



## Miliband's Labour: no alternative to Cameron-Clegg



London student demonstration, 9 December 2010.

Peter Macdiarmid/Getty Images



Matt Dunham/AP

# For a class-struggle fight against fees and cuts!

In the final months of 2010 the country was rocked by furious student protests against the Tory-Liberal Democrat coalition government's attacks on university education. Tuition fees for students at England's universities will be allowed to rise to £9000, three times the existing level, while university budgets have been slashed by 40 per cent. The education maintenance allowance, a miserable payment of up to £30 per week on which seven out of ten college students depend, is being scrapped. The anger among students in universities and colleges exploded on the streets on 10 November 2010, when some 50,000 students marched in London against the new legislation. A section of the demonstration broke away and briefly occupied Tory headquarters, chanting "Tory scum" and vowing: "This is only the beginning". In the weeks to follow, students occupied campuses in several cities and mobilised in their thousands in London on 9 December, the day of the vote on university fees in the House of Commons.

Tory prime minister David Cameron and his Liberal Democrat coalition partners narrowly won the vote, despite a rebellion among Liberal MPs. Having pledged before the election to oppose any rise in tuition fees, the Liberal Democrats are now hated and the party leader is derided on demonstrations with the chant "Nick Clegg, we know you—you're a f---ing Tory too!" Despite the fact that it was a Labour government that introduced student fees in 1998, Labour MPs on this occasion voted against the Con-Dem fee increase.

The 9 December demonstration saw thousands of students, from universities, schools and colleges, marching to London's Parliament Square. Despite a gargantuan police operation on the city

## Defend student protesters!

streets that evening, students in Regent Street chanced upon the Rolls-Royce carrying Prince Charles and his wife Camilla sitting in traffic. Demonstrating more apparent sense of British history than the schools might be expected to provide, protesters recalled the fate of Charles I and chanted "Off with their heads!" Students spattered the royal car with paint and seemingly gave the Duchess a poke in the ribs while they were at it.

The police, who came under heavy criticism for not protecting the heir to the throne, and previously for the fact that students got into the Tory Party headquarters, are now carrying out a witch hunt against protesters. Hundreds of students have been arrested and the numbers continue to rise. Outrageously, on 12 January an 18-year-old protester, Edward Woollard, was jailed for 32 months for throwing a fire extinguisher from the roof of the Tory building, hitting *nobody*. Criminal charges remain against many of the other demonstrators. **Free Edward Woollard! Drop all charges against student protesters!**

Sentencing Woollard, judge Geoffrey Rivlin said those who "indulge in serious violence must expect a lengthy sentence". For students who are new to political protest, lesson number one is that the good judge's words do not

apply to the police, the actual source of serious violence on the demonstrations. The police "kettled" protesters for hours in freezing conditions, terrorised protesters by lunging at them on horseback and knocked student Alfie Meadows unconscious on 9 December, causing life-threatening brain injuries. That same evening Jody McIntyre, a young protester, was yanked from his wheelchair by four riot cops and dragged across the street.

Terror and violence is routine for the police, who killed Ian Tomlinson during the April 2009 protests against the G20 summit; who executed Brazilian electrician Jean Charles de Menezes on the Tube in 2005 in the name of the racist "war on terror" and who daily harass black and Asian youth using

"stop and search" powers. The police are at the core of the capitalist state—which also includes the courts, prisons and military—the purpose of which is to maintain through violence the system of exploitation of the working class by the bourgeoisie.

Student organisations are building for demonstrations against student fees called for 29 January in London and Manchester, which are backed by some of the country's largest unions, including the civil service Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union, Unite and the GMB. As revolutionary Marxists, we fight for free, good quality education for all! For open admissions and a cost-of-living allowance for students! The question is how to get this. The money and resources exist for funding of schools, university education, hospitals and other infrastructure that is being gutted, but to seize that wealth requires breaking the power of the bourgeoisie. The Spartacist League/Britain intervenes into these protests with the understanding that the attacks on education, as well as attacks on working people, racism and exploitation, are endemic to the capitalist system. We seek to win students to our programme for the

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# Defend Tommy Sheridan!

At the end of the longest-running perjury trial in Scottish legal history, on 23 December 2010 prominent Scottish leftist Tommy Sheridan was found guilty of perjury. Outrageously he was told by the judge to expect a jail term when he returns for sentencing on 26 January. Sheridan's crime? He successfully sued the viciously anti-working-class *News of the World* for defamation in 2006 and was awarded damages of £200,000, which gored the ox of the Murdoch empire and the Scottish establishment.

The *News of the World* (aptly referred to as the *News of the Screws* in the satirical magazine *Private Eye*) had published trademark sex scandal stories claiming that Sheridan—at the time a

Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) for the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP)—had had an affair with a former prostitute and visited a “swingers” club where he engaged in “drug-fuelled” orgies. Sheridan insisted the lurid tales were lies and the jury believed him. Indeed why on earth would anyone believe the *News of the World*? But Sheridan's victory came as a shock to the newspaper owners and following a four-year investigation by the Lothian and Borders Police, Sheridan and his wife Gail were prosecuted—for alleged perjury during the defamation proceedings.

The perjury trial had all the hallmarks of a right-wing political vendetta by Murdoch's press empire, the cops and the Scottish bourgeois legal establish-



Getty Images

Glasgow, 4 October 2010: Tommy and Gail Sheridan are greeted by supporters as they arrive at court with their solicitor Aamer Anwar.

ment against a well known leftist politician who rose to prominence in the mass demonstrations that defeated Thatcher's Poll Tax in 1989-90. It is unusual, to say the least, for a perjury prosecution to be launched against the *winner* of a defamation case. Evidence presented by the prosecution was so unreliable that all charges against Gail Sheridan were dropped, as were many of the charges against her husband. Prior to the trial, the Sheridans' house was raided by police officers and the couple were subjected to police intimidation. A BBC One Scotland documentary titled “The Rise and Lies of Tommy Sheridan”, which was timed to air on the night the guilty verdict was announced, shows footage of the interrogation of Gail Sheridan in which a policeman suggests she has received training in interview techniques from the IRA (!) for exercising her right to silence.

The notion that anyone should have to defend themselves against Murdoch's rags for lying is obscene. At the time of the Sheridan sex allegations, the *News of the World* was edited by Andy Coulson who was later forced to resign in the wake of a scandal over illegal phone hacking. The paper's royal editor Clive Goodman and private detective Glenn Mulcaire were both jailed in 2007 for plotting to intercept voicemail messages of media celebrities and even members of the royal family. Coulson, who now has also been forced to resign as communications chief for Tory prime minister David Cameron, was centrally involved in the campaign to get Sheridan.

In statements condemning Sheridan's conviction for perjury, the reformist left has predictably been fawning over the “working-class hero” Tommy Sheridan. Indeed, for these groups Sheridan's SSP was once touted as a model “socialist” party. Both the SSP and Solidarity, Sheridan's current outfit, are common-or-garden-variety reformist organisations seeking to cash in on the drop in support for the Labour Party in Scotland. In 2003, with the Labour Party widely despised over the invasion of Iraq, the SSP won six seats in the Scottish parliament. At the time when the *News of the World* ran its sex scan-

dal story in 2004 Sheridan was a prominent public figure; the SSP he led was popular and had hopes of sharing power in Holyrood with the Scottish National Party, a bourgeois party. But deep divisions arose in the SSP over how far to capitulate to the SNP.

The *News of the World* sex scandal became part of the bitter power struggle inside the SSP, which ended in a split and Sheridan launching a rival party—Solidarity. Sheridan's former comrades in the SSP played a central role in getting him convicted. SSP members testified against him at the defamation action, claiming that Sheridan had admitted in a party meeting that some of the newspaper's allegations were true. In response Sheridan denounced them as “scabs”. At the perjury trial, out of 42 prosecution witnesses, 24 were SSP members, including 16 members of the original Executive Committee who gave evidence in 2006.

The key piece of prosecution evidence was a videotape secretly filmed by Sheridan's former friend, SSP member George McNeillage, who sold it to the *News of the World* for £200,000. The tape purports to show Sheridan confessing that he attended “swingers” clubs, but he is not clearly visible on the tape and claims it is a forgery.

It is in the interests of the working class to defend Tommy Sheridan against the Murdoch empire and to demand the dropping of all further action against him. During the 2006 defamation trial we said that “the scurrilous *News of the World* was trying to smear a leftist politician with a ‘sex scandal’”. At the same time, we mocked Sheridan's defence of himself as a God-fearing upholder of bourgeois morality, saying: “Sheridan wants us all to believe he is a paragon of virtue who only ever has sex with his (adoring) wife, to whom he is devoted and who would drown him in the Clyde if he were unfaithful!” (*Workers Hammer* no 196, Autumn 2006). We Marxists regard consensual sex as a private matter. And we look forward to the day when the Murdoch empire and the rotten capitalist system of lies and slander that it upholds will be swept into the dustbin of history by a successful socialist revolution. ■



TROTSKY

## WikiLeaks and “secret diplomacy”

The furious reaction to the WikiLeaks exposures points to the importance the rulers of capitalist imperialism place on secret diplomacy. This was exposed in 1917, two weeks after the Bolshevik-led Russian Revolution, when Leon Trotsky, then People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, announced the Soviet government's publication of secret treaties, exposing the machinations of the prior tsarist and Provisional Government regimes and their

imperialist allies. Published after the Soviet government had declared Russia's withdrawal from the carnage of World War I, a war of competing imperialist powers for redivision of the world, the revelations helped foment a wave of struggle by the imperialists' colonial victims. Most importantly, the Bolsheviks advanced the fight to end the war through proletarian revolutions in the advanced capitalist countries.

In publishing the secret diplomatic documents from the foreign policy archives of Tsarism and of the bourgeois coalition Governments of the first seven months of the revolution, we are carrying out the undertaking which we made when our party was in opposition. Secret diplomacy is a necessary tool for a propertied minority which is compelled to deceive the majority in order to subject it to its interests. Imperialism, with its dark plans of conquest and its robber alliances and deals, developed the system of secret diplomacy to the highest level. The struggle against the imperialism which is exhausting and destroying the peoples of Europe is at the same time a struggle against capitalist diplomacy, which has cause enough to fear the light of day. The Russian people, and the peoples of Europe and the whole world, should learn the documentary truth about the plans forged in secret by the financiers and industrialists together with their parliamentary and diplomatic agents. The peoples of Europe have paid for the right to this truth with countless sacrifices and universal economic desolation....

