com/newsite/article/13447#.U_IhhbaaX0

6 www.rsc.org/chemistryworld/2013/03/derek-lowe-antibiotics-research-pharma-business

7 [www.cell.com/current-biology/abstract/S0960-9822\(14\)00328-5](http://www.cell.com/current-biology/abstract/S0960-9822(14)00328-5)

Pride! The power of solidarity

Karina Knight reviews *Pride*, the film which tells the story of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners [LGSM], set up to collect money for miners during the 1984-1985 strike.

The writer, Stephen Beresford, first heard the story of LGSM from a friend. He told a pre-screening audience that it inspired him greatly — the film is clearly a work of care and love. The characters are the real members of LGSM. Mike Jackson and others input into the writing and production, infusing the personalities, lives and experiences of the LGSM activists.

Refreshingly, Beresford does not consider it necessary to provide background to justify the miners' strike; it is accepted in the film that the strike was valid. That lesbians and gay men and miners share a common enemy in the ruling class. That it is right and necessary to organise and fight back.

When we talk about Women Against Pit Closures, LGSM and their role in labour movement history, we talk about how communities, identities and ideas can change rapidly in struggle, about the potential for personal change and growth. *Pride* explores this — it is essentially a film about solidarity, acceptance of difference, and ultimate recognition that working class people have much more that unites us than divides us.

Pride tracks these personal journeys. Joe (Bromley) Cooper, a young man who discovers the strength to come out and finds acceptance and a new family; Gethin, a gay man estranged from the community he grew up in, who by facing his fears in entering a pit village is able to reconnect with his Welsh working class identity and rebuild a relationship with his mother; Dai, whose life experience is "expanded" in the gay bars of London; Hefina and Cliff, who recognise the value of the solidarity offered, the bravery, of the LGSM activists.



Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, as depicted in the film *Pride*

The power of homophobia to divide us is all too apparent when Maureen, so threatened by the presence of gay people in her community, provides fodder for *The Sun*. In her intransigence she acts against her own basic class interests and is prepared to undermine the strike, such is her fear of change and of the unknown.

This is a mainstream film on general release, so it gives a feel-good factor similar to *Made in Dagenham*. Adverts describe it as "hilarious", but that isn't quite right. While there

are a few good belly-laughs (A "great big Lez-off", anyone?), I found more that I was moved to tears and laughter in equal measure: hope, disappointment, resolve, and hope again. A positive film, it tells an important part of our history to those who were not aware of it, and will remain a useful organising tool, a permanent, widely accessible and true record of a seminal time for gay rights and for our class.

Go and see this film, possibly with a pack of tissues. Then get out and organise.

"The miners needed solidarity"

Clive Bradley was active in Lesbian and Gays Support the Miners. He spoke to *Solidarity*.

Solidarity: What was LGSM and what did it do?

Clive: It was a group that was set up of lesbians and gay men set up to support the miner's strike. It has to be said it was initially mainly gay men, but more and more women got involved over the time. Practically it raised money for the miners who were on strike for a year. Mainly by standing outside lesbian and gay pubs rattling buckets, it raised quite a lot of money. This was sent to a particular mining community in south Wales, in the Dulais valley, with which connections had been made.

Solidarity: Why did this get started, and how did you get involved?

Clive: It was the idea of two people in particular, Mark Ashton and Mike Jackson. Both are dramatised in the movie. They put out a call at Pride in '84 and organised a meeting at "Gay Is the Word" bookshop in London. At that time I was just moving to London from Manchester and was a member of Socialist Organiser [forerunner of the AWL]. It's not rocket science to see how I got involved.

I went to the second ever meeting of LGSM. I was active in supporting the miners and thought it was a brilliant initiative. It proved to have a very powerful effect on lesbian and gay men and on the miners. The NUM went on to lead the pride demonstration in August 1985. The NUM, a traditional union, not famous for its view on matters such as lesbian and gay rights, became quite prominent in the changing policy on gay rights in the Labour Party.