The workers' and peasants' Government abolishes secret diplomacy and its intrigues, codes, and lies. We have nothing to hide. Our programme expresses the ardent wishes of millions of workers, soldiers, and peasants. We want peace as soon as possible on the basis of decent coexistence and collaboration of the peoples. We want the rule of capital to be overthrown as soon as possible. In exposing to the entire world the work of the ruling classes, as expressed in the secret diplomatic documents, we address the workers with the call which forms the unchangeable foundation of our foreign policy: “Proletarians of all countries, unite.”

—“Statement by Trotsky on the Publication of the Secret Treaties”,  
22 November 1917, reprinted in *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy*,  
vol 1 (1917-1924), edited by Jane Degras (1951)



LENIN

## WORKERS HAMMER

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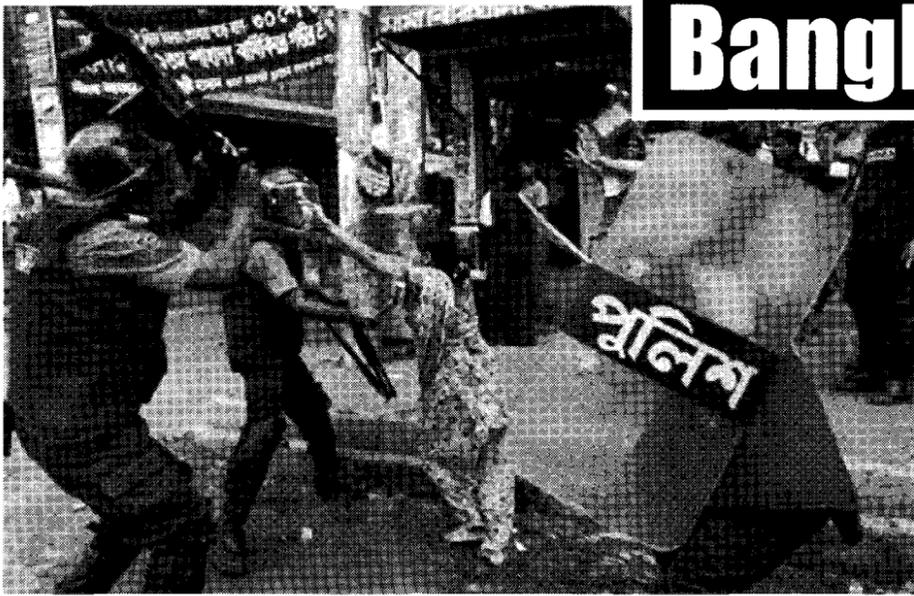
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Welcome to our new readers!

# Bangladesh



Andrew Biraj/Reuters



Pavel Rahman/AP

Left: Police attack woman garment worker during protests in Dhaka, 30 June 2010. Right: Garment workers and activists march in Dhaka demanding a minimum wage of 5000 taka, 28 July 2010. Banner slogan reads: "Accept all the just demands of the garment workers."

## Women garment workers fight starvation wages

On 12 December 2010, police in Chittagong, Bangladesh opened fire on garment workers protesting starvation wages, killing at least three. The killing occurred during several days in which tens of thousands of workers, who are mostly women, blocked roads near the capital, Dhaka, and besieged factories in the southern Export Processing Zone, protesting the refusal of factory owners to honour a wage increase agreed following an earlier round of class struggle last summer.

Two days after the police killings, a fire in the Ha-Meem clothing factory in Ashulia near Dhaka killed between 26 and 31 workers and injured at least 100 more. That the exact number of dead in both the fire and the police killings is not clear speaks volumes about the value placed on workers' lives in this wretchedly impoverished South Asian country.

The ready-made garment industry in Bangladesh employs around 3.5 million workers and accounts for 80 per cent of the country's export earnings, some £7.7 billion last year. It provides the country's second largest source of income after remittances from Bangladeshis working abroad, millions of whom are forced to toil in the most dangerous and lowest paid jobs in the Near East and Europe to support their families at home. Bangladesh's garment industry has grown dramatically over 25 years, supplanting the traditional exports of jute and tea, and consolidating

a female proletarian layer with significant potential social power. Bangladesh's clothing factories supply major Western clothing brands, including Marks & Spencer, Tesco, Gap and Wal-Mart, while paying the lowest wages of garment workers in the world. The legal minimum wage won last summer (but not generally paid out by the factory bosses) is 3000 taka (£28) a month, far below subsistence and coming in the context of sharp rises in food prices.

Garment factory fires like that in December—virtually mass murder by factory owners—are anything but rare. The Bangladesh *Daily Star* (27 February 2010) published a partial list of garment factory fires since 1990, including eight in which at least 20 died. In describing conditions typical of these atrocities, the International Labor Rights Forum wrote of a fire last year at the Garib & Garib Sweater Factory in Dhaka in which 21 workers died:

"Lasting nearly two hours, the fire consumed the oxygen in the air, suffocating the workers. The smoke could not get out because the factory's windows were sealed with heavy metal shutters. Workers could not escape because exits were locked. Security personnel had reportedly locked two of the factory's main gates when the fire broke out to prevent theft by garment workers leaving the factory"

—*Fighting Poverty Wages in Bangladesh*, SweatFree Communities, December 2010.

Recent years have seen explosive waves of labour protest and strikes by Bangladeshi garment workers who are engaged in a battle for survival in conditions of near-slavery, often forced to work more than twelve-hour days, seven days a week to fill orders, in hazardous conditions. Trade unionists, even where allowed to function legally, are banned outright from organising in the factories, and are frequent targets of arrest, torture and killings by state forces. Odhikar, a Bangladeshi human rights organisation, documents at least seven garment workers killed in 2010 by government forces and 2528 injured in the course of protests (odhikar.org, 1 January). They cite 259 arrests of workers' leaders in 2010 including garment workers' leader Mushrefa Mishu, who has been held in custody since the mid-December strikes and is seriously ill. Trade unions internationally must demand in solidarity: Free Mushrefa Mishu and all other detained worker activists!

Several trade unions internationally have issued statements of support for the embattled Bangladeshi workers. Workers Uniting, formed by trade unions including Unite in Britain and the United Steelworkers in the US and Canada, took out a full-page advertisement in a Bangladeshi newspaper, the *Daily Ittefaq*, last July which was reproduced and mass distributed in Dhaka and Chittagong by the Textile Garment Workers Federation. It proclaimed: "Workers Uniting supports the very modest demand of Bangladesh's garment workers for a minimum wage of at least 5,000 taka [£45] a month." Derek Simpson, outgoing leader of Unite, condemned the global "race to the bottom" in sweatshop wages, saying that "these women in Bangladesh are having to work for as little pay as the employers can get away with".

Statements of international solidarity from the trade union bureaucracies are a welcome change from protectionist campaigns against foreign workers such as when Simpson backed the wave of chauvinist strikes on Britain's building sites for "British jobs for British workers". Genuine proletarian internationalism, summed up in the Communist Manifesto slogan "workers of the world unite", is a call for unity in class struggle *against* the capitalist rulers in

each country and is counterposed to the politics of the reformist trade union bureaucracy which is loyal to its "own" bourgeoisie. Simpson's professed opposition to the "race to the bottom" in wages would ring hollow to Bangladeshi immigrant workers in Britain, who are among the poorest sections of the proletariat in the country. Far be it from the union bureaucracy to mobilise the social power of this powerful union in a class-struggle fight to defend jobs and wages against vicious capitalist austerity. By and large the union bureaucracy has supported the racist "war on terror" directed against Muslims which was launched under "their" Labour government.



Shahidul Alam/Drik/Majority World

Mushrefa Mishu

The statements of solidarity with workers in Bangladesh by the trade union bureaucracies include wretched appeals to their "own" capitalist rulers. The Workers Uniting statement pledges: "The AFL-CIO will ask our government to work together with the government of Bangladesh to guarantee that Bangladesh's workers have the right to freedom of association, to organise independent unions and to bargain collectively." In Britain, Unite backs the "Love Fashion Hate Sweatshops" campaign organised by War on Want which appeals to the British government to "regulate the business practices of UK retailers to ensure that overseas workers

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Rahnuma Ahmed/DRK

Women's organisations protesting against the government's declaration of Islam as the state religion, 1988. Banner reads: "No to playing politics with Islam!"

# Students...

(Continued from page 1)

overturn of that system through socialist revolution.

## What programme to fight budget cuts?

The coalition government's budget cuts amount to a breathtaking attack on the living standards of working people, the poor and elderly, as well as youth. Across Europe and in the US, the capitalist ruling classes are seizing on the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression to slash jobs and to demand massive concessions on working hours, wages and pensions. Any capitalist government in Britain—whether Labour, Tory and/or Liberal Democrat—will try to restore the “health” of the system by bleeding working people; while of course cuts in company profits and the stratospheric bonuses paid to bank executives are off limits. At the mere suggestion that a “mansion tax” be imposed, Blairite Peter Mandelson cried, “surely the rich have suffered enough!” Indeed, some of Britain's richest have been reduced to asking for handouts from the state: it recently came to light that in 2004 the Queen turned to a public fund earmarked for “schools, hospitals and low-income families” to help her in the onerous task of heating Buckingham Palace! In these hard times, Her Majesty cut corners by eliminating Christmas luncheon for the palace staff.

What's needed is a class-struggle fight to defend the working class and poor against these attacks. Winning decent healthcare and quality education for the working class, including its black and Asian minority components, requires hard struggle against the capitalist class, a handful of people whose obscene wealth is gained from exploiting the working class and whose rule is reinforced by racial and other forms of social oppression. Students themselves have no social power and therefore must mobilise behind the organised working class,



Matt Dunham/AP

London, 9 December 2010: Student demonstrators confront Prince Charles and Camilla. New York, 1980 (right): SL placard recalls the fate of Charles I.

ship is key to building a revolutionary workers party.

## Refurbishing Labour's image

The student protests have sparked a debate about the role of the trade unions in fighting the budget cuts. Len McCluskey, newly elected head of Unite, said that the students had “put the trade union movement on the spot” and that the unions “have to be preparing for battle”. The aim of this “battle” is to channel discontent among students and workers into support for a Labour government. McCluskey hopes that “Ed Miliband is going to continue his welcome course of drawing a line under Labour's Blairite past” and warns that: “These are Con-Dem cuts, and this is a capitalist crisis. An attempt to blame Labour local authorities for the problem is a shortcut to splitting our movement and letting the government off the hook” ([guardian.co.uk](http://guardian.co.uk), 19 December 2010).

Reformist organisations such as the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) tail the trade union bureaucracy and share the same goal: to pressure the Labour

Britain's economic crisis, issuing a glossy “anti-cuts” poster titled “Why There's No Need to Slash Spending”. With a series of colourful graphs and pie charts, the SWP demonstrated in regard to the deficit that “we could raise the whole of that every year”, merely by taxing the rich, clamping down on tax evaders, and cutting defence spending by scrapping Trident and ending the war in Afghanistan. The SWP calculates that these simple measures would bring £310 billion to Britain's coffers. Quick—someone alert David Cameron! He should be informed that he needn't throw people out of council housing, raise student fees or threaten workers' livelihoods.

In fact—as Marx and Engels explained over a century and a half ago—the capitalists and their government behave the way they do not because they are ignorant, irrational or simply mean people, but because they must pursue their class interests: maximising profits and all that this entails, which includes securing access to markets and resources through imperialist butchery abroad and war on working people and minorities at home.

Counterfire, an offshoot of the SWP, together with Workers Power and others are building several “anti-cuts” lash-ups. Despite much grief among themselves about the failure to unite into a single “anti-cuts opposition” the differences are over tactical and organisational questions, not over politics and programme. None of the competing groups has a programme for the overthrow of capitalism. Workers Power, parent of the youth group Revolution, expressed the hopes and dreams of all the Labourite left when they headlined last October: “Ed Miliband elected Labour leader by workers' votes: Now make him fight!” (Workers Power website, 2 October 2010). Ed Miliband is already fighting: he has told the compliant union leaders that he is opposed to strikes against the cuts and is appalled at the very idea of a strike in London Underground on the day of Prince William's wedding in April.

Counterfire is heavily involved in the so-called “Coalition of Resistance”, supported by retired Labour MP Tony Benn, darling of the reformists, plus Labour MPs John McDonnell and Jeremy Corbyn. Also included are Green Party MP Caroline Lucas, filmmaker Ken Loach and author Iain Banks and numerous trade union leaders including Mark Serwotka, leader of the PCS and Bob Crow, general secretary of the Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union as well as Len McCluskey. The Coalition of Resis-



Workers Vanguard

tance aims not for the overthrow of capitalism but for “a radical alternative, with the level of determination shown by trade unionists and social movements in Greece and other European countries”.

The mass strike waves in Greece and France last year showed the tremendous social power of the organised working class: both countries were brought to a grinding halt by mass strikes in protest against government austerity. However, these struggles were undermined by the political bankruptcy of their reformist misleaders, who accept the need for capitalist austerity, while seeking to have a say in how and where cuts should be implemented. Like their counterparts in France and Greece, the British reformists are tailing the wretched trade union bureaucracy.

Counterfire invokes the spectre of France in May 1968, “the totemic student struggle, the mark against which all others become judged” (“Where Next for the Student Revolt?”, 23 December 2010). May '68 was indeed an immense social struggle ignited by student protests that resulted in mass strikes, factory occupations and demonstrations and led to a pre-revolutionary situation in France. The Counterfire article can't bring itself to utter the words “socialist” or “revolution”, saying instead that “the change of a whole society” was posed in France, and that this “didn't quite happen, for reasons that still provoke debate”. They don't explain the reasons this “didn't quite happen”. In fact, the workers and students were *sold out* by the reformist Communist Party leaders, who called off the strikes for a few crumbs from the capitalists' table (see *Workers Vanguard* no 972, 21 January).

The Socialist Party-dominated National Shop Stewards Network has launched an “All-Britain anti-cuts campaign”. The politics of the Socialist Party amount to craven reformism, notably on the state. Their position is that the police and prison guards are “workers in uniform”, a flat denial of the Leninist position that the police are a core part of the armed fist of the capitalist state whose purpose is to maintain capitalist rule through repression of the working class. The Socialist Party is known on the left for pandering to chauvinism and backward consciousness. Grotesquely, these “socialists” played a leading role in the chauvinist strikes against foreign workers at the Lindsey oil refinery in Lincolnshire in 2009 in which the slogan “British jobs for British workers” was prominent. (See “Labourites whitewash chauvinist

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PA

Edward Woollard arrives at court in London, 11 January.

particularly the public sector unions, which have the social power and a vital interest in fighting against all the attacks on social services, including on state education.

But to engage the strength of the unions in an effective battle against the government's cuts requires a struggle against the pro-Labour politics of the trade union bureaucracy who are committed to defending the interests of the British capitalist rulers. What's needed is a new class-struggle leadership that will fight—in the face of capitalist austerity—for the basic needs of the working class. Forging such a leader-

Party—which before the general election promised cuts “deeper and tougher” than Margaret Thatcher's in the 1980s; which during 13 years in office carried out imperialist butchery in Afghanistan and Iraq and racist immigrant-bashing at home.

The SWP backed Labour in the 2010 general election and now runs the National Right to Work coalition, whose prominent slogan is “Break the Con-Dem Coalition!” a barely disguised appeal for a Labour government (backed by the Liberal Democrats). Last June the SWP provided the Cameron government with a helpful way out of

# Defend air traffic controllers!

## Spain

The following article is reprinted from Workers Vanguard no 971, 7 January 2011.

On 4 December, the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero declared war on Spain’s working class by imposing a “state of emergency” in the airports in response to a work stoppage by air traffic controllers. Under martial law measures not invoked since the end of the bloody dictatorship of General Francisco Franco in the 1970s, members of the Union of Air Traffic Controllers (USCA) were frog-marched by armed police from the Madrid hotel in which they were meeting and forced to man the control towers. Controllers were forced to report for work under threat of arrest; those who took part in the work stoppages now face jail terms of up to eight years for sedition. To prevent strikes over the Christmas holiday period, the emergency measures were extended to 15 January.

It is in the vital interests of workers in Spain, and across Europe as a whole, to defend the air traffic controllers. **An injury to one is an injury to all! Drop all charges against air traffic controllers!**

Controllers have noted that the government has been carrying out calculated provocations in order to provide a pretext for a crackdown. Early last year, it increased the controllers’ annual work hours, limited overtime and slashed wages by half. Most air traffic controllers in Spain worked more than the legal maximum of 1670 hours last year, and under the government’s new rules sick days and time off no longer count towards their annual work hours. The controllers staged last month’s mass sick-out only hours after the government announced attacks on their working conditions as part of the planned privatisation of 49 per cent of Aena, the country’s aviation authority.

The PSOE government’s drive against the air traffic controllers comes in the context of the capitalist financial crisis that has been wracking European Union countries. It follows hard on the heels of the €85 billion (£70 billion) EU/IMF bailout of the Irish banks and a few months after the €110 billion bailout of Greece in exchange for the imposition of savage austerity measures. Spain’s budget deficit is the third-highest in the euro zone after Greece and Ireland, and according to an article on the *Financial Times* website (15 December 2010): “Market prices suggest there is a one-in-four chance that Spain will default over the next five years.” The same article reports:

“Analysts are therefore examining the previously unthinkable possibility that Spain will need to seek a bail-out from the €750bn available from the European financial stability facility, the International Monetary Fund and the European Union, or even negotiate a default. Either option would have grave consequences given that the Spanish economy is larger than those of Greece, Portugal and Ireland put together.”

By invoking military measures against



December 4, 2010: National police occupying entrance of Madrid’s Barajas Airport were mobilised by Spanish prime minister Zapatero (left) to crush controllers strike.



AP photos

the air traffic controllers, the government is sending a message to the international financial markets that it is prepared to use naked state repression to cow the trade unions into submission. The *Wall Street Journal* (8 December 2010) observed with approval that “the government’s severe response has shored up the position of Spain’s embattled prime minister and could give him more support in passing reforms”. It further notes that the cost of government borrowing, which had been soaring in the weeks before the state of emergency, began to fall immediately afterwards. The government’s “reforms” include plans to raise the retirement age by two

The state of emergency should have been met by massive protests by the country’s powerful trade union federations—the General Union of Workers (UGT), aligned with the PSOE, and the Workers Commissions (CCOO), associated with the United Left coalition (Izquierda Unida—IU), in which the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) is the dominant force. Instead, the union bureaucrats in both federations, which are loyal to the PSOE government, scandalously chimed in with Zapatero’s attacks on the strikers. UGT leader Cándido Méndez denounced the controllers’ action as “in no way justified”, while in a 6 December web posting the

say they can afford. This would be part of the struggle to forge a revolutionary workers party grounded in the Marxist understanding that the capitalist system must be overthrown through socialist revolution.

In Spain, the leaders of both the UGT and CCOO are committed to the defence of the interests of their “own” capitalist rulers. UGT leader Méndez has baldly declared: “Social peace is the birthright and the responsibility of everyone. We are not the ones breaking the social peace and we do not want to do so in the future” (abc.es, 23 February 2010). In June, when Zapatero announced a new labour law attacking workers’ rights, UGT and CCOO leaders called for a one-day general strike to be held...three months later, which amounted to seeking the government’s permission for the strike. The 29 September general strike was organised under the slogan “Not Like This” and called for a “fair and balanced way out of the crisis”.