Solidarity: What impact did it have in the gay community, and what arguments did LGSM make about why gay people should support the miners?

Clive: The strike lasted for a whole year and divided the country, divided everybody. A lot of people supported the miners and didn't need to be persuaded, but we argued that we needed the miners to win. If the miners lost then the Tory government would be going for everybody, and these lesbian and gay communities would be an easy target. People would put a lot of money into the bucket to show solidarity — presumably a lot of money they didn't have in many cases. LGSM was the first really concrete example of how an "au-

tonomous" movement of the "specially oppressed" (as we used to say) could struggle alongside the organised working class, and transform working-class consciousness in the process.

Solidarity: Were other left groups involved in LGSM? What was their attitude to it?

Some members of different left groups were personally involved, even members of Militant [forerunner of the Socialist Party] and the SWP, whose organisations were more hostile to the project. Militant, for example, generally argued that any kind of autonomous organisation was necessarily divisive. LGSM and Women Against Pit Closures, etc. showed that quite the reverse was true.

Solidarity: How was LGSM received in the mining communities?

Clive: The film does this quite cleverly. It is basically a rom com between two communities. The film shows you both acceptance and hostility, but a growing acceptance. That isn't far off what actually happened.

I went to South Wales twice, the second time when the strike was actually finishing in March '85. That was very emotional for all of us. My own experience was that people couldn't really have been more welcoming.

The first time we went down, there was a minibus load of us, we were being put up in people's houses, that was the deal. We all went down to the miner's welfare in the evening to sing songs and get drunk. It was completely fine, no hostility at all.

The reality was we were raising money for them. The miners needed solidarity, and I'm sure if people were at first dubious about where the solidarity came from, need overcame that. And, of course, as you make contact with people you realise that you have more in common than you initially thought. Why the suspicions broke down, as I'm sure there were some, is no mystery. It was the nature of people meeting each other and the power of solidarity.

Solidarity: What do you think members of LGSM learnt from the experience?

Clive: For many people it was their first time going to that sort of working-class community, though certainly not for everyone. We were a mixed group and certainly there were

people from working class backgrounds, it was not all middle class lefties. The vast majority were just people who wanted to do something.

When you have a big confrontation between a section of the working class and the government you have to take sides, more than just in your head.

There have been reunions [of LGSM] recently and many people still seem to hold broadly the same views that they used to. You can tell for many people in LGSM it was an absolutely formative experience in their lives, and very important to them.

Solidarity: Do you think there was rolling back after the defeat of the dispute, both in the gay community and in the mining community?

Clive: The miners were beaten and most of them lost their jobs. Generally speaking in the class struggle, the defeat of the miners had a hugely bad effect. We're still living with the consequences of it.

I doubt miner's attitudes rolled back too much with regards lesbian and gay rights. You started to get stories of miners coming out. At reunions we get visits from miners. We often hear "it turns out my son is gay".

Ex-miners and their families came up from south Wales for the film premiere.

In the lesbian and gay community, struggle wasn't rolled back. You got growth of the lesbian and gay movement after 1985. Not long after was "Section 28" [the Tory law which prevented the "promotion of homosexual lifestyles"] against which you had enormous demonstrations. The pride parades in the early '80s were relatively small, but by the late '80s and certainly the early '90s they were enormous.

Solidarity: What do you think about the film?

Clive: It gets an awful lot incredibly right. It's in the broad ball park of something like *The Full Monty*, but much more political. Over the credits you have someone singing Solidarity Forever. It takes for granted that the strike was right. It's absolutely about the importance of class struggle and solidarity between communities. The portrayals of the real people are very close and a good tribute.

It's good that for the anniversary, this particular act of solidarity will be remembered.

The real price of gold

By Kieran Miles

The pursuit of gold has led to great exploitation throughout history.

From the demands of the Pharaohs to be buried with enormous wealth; the use of slaves in mining operations in the Roman Empire; the genocide of indigenous peoples, first by the Conquistadors, then Columbus and the colonisers of the Americas, continued in the Californian Gold Rush, the “Scramble for Africa” by the major imperialist powers, and the Klondike; the Boer Wars, fought over the Witwatersrand mines; the use of forced labour in the gold mines of the Kolyma gulag; the list continues.