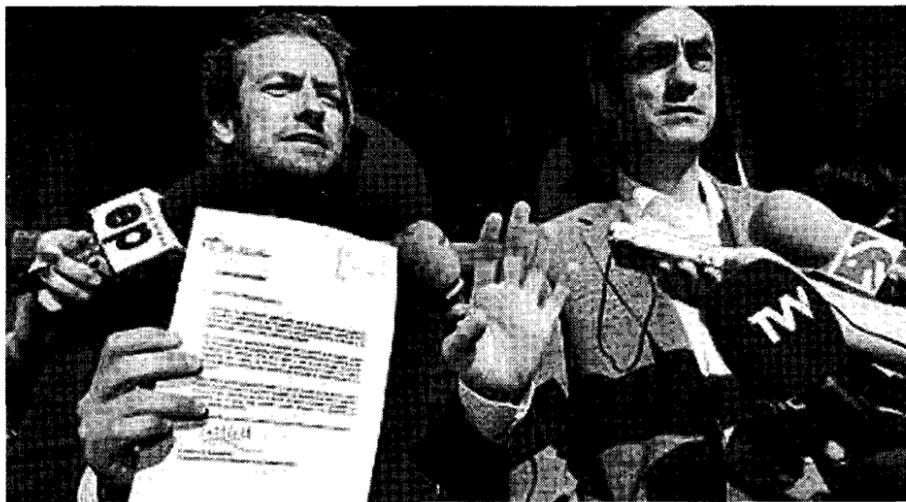
### Forge a Trotskyist party in Spain!

To justify their class treason in refusing to defend the air traffic controllers, the UGT and CCOO misleaders maintain that USCA is not a trade union and that the controllers are pampered and highly paid. Reformist left groups in Spain, which routinely look to the PSOE to defend “democracy” and keep out the bourgeois right, have also joined in the denunciation of the air traffic controllers. Despite much handwringing over the state of emergency by the United Left, its parliamentary deputy Gaspar Llamazares denounced the controllers’ action as “an abuse of power against the workers” that leaves the unions “weaker to defend labour and social rights”.

In contrast, a 5 December 2010 press release by STAVLA, a flight attendants union, recognised what is at stake for the union movement. Offering unconditional support, STAVLA expresses the hope that the air traffic controllers’

“VALIANT action and courage serve to wake up a society that is asleep, individualist and depressed in the fight for its economic and labour rights in the country with the highest rate of unemployment in Europe. If we fall into the Government’s

continued on page 9



EFE

Madrid: Air traffic controllers union president Camilo Cela (right) and communications secretary César Cabo (left) speak to press during contract negotiations in August. Strikers face up to eight years’ imprisonment.

years, to 67, and eliminate the pitiful €426 (£355) monthly payment to the long-term unemployed. This in a country with an unemployment rate of 20 per cent, the highest in the euro zone.

The assault on the air traffic controllers poses a deadly threat to the organised labour movement. Especially given Spain’s important tourism sector, workers in the airline industry are strategically placed and have enormous social power. At the same time, the trade unions are generally divided by affiliation to political parties, which weakens their capacity to struggle. What’s needed instead is to unite all workers in industrial unions, including a single union of airline workers embracing pilots, controllers, mechanics, baggage handlers and cabin crews.

CCOO described the action as “intolerable” and “an act of grave irresponsibility deserving of ‘our most forceful and radical rejection’”.

Facing the most ferocious attacks on their jobs and livelihoods in decades, workers across Europe, notably in Greece and France, have waged major class battles. But the workers’ struggles have been undermined by the political bankruptcy of their reformist misleaders, who accept the need for capitalist austerity, while seeking to sugarcoat its effects. This underlines the need to forge a revolutionary leadership of the working class. Based on the understanding that the interests of the workers and those of the bosses are irreconcilable, such a leadership would fight for what workers need, not for what the bosses



## Birth control, abortion rights and women's oppression

# Fifty years after the Pill: still a long way to go

The following article is reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* no 968, 5 November 2010, newspaper of our comrades of the Spartacist League of the US.

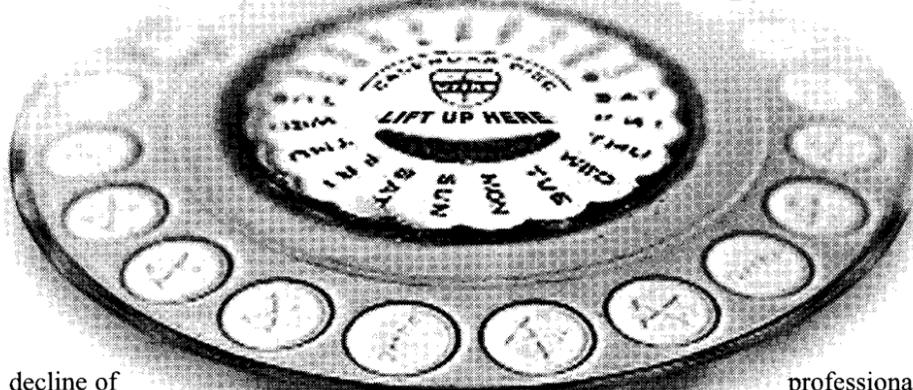
"You've come a long way, baby", crooned the old Virginia Slims commercials on TV in the late 1960s, and the bourgeois media has picked up the tune again on this, the fiftieth anniversary of the Pill (no further definition necessary — everyone knows you are talking about s-c-x). And everyone knows the Pill is all about sex. When in 1975 Loretta Lynn sang, "I'm tearin' down your brooder house 'cause now I've got the pill", the hearts of millions of women across America beat in time to the rhythm of her song, which dozens of radio stations tried to censor — until it made the hit charts.

### WORKERS VANGUARD

The Pill was the first reliable contraceptive that gave women control over their own reproduction. This tremendous medical advance enabled women to separate sexual enjoyment from fear of pregnancy, freeing them from the now excessive fertility with which evolution has endowed our species. But birth control and abortion remain restricted throughout the capitalist world by the state, by the institution of the family, and by organised religion, which all serve to enforce women's oppression. As long as the capitalist order exists, the benefits of science will be limited by the exploitation and oppression of this class system. Marxists look forward to the day when science can be "applied with full understanding to all the fields of human activity", to quote the words of German socialist leader August Bebel, whose 1879 work *Woman and Socialism* was one of the first major Marxist works on the woman question.

Leon Trotsky, co-leader with VI Lenin of the 1917 October Revolution, underlined that birth control and abortion are among woman's "most important civil, political and cultural rights" (*The Revolution Betrayed* [1936]). We fight for women's liberation through socialist revolution. We call for **free abortion on demand** as part of **free, quality health-care for all** and for **free, 24-hour child-care** to address the deep class and racial oppression of poor and minority women. The wealthy will always get their medical care, including their abortions, while myriad anti-abortion laws and restrictions on birth control target young, working-class and poor women, who can't afford quality healthcare, childcare and housing.

At the time of its first release by the pharmaceutical company Searle, big predictions were made about the effect that the Pill would have on society. Moral bigots wailed that it would promote female promiscuity and the



decline of religion and the patriarchal family, while birth control advocates believed it would save the family, create happy marriages and end the world population explosion. The Pill was even hailed as the solution to the "Red Menace". In her book *America and the Pill: A History of Promise, Peril, and Liberation* (Basic Books, 2010), historian Elaine May speaks of how some Cold Warriors believed that the Pill "would alleviate the conditions of poverty and unrest that might lead developing nations to embrace communism, and instead promote the

professional jobs for women. At the same time, the civil rights movement could not eradicate the race-colour caste oppression of black people, which is the bedrock of American capitalism, just as the institution of the family, the main source of women's oppression in capitalist society, is a bulwark of the bourgeois order.

### Abortion rights under attack

While US bourgeois pundits celebrate the reproductive freedom that the Pill has given women, it is striking that most do not mention the precipitous

Perhaps the most barbarous is Utah's new law. Passed after a desperate 17-year-old paid a man \$150 to beat her in an effort to induce a miscarriage, the law now allows homicide charges against women in similar cases! Meanwhile, the lies that abortion causes depression and breast cancer continue to circulate, and some recent polls show that for the first time more Americans call themselves "pro-life" than "pro-choice".

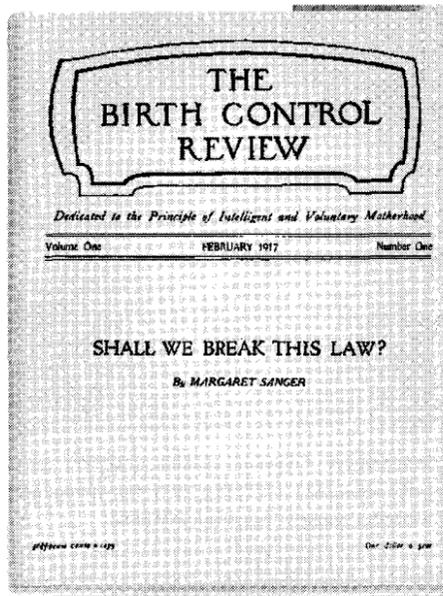
The arsenal of legal measures on the federal as well as the state level has already made abortion virtually inaccessible to a large number of women. Thirty-eight states prohibit abortions after a specified point in pregnancy. Fully 35 states require one or both parents of women under 18 to be notified and/or consent to an abortion. Some 87 per cent of US counties and 31 per cent of metropolitan areas have no abortion services.

In May 2009, the "pro-life" war on women claimed yet another life. Dr George Tiller — one of only three doctors whose clinics provide late-term abortions in the United States — was assassinated while attending his church in Wichita, Kansas, by a right-wing anti-abortion bigot. Tiller, a main target of the anti-woman God squad for decades, was the eighth person murdered in this anti-abortion, "family values" onslaught since 1993. In an article titled "The New Abortion Providers", the *New York Times* (18 July 2010) details the long decline in the number of doctors trained in performing abortions and tells the story of young doctors in groups like Medical Students for Choice fighting to make abortion part of a doctor's regular practice. Abortion is a medical procedure, now one of the safest in the world, that does not need to be carried out in isolated clinics, where doctors and their families, friends and co-workers can easily be subjected to harassment, violence and death by anti-abortion fanatics.

Ever since the passage of *Roe v Wade* in 1973, the basic democratic right of legal abortion has been under attack. The war on abortion rights has become a spearhead for social and political reaction because at its heart lies the question of legal and social equality for women. Providing women with some control over whether or not to have children, abortion is viewed as a threat to the institution of the family.

Access to contraception, too, is limited by cost and lack of basic information, while "conscience clauses" allow pharmacies to refuse to fill prescriptions for birth control and Plan B, the "morning-after" pill. To all this can be added anti-woman moralising, which rants that a girl shouldn't want to have sex. The argument goes that while any unwed mother is a bad girl, if she can claim she got carried away, maybe the sin is not quite as great (as long as she

## For women's liberation through socialist revolution!



Top: *Workers Vanguard* illustration based on Ortho/McNeil photo; above right: Bettman  
First issue (February 1917) of monthly journal published by Margaret Sanger, shown here protesting gag rule against birth control advocacy in Boston, 1929.

growth of markets for consumer goods and the embrace of capitalism".

In fact, the "sexual revolution" that is often credited to the Pill was the result, in one way or another, of the convulsive social struggles of the civil rights movement, which broke the back of Jim Crow segregation in the South, and of opposition to US imperialism's war against the Vietnamese Revolution. The major social upheavals of the 1960s that broke up the reactionary Cold War consensus also led to substantial advances in access to higher education and

decline in women's access to abortion. The assault on women's right to abortion continues unabated in the courts and halls of government, especially on the state level. As of June 2010, some 370 bills to restrict abortion rights had been introduced last year alone in state legislatures across the country, and many have already passed. These range from Oklahoma's cruel requirement that a doctor show the woman an ultrasound of the foetus, to Nebraska's ban on all abortions after 20 weeks based on the claim that the foetus can feel pain.

doesn't have an abortion). But having birth control implies premeditation. Precisely! In the words of the late comedian George Carlin, "Not every ejaculation deserves a name."

Today sex education in schools is increasingly under attack, while abstinence remains the focus of government-funded programmes like the State Personal Responsibility Education Program, established by Barack Obama's recent healthcare "reform" act. Abortion clinics are overwhelmingly outnumbered by "pregnancy crisis centres"—fake clinics set up by anti-abortion groups with the purpose of subjecting pregnant women to anti-abortion propaganda and otherwise pressuring them to carry the foetus to term. According to the *Nation*, some 4000 of these centres have received over \$60 million in federal abstinence and marriage-promotion funds. As a result of the ignorance and miseducation produced by this tangle of social reaction, almost half of pregnancies in the US every year are unplanned, according to the most recent government survey.

While US newspapers headline "The Pill: Making Motherhood Better for 50 Years" (*Washington Post*, 9 May 2010), the masses of working-class, minority and poor women have missed the celebration. The Great Recession rages on; union-busting is destroying what good union jobs remain; homes are in foreclosure; millions of working people cannot get jobs and their children cannot get a decent education or affordable healthcare. Except for the women at the very top of society, where the rich are certainly getting richer, the decades-long assault on the working class and the poor has more than cancelled out the important improvements in women's legal status over the last 50 years.

In times of substantial class and social struggle, the capitalist class may be forced to cede some reforms. But as long as the capitalist order remains, the ruling class will seek to overturn these gains, as it is now doing, when such struggles are at an ebb. As revolutionary communists, we defend every gain that's been won for the exploited and oppressed, such as the gains wrested during the hard struggles of the civil rights movement. But these reforms have a fundamentally token quality to them because they leave untouched the capitalist system. The source of black oppression and anti-woman bigotry is not the particular capitalist party in power—whether Democratic or Republican—but the capitalist order that breeds oppression and bigotry as a necessary corollary to its system of exploitation.

### Sex and social control

The capitalist class seeks to buttress the family, which, along with organised religion and the state, form a triad that props up the exploitation of labour. To free women from their deeply entrenched special oppression will take a workers revolution to rip this system of

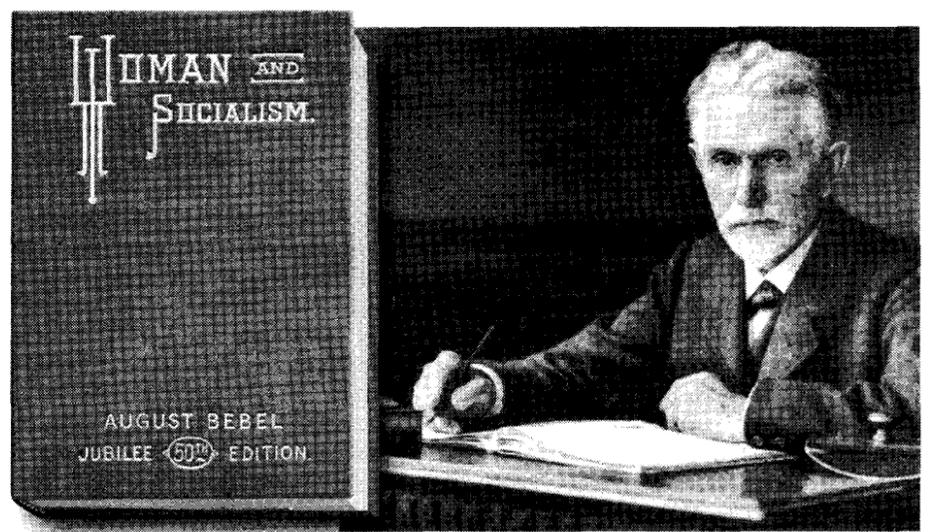
exploitation out by the roots and replace it with a workers government to begin the construction of a socialist world. Only then can we undertake the profound changes in the fabric of everyday life where the institution of the family is replaced by socialised childcare and housework, enabling women to fully participate in social and political life.

The family is not an immutable, timeless institution, but a social relation subject to historical change. In his classic 1884 work *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, Friedrich Engels traced the origin of the family and the state to the division of society into classes. The development of agriculture allowed the creation of a social surplus. In turn, that surplus gave impetus to the development of a leisured ruling class, thus moving human society away from the primitive egalitarianism of the Old Stone Age (Paleolithic). The centrality of the family began with its role in ensuring "legitimate heirs" for the patriarchal inheritance of property, which required women's sexual monogamy and social subordination. In the 10,000 years since the advent of class society, the family has taken many forms—including polygamous, extended and nuclear—reflecting different political economies and their cultures and religions. But the oppression of women is a fundamental feature of *all* class societies.

The family is a socially conservatising force that imposes certain behavioural norms. For example, in this country the definition of "manhood" is, besides getting a girl pregnant, the ability to support a wife and children. But that is becoming ever more difficult given the lack of decent-paying union jobs. If not for wives entering the workforce, the entire bottom 60 per cent of the US population would have had real income losses since 1979. At the same time, the institution of the family serves the capitalist rulers by placing the burden of raising a new generation of proletarians on working men and women. Indeed, the "family values" crowd (which encompasses Democrats as well as the Republicans) wails about the so-called "crisis of the family" and insists that it is both right and proper that parents should be wholly responsible for the upbringing of their children.

Even the most cursory examination of laws regulating abortion, contraception and the like that go back thousands of years shows that they are integrally related to the maintenance of the family. Some of the first documented legal measures to strengthen the patriarchal family were enacted in ancient Rome under Augustus Caesar. These included prohibitions against adultery, incentives for widows to remarry, "sin" taxes on bachelors 30 years and older, and incentives for fathers of three or more children. The concern of the government was to have enough Roman citizens to fill the ranks of the army and maintain the city of Rome as the core of the Empire.

Modern abortion laws show how



German socialist leader August Bebel wrote in his 1879 work *Woman and Socialism*, "There can be no liberation of mankind without social independence and equality of the sexes."

social and legal institutions have changed to reflect the interests of the capitalist class. In 1803 the British Ellenborough Act marked the advent of abortion as a statutory crime in the English-speaking world. The interest of the ruling class in this law and others following it was to protect the male's right to heirs, punish (especially single) women for illicit sex and encourage population growth for the newly forged capitalist nation-state, its army and labour pool.

Alongside legal prohibition stands religion, the strongest ideological force against birth control and abortion, espe-

cially the Roman Catholic church. The claims by the Pope and other clergy about the "souls" of unborn children are revealed as so much superstition by the science of human development. Yet thanks to the reactionary influence of religion, tens of thousands of women die each year from illegal abortions—lives that would have been saved with access to birth control and abortion. A brief look at Catholic doctrine shows that the church has changed its mind several times about when the nonexistent "soul" enters into the conceptus. For most of the existence of the church, this was considered to be the time of "quickening", at about the fourth month, when the pregnant woman can feel the movement of the foetus. John XXI, who became pope in 1276, was the author of a book called *Treasury of Medicines for the Poor*, which is the greatest single source of information about the practical means of birth control and abortion that was known in the Middle Ages. It was not until 1869 that Pope Pius IX declared that abortion "from conception" was a sin. This was a political calculation carried out in exchange for recognition of "papal infallibility" by French Emperor Napoleon III, who was seeking to stem France's decades-long decline in the birth rate.



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The woman-hating strictures against birth control and abortion, the poisonous bigotry against homosexuals, the

### Some history of birth control

In *Contraception and Abortion from the Ancient World to the Renaissance* (Harvard University Press, 1994), John M Riddle explores the ways that pre-industrial people might have tried to enjoy sex without the consequence of procreation. Nobody knows if the methods he documents had much effect on the birth rates, but they certainly show intent. One city in Northern Africa, Cyrene, is believed to have made its name and its fortune from a wild giant fennel that grew nearby, which people believed to have abortifacient effects. Its use became so widespread that it was harvested to extinction.

Peter Fryer, in his witty and erudite book *The Birth Controllers*, documents that ancient Egyptians used crocodile-dung pessaries (vaginal suppositories) and other dubious methods to control fertility. The Christian Bible's story of Onan is only the most well known of a long-practised method (withdrawal), a story used for centuries to put the terror of hell into countless adolescents for masturbation. Some historians believe that the tens of thousands of women who were executed as witches in early modern Europe may have been abortionists and birth control practitioners. In 20th-century America, before the Pill, housewives often resorted to the dangerous practice of douching with Lysol [disinfectant].

In the 1830s, a Massachusetts doctor named Charles Knowlton was the first person in the history of birth control to be sent to prison for advocating it. The United States also has the dubious honour of passing the first nationwide laws prohibiting the dissemination of birth control methods. In 1873 Congress passed the Comstock Act, named for its sponsor, Postmaster General Anthony Comstock. It outlawed the circulation of contraceptive information and devices through the US postal service as "pornography". In 1915 Comstock boasted that he had convicted enough people of "sexual misconduct" to fill a 60-car passenger train.

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Spartacists join in defence of abortion clinic against Operation Rescue terrorists, San Mateo, California, July 1993.