Gold is often used in important places of worship – the Harmandir Sahib, the Dome of the Rock, the Wat Phra Kaew, the Sripuram Golden Temple, Saint Mark’s Basilica, and so on. Regal pomposity has long demanded the use of golden carriages and crown jewels, and gold is used as a signifier of personal achievement, from the Oscars and the Nobel Prize, to Olympic gold medals.

Gold has long been prized as a commodity, but by 564 BC, both the Ancient Chinese and the Lydians started to use gold for currency as well. This was because of gold’s easy divisibility (it is far easier to divide a piece of gold into ten equal parts than say, a cow or a clay bowl), and because of its value in terms of human labour.

But most of all, once refined, gold has a universal regularity — unlike most commodities. If you trade, for example, a pair of shoes for some linen, or a piece of furniture, there are so many variations in the quality, provenance, and craftsmanship of all of these items as to make setting a national or global standard impossible; trading terms can only remain at the level of barter between individuals. One ounce of 18 carat gold is identical the world over. So gold was made a universal means of exchange, its use becoming more and more widespread as class society grew globally*.

COST

Although bank notes have existed for centuries, and most currencies are now depegged from the gold standard, gold is still used in some parts of the world to trade with.

For example, in India, gold is so often used as an alternative currency that the government has restricted its import. And about 10% of the world’s gold supply is still used in official coinage.

Gold mining is hugely environmentally damaging. Every gold ring produced makes about 20 tonnes of waste. Every year an estimated 180 million tons of toxic waste is dumped into rivers, lakes and reservoirs by gold miners. The most commonly used method (90% of all gold produced today) of separating gold from ore uses cyanide, most of which is dumped into the water supply.

The Roşia Montană mines in Romania — first mined by the Romans — are set to become Europe’s largest. Many Romanians are rightly concerned by the growth of the mine.

In 2000, the Baia Mare mine flooded rivers and reservoirs with cyanide used in extraction, including the Someş River and the Danube. Drinking water for some 2.5 million Hungarians was contaminated, and 80% of the aquatic life in the Serbian part of the Tisza was killed. Similarly, the Grasberg mine in West Papua (the largest gold mine in the world) produces some 230,000 tonnes of waste a day. Most of this waste is dumped straight into the Aikwa River, killing most of the fish in the river.

In the mountainous regions of Tragadero Grande, near Cajamarca in Peru, the mining company Minera Yanacocha has started opening a gold and copper mine (Minas Conga). It will be around 20 square kilometres and the largest single investment in mining history in Peru, at US\$ 4.8 billion. The site will destroy four mountain lakes: two will be completely depleted for use in mining operations, and two will be turned into tailing ponds for mining waste.

Each single gram of gold from the mine, will take ten thousand litres of water. In the Minas Conga area, an average campesina family will use 30 litres of water a day, in contrast to a small mine, which will use 250,000 litres of water in just one hour. One single small mine will use as much water in an hour as a local family will use in 22 years! And keep in mind there are multiple mines owned by Minera Yanacocha, the



Workers in an open gold mine in Ghana

new Minera Yanacocha will be a lot bigger than the extant small mines, and there are dozens of multinational companies mining all over the world. To make just one tonne of gold takes some 260,000 tons (not litres) of water.

The scale of water use is obscene, especially when 3.4 million people die each year from lack of access to clean drinking water or from a sanitation-related disease.

Mining has also devastated large areas of forestry. 40,000 hectares of Peru’s Amazon has been lost. The Cassandra mines in Greece, sold to Eldorado Gold, an operation which will produce 380 million tons of gold ore — over ten times as much as has been mined there in the last two millennia — will destroy 180 hectares of forest and farmland. In Ghana, approximately 140 hectares of tropical forest, including a quarter of the Ajenjua Bepo Forest Reserve, has been destroyed since 2009.