# The Pill...

(Continued from page 7)

One of Comstock's prominent targets in later years was Margaret Sanger. Sanger, who would go on to found Planned Parenthood, began her political life as a member of the Socialist Party, working on the party's women's committee. She was working as a nurse, visiting immigrants in New York's Lower East Side, where she saw firsthand the suffering of women whose health had been ruined by too many pregnancies, who were struggling to feed children they could not afford to support, who all too often ended up butchered by some back-alley abortionist. Soon she began writing about sex education and health for the party's women's page under the heading, "What Every Girl Should Know". In early 1913 Comstock banned the column, and the paper ran in its place a box titled "What Every Girl Should Know—Nothing; by order of the U.S. Post Office".

by Church of England parson Thomas Malthus, whose 1798 *Essay on the Principle of Population* predicted unremitting misery on account of population growth that would, he claimed, inevitably outstrip available resources. Writing at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in Britain, Malthus proposed two solutions: leave the poor to die of their misery (he opposed poor relief) and postpone the age of marriage so as to reduce the number of children per couple (that is, "abstinence" as birth control).

Malthusianism was, as Friedrich Engels characterised it in *The Condition of the Working-Class in England*, "the most open declaration of war of the bourgeoisie upon the proletariat". Lenin, too, denounced Malthusianism in a short 1913 article, "The Working Class and Neomalthusianism". At the same time, he noted, "It goes without saying that this does not by any means prevent us from demanding the unconditional annulment of all laws against abortions or against the distribution of

and social environments. Both the division between town and country and economic dependence on the family will be overcome. The time when people were compelled to have more children in order to ensure enough manpower to work the land or to care for the elderly will have long passed."

## Genesis of the Pill

Margaret Sanger first had the idea of a "magic pill" to prevent conception in 1912, but the scientific knowledge to create it did not exist. By the end of World War II, decades of research into human reproductive biology had revealed the crucial role of hormones in conception and pregnancy. In 1953 Sanger, accompanied by International Harvester heiress Katherine McCormick, paid a visit to the Worcester Foundation for Experimental Biology, where Gregory Pincus, who in the 1930s engineered the first in vitro fertilisation (a rabbit embryo), conducted his privately funded research. Pincus's early work had been cited as a great scientific achievement, but the storm of media condemnation over "babies in test tubes" led to him being denied tenure by Harvard University and all but driven from mainstream research as a "mad scientist". Another maverick scientist, chemist Russell Marker, had developed a technique, later refined by Carl Djerassi, to extract massive, cheap amounts of a synthetic progesterone from a species of enormous yam that grew only in Mexico. The research to create an oral contraceptive was funded almost entirely out of McCormick's private fortune; the pharmaceutical companies would not touch research into contraception at that time.

The post-World War II years were hard for American women. The outbreak of the Cold War, the purge of communists and other militants from the unions and the rise of McCarthyism also included a wholesale campaign to put women back into the kitchen and nursery. Many women had escaped from such drudgery during World War II, when their labour was necessary for the war economy. As the government investigated "subversives", there was an unprecedented state intrusion into family life and the deadening of every aspect of social and intellectual life. A "normal" family and a vigilant mother were supposed to be the front line of defence against treason, while anti-Communists linked "deviant" family or sexual behaviour to sedition. Most women were married by age 19; the birth rate became the highest in US history.

At the same time, the groundbreaking reports by Alfred C Kinsey documented what Americans really did

behind the bedroom door (and in some other places, too). And women wanted better contraception. The Pill was first marketed in 1957 as a treatment for menstrual disorders. When word circulated that it suppressed ovulation and prevented pregnancy, doctors across the country were besieged by hundreds of thousands of women asking for prescriptions to treat their suddenly discovered menstrual problems.

The leap to respectability and mainstream medicine for the Pill came through Harvard gynaecologist John Rock, a fertility specialist, who had the medical practice and experience in working with women patients that enabled the first clinical trials to be conducted. A devout Roman Catholic, Rock later wrote a book, *The Time Has Come: A Catholic Doctor's Proposals to End the Battle Over Birth Control*, trying to garner public support in a fruitless campaign to make the Catholic church change its denunciation of birth control as a sin.

In its first incarnation, the Pill had doses of progesterone and oestrogen far higher than it does today, leading to serious side effects in some users. These dangers were seized upon by anti-woman bigots, including in the Senate, which in 1970 held a series of hearings to "investigate" the matter. Over the years the Pill has been massively tested in many combinations. While risks remain regarding breast cancer and stroke for some, the Pill in fact helps to protect women from ovarian and uterine cancer. Because it reduces or eliminates the menstrual flow, it also reduces the risk of anaemia, a serious problem in poor countries. The experience of millions of women, researchers and doctors working to improve the safety of the Pill has provided the basis for the clinical trials and testing now routinely used by the Food and Drug Administration.

## From Carter to Reagan: resurgence of the religious right

By 1960 the Pill was available by prescription as a contraceptive, but laws against contraception remained on the books in many states. Until 1965, it was illegal for married people in Connecticut to use birth control. Until 1972, it was illegal for single people to use birth control in Massachusetts and many other states as well. Bill Baird, a heroic fighter for women's right to abortion and contraception, spent three months in jail in Massachusetts for giving a package of contraceptive foam and a condom to a Boston University student as a challenge to the law. His case later went to the Supreme Court and helped lay the basis for the right to privacy—the main legal argument behind *Roe v Wade*, which established legal abortion in the United States in 1973.

The legalisation of abortion was itself a product of the explosive struggles of the 1960s. For the American bourgeoisie, the all-sided social turmoil and defiance of authority of that period were deeply disturbing. US imperialism was suffering a humiliating defeat at the hands of Vietnam's heroic workers and peasants. In the late 1970s, a major bourgeois ideological assault was launched to overcome the "Vietnam syndrome"—popular hostility to direct US military intervention abroad—and to instil an unquestioning acceptance of "free enterprise", God and the family among the population, which included the desirability of dying for one's country. Coming to office in 1977, the Democratic Carter administration brought "born again" religious fundamentalism front and centre into the White House as it kicked off a renewal of US imperialism's Cold War drive to destroy the Soviet degenerated workers



Raleigh News and Observer

**Civil rights activists jailed in Wake County, North Carolina, 1963. Civil rights movement ended Jim Crow segregation in South, inspired further struggles, including for women's rights.**

Sanger soon left the Socialist Party to focus single-mindedly on fighting for birth control, a term that she herself invented. A courageous woman, Sanger set up the first birth control clinic in the country and endured arrests and imprisonment as she sought to overturn the Comstock Law and to educate women and doctors in birth control methods. She travelled to Europe to research the latest techniques and wrote a sex manual in 1926 where she describes the act of sex in ecstatic, uplifting terms. Seeking to promote the cause of birth control among the wealthy and influential, she steered her movement away from the socialist movement. Sanger, a bourgeois feminist, was willing to make any political compromise she saw as necessary to win advocates to her side and thus embraced some ugly arguments popular among bourgeois reformers of the time, such as endorsing eugenics, including the call to bar immigration for the "feeble-minded". While the eugenics movement, which stigmatised the poor for their own oppression, was at the time not yet associated with the genocidal movement that would emerge in Nazi Germany, it was widely opposed by socialists. American socialist and birth control pioneer Antoinette Konikow denounced the presence of eugenicists at a 1921 New York City conference on birth control, declaring that the working-class mothers she represented "are often considered to be not fit" by such forces.

## The "population bomb"

Behind the scenes (or not), people have always struggled to control fertility for their own private reasons. But there is also a longstanding chain of argument in favour of population control on the part of bourgeois ideologues. The most notorious of these was made

medical literature on contraceptive measures, etc". Lenin called for "freedom for medical propaganda and the protection of the elementary democratic rights of citizens, men and women".

The corollary of Malthusianism, eugenics, with its calls for compulsory sterilisation and forced abortions, has its contemporary advocates, including Obama's "science czar", John Holdren. In 1977, Holdren co-authored *Eco-science: Population, Resources, Environment* with the (now largely discredited) population "experts" Paul and Anne Ehrlich. Dripping with contempt, Holdren et al wrote: "If some individuals contribute to general social deterioration by overproducing children... they can be required by law to exercise reproductive responsibility." Such "reproductive responsibility" laws could include "compulsory abortion", "adding a sterilant to drinking water or staple foods", "sterilizing women after their second or third child" and other "involuntary fertility control" methods that would be implemented by a "Planetary Regime", which "might be given responsibility for determining the optimum population for the world". The ravings of Holdren and the Ehrlichs are worthy of the genocidal Nazi eugenics movement.

Marxists are of course not indifferent to the problem of rapid population growth. But our starting point is the fight for socialist revolution to open the widest vista of human freedom. As we wrote in part two of "Capitalism and Global Warming" (*Workers Vanguard* no 966, 8 October 2010):

"Only a society that can raise the standard of living worldwide can provide the conditions for a natural decline in reproductive rates....

"Under communism, human beings will have far greater mastery over their natural



Workers Vanguard

**Bill Baird, champion of abortion rights for poor and black women, with photo of his Hempstead, New York, clinic, firebombed by anti-abortion terrorists in 1979.**

state, garbed in the call for “human rights”.

This was the backdrop for the decades-long anti-sex witch hunt against abortion rights, pornography, gay rights and teen sex as well as for the vicious persecution of AIDS patients and day-care workers, who were targeted and jailed as “child molesters” amid hysterical allegations of “satanic ritual abuse”. Beginning in the 1980s, scientific research into new contraceptive methods virtually screeched to a halt as Reagan slashed funding for family planning internationally, including for abortion and birth control, leaving many Third World women with not much to turn to. While Obama has reversed this particular policy, he explicitly disavowed defending the rights of women as well as immigrants in his healthcare proposal, proclaiming that “the reforms I’m proposing would not apply to those who are here illegally” and that “no federal dollars will be used to fund abortion, and federal conscience laws will remain in place”. Obama pledged to uphold the Hyde Amendment, which outlaws Medicaid funding for abortions.