On top of these environmental catastrophes comes a long list of violations of workers’ rights, and mass displacements. Fears over cyanide leaks into the Amazon led to huge protests in Peru, and operations were temporarily halted in late 2011. But in December 2013, operations restarted after the military was used to forcibly displace the largely peasant-farmer population. Those who refused to sell their homes to the mining company were arrested and dragged through the courts for “occupying” their own land. Another mine in San Juan de Cañaris, Peru, will displace 10,000 people.

ILLEGAL

In Tanzania, as elsewhere, the multinational companies hold a monopoly on legal mining. Many people, desperate for money, mine illegally.

The local police force runs a racket, turning a blind eye to illegal miners — for a bribe. In the last three years, 69 people have been killed near the North Mara mines, presumably those who were unable to pay off the police. This is not an isolated incident — there are 20 to 50,000 illegal miners in Ghana, under frequent threat of arrest and assault.

The list of environmental damages and attacks on workers’ rights is endless: destruction of large parts of the Indonesian fishing industry because of poisoned waters, causing birth defects from irreversible mercury poisoning; displacement of Gobi desert herders in Mongolia; 9,000 indigenous Akyem people in Ghana displaced by gold mining; use of “conflict gold” in the DRC. And then, not least, problems faced by all miners — terrible working conditions, high risk of death and injury, low pay, long working days, union busting...

Many of the easily available sources of ore have been used up. Now mining companies are searching in extremely low-grade sites — causing huge amounts of environmental damage for smaller and smaller amounts of gold. Some mines find as little as one gram of gold in one ton of ore.

In 2013 *Business Insider* estimated that just 9% of gold was used for socially necessary purposes (1% for dentistry and 8% for electronics and medical equipment). 49% was used for jewelers, 10% in official coinage, 27% in bar hoarding, and 5% for ETFs (investment funds).

The small amount of gold we need for things like dentistry and electronics already exists above ground, and unlike, say, fossil fuels, gold that has been mined does not get used up, it

just changes hands!

Hand-wringing speculation about whether your personal necklace or rings should be gold or silver, when there is enough gold above the ground for more than just human need is unnecessary. We can recycle the existing gold used in coinage and bank hoarding for the production of jewellery. There is no less exploitation in silver or copper mining.

The world should urgently cease all gold mining operations. But what should we say about the workers in the mining industry in the here and now?

WORKERS

There are broadly two approaches to the immediate problems caused by gold mining. Oxfam set up the “No Dirty Gold” campaign.

The campaign tried to source gold which was not mined in environmentally degrading ways, or by violating workers’ rights. Over 100 jewellery stores and chains signed up. But the campaign has many problems. Most reporting on ethical gold is done by auditors in the pay of the mining companies, who naturally underestimate the damage of the mining. Not all Fairtrade or Alliance for Responsible Mining gold is chemical-free. Mercury and cyanide are still used in certified “clean gold”.

This approach neither helps workers improve working conditions, nor halts the environmental damage in any meaningful way. Whilst well-meaning, the logic of this kind of campaign is fundamentally liberal: any small improvement in working rights comes not from workers organising, but from appealing to the compassion of mine owners, which has proved to be in short supply.

The socialist approach means supporting mining workers in their struggles for safer working conditions and higher pay. At the same time we argue for cleaner methods of extracting gold from ore, such as the use of hydroxylamine hydrochloride in gravimetric processes. Support for Spanish and South African mining unions, new links with unions in Peru, Greece, and other countries should be our priority.

The environmentally destructive nature of gold mining logically points to its eventual abolition. But miners involved in gold mining should not lose their jobs; they should be employed in other mining industries, reskilled (at the company’s expense) for alternative work.

Then there is the question of who controls the above-ground supply of gold. Lenin wrote in *Pravda* in 1921: “When we are victorious on a world scale I think we shall use gold for the purpose of building public lavatories in the streets of some of the largest cities of the world.”

I appreciate the sentiment, though there are enough smartphones and dialysis machines to warrant some use of the world gold supply. There is more than enough gold sitting around in banks for such use — we should seize those banks!

* For a more in depth analysis of the use of gold as money, read this article: www.workersliberty.org/node/5537, and also Chapter 2 of *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* by Karl Marx. For an extremely detailed analysis of money in general, see Chapter 3 of *Capital*.

US fast food workers' struggle escalates

By Daniel Lemberger Cooper

On 4 September, thousands of fast food workers and other service industry employees backed by the SEIU (Service Employees International Union) and UFCW (United Food and Commercial Workers), held strikes and protests in cities across the US.

They struck for improved benefits, the right to organise, and for a \$15 minimum wage. Hundreds of workers and supporters were arrested.

The "Fight for 15", a movement by fast food and other low-paid workers began in November 2012. Actions took place in eight US cities in June 2013; 4 September saw actions in over

100. They are the result of an intense summer of organising, including a national convention held in Chicago at the end of July.

The growth and momentum is impressive, and should be discussed by trade unionists in the UK.

The strikes involve a workforce that is young, black, Latino, predominately female, all of whom are precarious workers on paltry benefits, low wages (the federal minimum wage is worth \$2 less than it was in 1968) and suffer routine racism and sexism.

Traditionally in the US a union will try to achieve majority density in a workplace, petition the National Labor Relations board for an election, and then if the election is won, seek recognition with the employer. In the "Fight for 15" campaign, mi-

nority strikes are held even before plan for raising union membership or collective bargaining.

The first strikes might involve only a very small number of workers, but are bolstered by other trade unionists and community campaigners and backed up with well-publicised direct action.

There have already been victories. Some cities, including Chicago and New York, have raised the minimum wage for city contractors. In Seattle, where a socialist councillor prominently involved in the campaign was elected, the \$15 minimum has been achieved.

Fast-food industry employers have been slower to shift, but there have been improvements in conditions. For example, in one Dunkin'



Donuts store, managers finally installed air conditioning in response to strike action.

Since the movement began, efforts have been made to form more long-term organisations. For example, several thousand Walmart workers have signed up to join a "non-majority association", to stay connected to organising efforts. The associations, and newly-formed worker centres, are used for education, training and workshops.

Many leaders of the "Our Walmart" campaign are former organisers of "Justice for Janitors", a 1990s SEIU campaign amongst cleaners, profiled in the Ken Loach film *Bread and Roses*. "Fight for 15" campaigners have established organising committees across several shops in particular cities.

In August 2014, the National Labor Relations Board ruled that McDonald's could be held jointly liable for employment and wage violations by its franchise operators. The move, which is being heavily contested in the courts by the bosses, could force fast food firms to negotiate on wages and allow SEIU to unionise restaurants on a larger scale.

The support from progressive and community organisations have been important. If the campaigns

are to grow, relationships will need to be deepened and connected to other struggles in localities. A great weight will need to be placed on making new conscious worker-militants and leaders who can democratically debate and decide on strategy and tactics (a necessary counterweight to the dominance of union staff).

There is a risk that union officials could channel the campaigns away from industrial direct action and towards mainstream political lobbying, or that they might sign industry-wide agreements over the heads of the workers. Fast food workers will need to own their struggles, control their committees, and develop strategy.

Trade unionists and socialists in Britain must support the "Fight for 15" movement.

HOLT action on 15 September

By Jonny West

The Hands Off London Transport coalition plans a day of action for 16 September, involving leafleting, petitioning, and demonstrations at Tube stations.

The action will coincide with the introduction of contactless payment technology on the Tube which unions say will lead to problems for both passengers and staff.

The HOLT coalition want to raise the profile of cuts as a political issue, mobilise community direct action against them, and pressure GLAs and London MPs to take a stand on the issue.

London Underground management insists it will push ahead with plans to

cut 953 jobs and close all ticket offices across the network. Tube union RMT called off a planned overtime ban and boycott of "development days" for Station Supervisors after management threatened legal action. Smaller union TSSA backed down from calling action after management agreed to postpone the assessment element of the "development days".