### For women’s liberation through socialist revolution!

Birth control methods like the Pill, medical knowledge, understanding of women’s health—these things have indeed taken giant leaps forward in the last 50 years. But exploitation, poverty and religious and cultural strictures deprive most women on the planet of these benefits. For them, daily life is little more than that of a beast of burden. Across vast regions of the globe, in the backward neocolonial capitalist coun-

tries oppressed by imperialism, women are swathed in the veil, sold into marriage against their will, or subjected to barbaric punishments like death sentences for “adultery” in Saudi Arabia, Iran and elsewhere. Poverty and backwardness, buttressed by imperialist domination, mean that much of the basic infrastructure necessary to bring basic medical care, contraception and abortion to Third World women is sim-

ply not there. Some researchers estimate that in Latin America and the Caribbean the primary cause of death for women between the ages of 15 and 39 is complications from illegal abortions. Feminism, a worldview counterposed to Marxism, is not capable of generating a programme for the libera-



Spartacist contingent at protest against bigots’ blockade of abortion clinics, New York, 1988.

tion of women. Feminism analyses society as gender-based rather than class-based. It views anti-woman ideology as just bad thinking and puts forward that what is needed is to spread correct ideas and then maybe people will catch on and stop being bigots. Feminism is an anti-egalitarian ideology of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois women who support the capitalist system and seek their own power and privilege within it.

Indeed, for women like Hillary Clinton and Michelle Obama, the good life will only continue to get better. But for working-class, poor and minority women, jobs disappear, wages plummet and life only continues to get harder. The fundamental source of women’s oppression is not bad laws or male

chauvinist attitudes—these are but reflections of the subordination of women in the institution of the family and the capitalist system that requires it.

The liberation of women can be realised only with the victory of proletarian revolution, which will smash all forms of social oppression, lay the material basis to free women from age-old family servitude and reorganise society in the interest of all. The family cannot simply be abolished; rather, its social functions like housework, child rearing, preparation of food, etc, must be replaced by social institutions. This perspective requires a tremendous leap in social development, which can be achieved only through sweeping away capitalist rule on a global basis and replacing it with a rational, democratically planned economy. The International Communist League fights throughout the world to lead the struggle for working-class power. Inscribed on the banners of these parties will be the struggle for women’s liberation, which is an integral part of the emancipating goals of communism. As we wrote in “In Defense of Science and Technology” (*Workers Vanguard* no 843, 4 March 2005):

“Communism will elevate the standard of life for everyone to the highest possible level. By eliminating scarcity, poverty and want, communism will also eliminate the greatest driving force for the prevalence of religion and superstition—and the attendant backwardness, which defines the role of women as the producers of the next generation of working masses to be exploited.”

For women’s liberation through socialist revolution! ■

## Spain...

(Continued from page 5)

devious manipulation and applaud their action, we will have allowed this attack on the fundamental rights of all Spanish workers to succeed and be entrenched forever.”

Spain’s air traffic controllers are a highly paid white-collar group on the margins of the labour movement. But if Zapatero gets away with this outrageous assault on the USCA, his government will take it as a green light for further attacks on the working class as a whole. Indeed, last summer Madrid’s right-wing regional government threatened to use the military to break a Metro strike.

Zapatero’s attack on the controllers, and the response of the trade union bureaucrats and reformists, bring to mind US president Ronald Reagan’s 1981 union-busting attack on the PATCO air traffic controllers union. In response to their strike, some 12,000 PATCO members were fired and their leaders dragged off to jail in shackles. As in Spain today, the trade unions had the social power to shut down the airports and defeat this attack. But the union misleaders in the US treacherously refused to mobilise that power, which emboldened the bourgeoisie to carry out

massive attacks on all of labour.

The Spanish government and Aena have imposed horrendous working conditions on the air traffic controllers, who are forced to work overtime as a matter of course because the bosses refuse to hire enough of them. These conditions are a direct threat to air safety, a situation that is drastically worsened by the state of emergency. The International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers’ Associations (IFATCA) issued a statement saying: “Given the duress under which our Spanish colleagues are forced to work, IFATCA declares that the safety of Spanish airspace and airports is severely compromised while this military rule is in force.”

While Zapatero’s martial law measures are an abrogation of democratic rights, the response of reformists has been to promote illusions in bourgeois democracy. Marxists understand that the government is the executive committee of the ruling class. As Lenin explained in *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* (1918), “There is not a single state, however democratic, which has no loopholes or reservations in its constitution guaranteeing the bourgeoisie the possibility of dispatching troops against the workers, of proclaiming martial law, and so forth, in case of a ‘violation of public order,’

and actually in case the exploited class ‘violates’ its position of slavery and tries to behave in a non-slavish manner.” The capitalist state, which exists to defend bourgeois rule, cannot be reformed and made to work in the interests of the oppressed; it must be overthrown by workers revolution and replaced by a workers state.

On 10 December 2010, in opposition to Madrid’s right-wing regional government, leaders of the UGT and CCOO in Madrid organised a public reading of articles of the Spanish Constitution, which formally guarantees the right to work and the right to strike. Upheld by the PSOE and the PCE, the Constitution proclaims the Spanish state to be a parliamentary monarchy. The present king, Juan Carlos de Borbón, was handpicked by Franco himself to succeed him as head of state. The Constitution also enshrines the continued oppression of national minorities—especially the Basque and Catalan peoples—in the name of the “indissoluble unity of the Spanish Nation, common and indivisible motherland of all Spaniards”. The king is no mere ornament but the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. It was Juan Carlos who signed the royal decree declaring the state of emergency against the air traffic controllers.

In the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39, the PSOE and PCE, as well as the anarchists and the centrist Workers Party of Marxist Unification, paved the way for the dictatorship of the butcher Franco by liquidating a proletarian revolution and subordinating the working class to the “democratic” bourgeoisie (see “Trotskyism vs. Popular Frontism in the Spanish Civil War”, *Spartacist* [English-language edition] no 61, Spring 2009). After the death of the dictator in November 1975, the reformists again came to the rescue of the capitalists as a powerful wave of strikes threatened to shake the bourgeois order to its founda-

tions. That betrayal too was carried out in the name of “democracy”.

The Spanish monarchy, the legacy of Francoism and the whole capitalist system can and must be swept away by workers revolution. What’s necessary is the building of a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party to lead the proletariat at the head of all the oppressed in the struggle for a workers government that will expropriate the capitalist blood-suckers and begin the construction of an egalitarian socialist order based on a massive expansion of productive forces. Such a party will champion the right of self-determination for oppressed nations, full citizenship rights for all immigrants, the emancipation of women and full democratic rights for homosexuals. For a federation of workers republics in the Iberian peninsula! For a Socialist United States of Europe! ■

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# Students...

(Continued from page 4)

strikes", *Workers Hammer* no 206, Spring 2009.)

Reformist politics cannot address any of the fundamental problems facing students today. These were summed up by one of a group of minority youth interviewed by the BBC's Paul Mason on the 9 December protest, who said: "We're from the slums of east London. How do they expect us to pay £9,000 for uni fees, and EMA [education maintenance allowance] was the only thing keeping us in college. What's stopping us from doing drug deals on the streets any more? Nothing." The willful neglect of education under capitalism hits hardest at the poorest in society, especially ethnic minorities, who are more likely to attend resource-starved and decrepit schools in run-down areas. An authoritative recent study into inequality in Britain showed that:

"children from the poorest families are half as likely to achieve good GCSEs; black pupils of Caribbean descent are three times more likely to be excluded; four out of five young people with special needs are being bullied; between a quarter and a third of Muslim women have no qualifications."

—*Guardian*, 10 October 2010

Labour's much talked about "reforms" in education amounted to a "free-market" bonanza for private companies and an insidious attack on the unions in education. Education services—from teaching to catering to building maintenance and cleaning—were outsourced to private companies. This meant many different employers operating in schools and colleges, many of whom are hostile to the existence of unions. Blair saw the teaching unions as a potential obstacle to his education "reform", and thus teachers were blamed for schools that were designated as "failing". Performance-related pay is increasingly used, supposedly to reward good results, but in fact it undermines the national pay scales and national terms and conditions ne-

The image shows the front page of the Socialist Worker newspaper. The main headline reads "WHY THERE'S NO NEED TO SLASH SPENDING". Below this, a large graphic displays "£310 billion" in a circle. Other headlines include "Poverty for 1 in 3 kids" and "SWP: reformism in action". The page is filled with various articles, photos, and statistics.

gotiated by the teachers' unions. Blair's legacy also includes more "faith schools", which boost the promotion of anti-scientific religious obscurantism and creationism, and city academies which are all but exempt from local authority control and are decidedly unfriendly to the teachers' unions.

Labour's introduction of university fees in 1998 was a massive attack on students from working-class backgrounds. (Two years later the Scottish parliament reversed this in Scottish universities.) However an unprecedented number of students now attend university, in Britain and other advanced capitalist countries. University students in Britain incur huge levels of debt—estimated to average £25,000 but may be as high as £50,000 in London. And despite a vast expansion in the number of working-class students attending higher education, the class divide in education remains as wide as it was decades ago when the eleven-plus examination determined that 80 per cent of the population was unfit for university.

To this day, social class is the single most important factor in determining educational achievement. The class divide persists because under capitalism

the education system is tailored to favour the wealthy few. Research shows that students who live in socially deprived areas are less likely to take A-levels in subjects such as maths and science, while "children from the higher social classes were more likely to opt for subjects such as biology, further maths, English literature and languages" (independent.co.uk, 19 August 2009). In affluent areas such as London's Kensington and Chelsea, upwards of 80 per cent of children will go to university, a rate which is five times higher than children from poorer regions. Although only seven per cent of all pupils are educated in the elite "public" (private) school system, this sector produces 75 per cent of judges, 70 per cent of finance directors and 55 per cent of solicitors (independent.co.uk, 22 July 2009).

The British ruling class sees little need to educate and train working-class people beyond what is needed for the City, which in the words of *Guardian* columnist Stewart Lansley "has sucked in the pick of Britain's brightest graduates with some of the best young PhD mathematicians and physicists behind the fiendishly complex mathematical formula used to run arcane fi-

nancial instruments" (guardian.co.uk, 27 August 2009).