The London Transport Region of the RMT recently passed policy in favour of joining the public sector pay strike. Some activists in the region are pushing for the union to act sooner.

• For more information, bit.ly/ho-lt, workersliberty.org/twblog

BBC workers to strike

By Stewart Ward

Members of the media union BECTU at the BBC will strike in September against job cuts.

The BBC plans 415 job cuts in BBC News, and although it promises to create 195 new ones, BECTU says it has received no guarantees that compulsory redundancies will be avoided.

Members of the National Union of Journalists have also voted for strikes.

Unions are seeking a guarantee of no compulsory redundancies.

While voluntary redundancy schemes are preferable to bosses sacking existing workers, unions should set their sights higher. A "no compulsory redundancies" position keeps any dispute on management's terrain, haggling over how job cuts are administered, rather than whether jobs should be cut at all.

BECTU says it will name strike dates soon. NUJ has already announced a work-to-rule and a boycott of a management appraisal process.

Traffic wardens' pay fight

Traffic wardens in East London to strike on 11 September over pay.

The workers have rejected a management offer of a 1.5% increase, well below the current Retail Price Index of 2.5%.

The workers are employed by NSL Ltd., a private contractor which runs traffic and parking services for many local councils.

Unison members employed by NSL on a contract at Camden council had a prolonged dispute in 2012, which involved sustained strike action.

• bit.ly/11ToKZb

Strike at Heathrow Airport

Baggage handlers at London's Heathrow Airport will strike on Friday 12 September.

Their employer has offered a 5.5% pay deal over two years, which the workers' union, Unite, says will not keep pace with the soaring cost of living.

The strike will involve workers at Terminals 1, 2, and 3.

21 more strike days for Care UK

Care UK strikers celebrated their 60th day of strike action for a living wage on Friday 5 September.

Workers have been picketing Care UK offices in Doncaster daily, as well as travelling the country to speak at meetings or picket other Care UK offices. On 9 September they joined care workers in Barnet, who are also on strike over pay, for a joint rally and fundraising social.

Management recently made an offer in two parts.

2% pay rise to non-TUPE staff which equates to just 14p increase per hour. 0% for TUPE staff, with a vague commitment to raise pay by the same level as other NHS staff in 2015 (i.e. not much). There was no commitment to move towards a living wage.

The negotiators, members of the shop stewards' committee, refused to give any response to the offer. It will be put to the next strike rally for a vote. They will be recommending to reject the offer.

Strikers have voted for a further 21 days of strike action.



Defend Julie Davies!

In July this year, Labour-run Haringey Council suspended the Borough's National Union of Teachers Secretary Julie Davies.

The council is responding to pressure from some local headteachers who were refusing to sign up to an agreement on facility time while Julie Davies was in post.

In a letter from those heads to the council they say that "Ms Davies' preferred approach and working style is one of confrontation and obfuscation."

Haringey Council suspended Davies for "gross misconduct", pending an investigation.

This is an attack on NUT members' democratic right to elect their own trade union representatives, and

an attempt to intimidate Julie Davies, who has been involved in recent high-profile campaigns in the Borough against forced academisation.

During the campaign to stop Downhills primary school from forced academisation, Gove described Davies, other campaigners and parents as "enemies of promise". One local head of governors disgracefully compared her to Nazi war criminal Hermann Goering.

At the end of July, the NUT gave Haringey two weeks to drop the suspension, or face legal action "as Ms Davies is not centrally employed, and so could not be suspended by the council — only by the school where she works." The union will now challenge the council in the High Court.

The suspension of Julie Davies, a Labour member, has caused anger inside the Labour Party. A motion condemning the suspension passed unanimously at Davies' own Tottenham Constituency Labour Party.

On 5 August the NUT wrote to schools asking them to clarify their position on facility time or the union "will have no option but to consider balloting our members for strike action in those schools."

The union should not rely on the High Court to protect trade union rights and should ballot members as soon as possible in schools where no agreement on facility time is forthcoming.

• Sign the petition: bit.ly/1uG5iyh



Solidarity

No 335
10 September
2014

30p/80p

14 October can be big!

By Gemma Short

On October 14 local government workers in Unison, Unite and GMB unions will strike over pay. They may be joined by health workers in Unison, Unite and the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) who all have ballots under way. If civil servants in PCS union join the strike this will be a very large and important action against the huge cuts in pay public sector workers have endured since 2009.

Health workers' wages have dropped in real terms between 12 and 15 percent since 2010. This year 60% of health workers are been offered no rise, and others will get one percent. Real wages for all workers have dropped by 12-14% since 2008 and the start of the re-

cession.

A serious revolt over pay is urgently needed and 14 October could kick-start this. But we need to take stock.

Unfortunately, the 5 September executive meeting of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) voted 26-12 against calling action on 14 October. This is a step backwards. Teachers will be confused, demoralised or angry about this decision. That's why activists should call meetings in schools and local areas to discuss how to support striking school support staff. School groups should collectively refuse to cross picket lines and attempt to shut schools by refusing to do work without the assistance of support staff.

Teachers will soon be hearing the outcomes of the first year of "performance

related pay"; many will find themselves not getting the pay increment they expected. The NUT's live ballot means those teachers can organise action in their schools to fight this.

Union leaders hope that a few "protest strikes" will nudge the government into trying to repair its popularity in the lead up to the May 2015 general election by making small concessions on pay. Some may also be stalling action because they are waiting for a Labour government. Vague hopes are not the basis on which to build a serious strategy to win on pay.

In 2011 several unions fighting to preserve public sector pension rights settled on terrible terms. That could happen again and that is what we have to fight against. Activists should push their unions to name

further strike dates, and commit their union to be prepared to go alone if other unions in "the coalition" pull out.

It is important that activists work to build action on 14 October, having arguments in workplaces about the necessity of strike action to move the government. This may not persuade everyone, but it puts onto the agenda ideas of working-class militancy and ways to address the economic inequality that is rife in society.

14 October will be a display of the potential power of the labour movement, and will be a beacon of hope for all workers feeling the squeeze on wages. We must ensure that it is not merely a beacon, but the start of a concerted battle.

BRITAIN NEEDS A PAY RISE

TUC March and Rally on Saturday 18 October

Assemble 11am, Blackfriars Embankment, and march to Hyde Park

See britainneedsapayrise.org for more information

LOBBY LABOUR TO SAVE THE NHS!

For a publicly owned, publicly funded and publicly accountable health service.

Mobilise and rally outside Labour Party Conference on Sunday 21 September, 2:30-5:30pm, Manchester Central, Windmill Street, M2 3XG

nhsliason@yahoo.co.uk
labournhslobby.wordpress.com
07796690874

999 call for the NHS



Thousands of people in Trafalgar Square welcomed the "Darlington Mums", who marched for three weeks from the North East to raise awareness against the privatisation of the NHS.

Good turnout needed in health union ballots

By a health worker

Strike ballots in the health unions runs up to the end of September, with Unison's closing date on the 18 September and Unite on the 26th.

A pay offer of 1% for 2 years, with no rise at all for those who receive an incremental rise, has angered workers, but a good turnout in the ballot would be very significant.

The government has stopped the Health Pay Review Body from even going through the motions of reporting on annual pay this year. Instead it has been asked to propose cuts in unsocial hours pay, should further galvanise the vote.

The proposal to begin strikes in October with a four hour walk out is a good tactic in the NHS, which has

proved effective in the past, for example in Australia during the campaigns on staff ratios.

Short strikes can have an impact without too much harm for patient care. Well supported strike action could give great confidence to health workers, and short strikes can give an opportunity to build amongst those who have concerns about action impacting too much on patients.

Another connected issue is the handling of emergency exemptions, which can be minimised if strikes are short.

It is vital that discussions on strike tactics are held at workplace level where union members know what action can be most effective and that these discussions happen now.