As working people and students face the hammer blows of the capitalists, the trade union misleaders and their "socialist" lackeys look to Labour to merely mitigate the worst of the assault. This perspective has proven bankrupt over many years, including under old Labour governments in the 1960s and 70s. To begin to address the fundamental problems faced by the multiethnic working class of this country requires a party armed with a programme for socialist revolution to destroy the capitalist state root and branch and replace it with a workers state that will lay the basis for building a socialist society. For that we need a revolutionary workers party—a party like Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks—which will fight for a workers government. The Spartacist League/Britain seeks to build such a party. Join us! ■

The image shows the cover of a Spartacist pamphlet. The title is "Karl Marx Was Right Capitalist Anarchy and the Immiseration of the Working Class". Below the title is a photograph of a protest. The text on the cover includes "For Workers Revolution! For an International Planned Socialist Economy!". At the bottom, it says "Spartacist pamphlet, May 2009 £1.50 (56 pages)".

# Bangladesh...

(Continued from page 3)

are guaranteed a living wage, decent working conditions and the right to join a trade union" (waronwant.org).

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are not workers' organisations but are funded by capitalist governments, churches and business enterprises and appeals by the trade union leaders to NGOs on behalf of the garment workers only serve to give a humanitarian gloss to imperialist exploitation in the world's poorest countries (while salving liberal consciences by promoting the mythical power of the consumers in the West). But the brutal capitalist exploitation that is endemic in the garment industry—from Bangladesh to the Philippines to Indonesia—will not be ended by appeals to the "good conscience" of the imperialist butchers in Britain and the US, but through class struggle that targets the profits of the manufacturing capitalists in every country.

The capitalists will do what they need to do in order to increase their profit margins—by intensifying exploitation of workers at home and/or by exporting their capital, thus moving jobs to countries where labour costs are cheaper. In opposition to protectionism, the labour movement must fight for international working-class solidarity, linking the economic and other struggles of workers in the US and Britain with those of workers around the world, particularly in Third World countries

such as Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. What is ultimately necessary is the sweeping away of the global capitalist order through a series of socialist revolutions that establish an *international* planned economy.

## Women's liberation and the programme of permanent revolution

For us revolutionary Marxists, the young women garment workers in Bangladesh are not mere victims in need of charity from the West, but are the backbone of a multi-billion pound industry that is vital to the economy of Bangladesh. Driven from the villages by desperate poverty, Bangladeshi women workers face brutal forms of exploitation, but they also stand to gain a new consciousness and for the first time in their lives participate in organised struggle against oppression as a class. In this hideously poor country that remains largely rural, the proletariat is small relative to the rest of the population but has tremendous social power and is a crucial link in the chain of the world economy.

The venal ruling class of Bangladesh is tied to the imperialist powers by a thousand and one threads, not least to British imperialism, the former colonial power that exploited and dismembered the subcontinent. A WikiLeaks report in December revealed that British police forces, starting when Labour was in government, have been training the paramilitary Rapid Action Battalion that is notorious for torture and killings of Bangladeshi workers leaders, tribal

activists, leftists and other political opponents of the government.

The horrific conditions of life in Bangladesh are a product not only of imperialist exploitation but of the tyranny of religious obscurantism. Whether under the Awami League, the Bangladesh National Party or military rule, Islamic strictures lead to brutish treatment of women who are secluded from social life and treated as chattel property of fathers and husbands. A job in the garment factories, however dangerous and poorly paid it may be, is one of the few socially acceptable ways for a woman to earn a living and to achieve a degree of independence. But to address the most basic democratic questions facing women workers in Bangladesh—who are subject to exploitation by employers, murderous state repression by the police, the danger of rape, as well as malnutrition for themselves and their children—requires a revolutionary socialist programme.

In 1994 the courageous Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasrin was hounded out of the country by rabid Islamic fundamentalists incensed by her fight for the rights of women including to contraception and abortion. But the anti-woman hordes mobilised by the mullahs were not unopposed: in June 1994, 500 women garment workers in Dhaka armed with sticks mobilised in defence of Nasrin and against a strike call by fundamentalists, the aim of which was to pressure the government to arrest and execute Nasrin (see "Women and the Permanent Revolution in Bangladesh", *Women and Revolution* no 44, Winter 1994-Spring 1995).

The emancipation of women as part of the liberation of the downtrodden of the entire subcontinent requires a struggle for *permanent revolution*—the perspective fought for by Lenin and Trotsky in the great October 1917 Revolution in Russia: the workers seizing power at the head of the oppressed masses, agrarian revolution to liberate the peasantry, the socialisation and rational reorganisation of the economy in the interests of human needs not profit, and the fight to extend socialist revolution internationally, especially to the imperialist heartlands. ■

The image shows the cover of a pamphlet titled "Women and Revolution". The main headline is "Islamic Fundamentalists Vow to Kill Woman Writer - Defend Taslima Nasrin!". Below this is a photograph of a woman. The text on the cover includes "Women and the Permanent Revolution in Bangladesh". At the bottom, it says "Women and Revolution no 44 (Winter 1994-Spring 1995) £0.75 (40 pages)".

# Ireland...

(Continued from page 12)

partnership between capital and labour, whose class interests are irreconcilably counterposed!

At a mass protest in Dublin called by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) on 27 November 2010, O'Connor was booed by demonstrators chanting "Sellout!" The ICTU slogan for the demonstration was: "There is a better, fairer way"...to solve the capitalist crisis. One of the country's largest trade unions, the Technical Engineering and Electrical Union, is calling for a campaign of civil disobedience "if the government does not hold a general election". Tailing Labour and the trade union leaders, reformist left groups are also angling for a general election. The Socialist Party's Member of the European Parliament, Joe Higgins, announced that his party will team up with remains of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) to form the United Left Alliance (ULA). Higgins is joined by Richard Boyd-Barrett, a local councillor elected on the SWP-led "People Before Profit Alliance" ticket.



IMF officials pass a beggar on their way to bailout meeting at the Central Bank of Ireland, 18 November 2010.

Lest anyone think the ULA represents a challenge to the Irish capitalist order, Boyd-Barrett assured the *Irish Times* (26 November 2010) that the alliance will be based on "simple principles of solidarity and people power" and was not "talking about extremism". The SWP is so mired in the ideology of the "death of communism" that even the cravenly reformist Socialist Party complains that the SWP argued that "socialist policies would put people off from voting for candidates or from getting involved in a left alliance" (socialistparty.net, 11 November 2010).

As for the Socialist Party's version of "socialism", it amounts to nothing but old-fashioned Labour reformism, encapsulated today in the call for nationalisation of the banks (coupled with "end the bailouts"). Leaving aside that the banks are either already nationalised, partly nationalised or on the verge of nationalisation, this is hardly a "socialist" measure but simply a scheme for trying to ameliorate the capitalist crisis. Far from offering a challenge to Ireland's clericalist capitalist state, the ULA will amount to an auxiliary to the Labour Party.

A general election would almost certainly result in a coalition government of the bourgeois Fine Gael and the Labour Party. Indeed, the Labour Party is currently seen as the party which will win the votes of workers who traditionally have voted Fianna Fail. Currently polling at 27 per cent, compared to its usual ten to twelve per cent, Labour's potential role in the next government would be particularly useful to the capitalist class. Promising "to give the people the leadership required to turn this country around, rebuild the economy

and restore national morale", Labour is best placed of all the parties to try to convince the working class to knuckle down and accept austerity.

In Ireland, "left" governments take the form of "popular fronts"—ie, coalitions between the reformist Labour Party and outright representatives of the bourgeoisie. Revolutionaries are unconditionally opposed to these alliances, which chain the workers to the capitalist class enemy. Likewise, we are opposed to voting for bourgeois parties, including the Sinn Féin nationalists and the Green Party.

Sinn Féin is itself seeking to capitalise on the decline of Fianna Fail. Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams, a longtime leader of the party in Northern Ireland, plans to contest a Dail seat south of the border. Sinn Féin's Martin McGuinness occupies the deputy First Minister's post in the Northern Ireland Assembly, where his party has shown its loyalty to the sectarian Orange state, including to its police force which is notorious for brutal subjugation of the oppressed Catholics. The British Army has retained a garrison of several thousand troops who can be called upon instantly to provide "assistance" to the Police

Service of Northern Ireland/Royal Ulster Constabulary. We demand: All British troops and bases out of Northern Ireland now!

Sinn Féin's support for state repression against dissident Irish Republicans in the North ought to go down well in the Dublin government, which has been committed to repression of Republicans since the foundation of the Irish Republic in 1921-22. Sinn Féin shares Fianna Fail's commitment to Catholic nationalism, which is viciously anti-woman, anti-Traveller and anti-working-class. Sinn Féin has produced its own plan for economic recovery, promising to cut spending. This is further proof of Sinn Féin's commitment to serve the bankers and bosses and their capitalist system, which is ruining the lives of the working class.

### For proletarian internationalism!

According to Irish economist Morgan Kelly, as many as 100,000 mortgage holders will default on their payments in the coming period. "People are going to extraordinary lengths—not paying other bills and borrowing heavily from their parents—to meet mortgage repayments, both out of fear of losing their homes and to avoid the stigma of admitting that they are broke", said Kelly (*Irish Times*, 8 November 2010). He noted that the presence of a permanent team of European Central Bank "observers" in Dublin's Department of Finance (known collectively as "The Germans") has led to a nationalistic hue and cry over Ireland's "sovereignty" being surrendered to the EU.

The Irish bailout also brought forth an outpouring of chauvinism in England, not least from right-wing Tory

backbenchers. However, the situation was not without its ironies. Noting that "heavily indebted Britain is borrowing another £7bn or so to lend to catastrophically indebted Ireland", journalist Philip Stephens remarked in the *Financial Times* (22 November 2010) that Tory opponents of the EU didn't know whether "to savour the eurozone crisis or to berate David Cameron for contributing to the Irish bail-out".

British prime minister Cameron tried to assuage his backbenchers by claiming that the £7 billion his government made available to Ireland is merely help for "a friend in need". Not quite: Britain's capitalist rulers are offering a *loan* to Ireland which, if accepted, will have to be repaid. This is what the British government is today demanding of Iceland, which received such a loan made when its banking system tanked in 2008 and the economy was thrown into recession. At the time, Britain's Labour government offered a loan not out of generosity but because Icelandic banks held huge funds belonging to British investors, including local councils. Cameron's motivation in regard to Ireland is not unconnected to the fact that the British economy is in the doldrums and Britain's trade with Ireland exceeds that with China, India, Brazil and Russia put together.

The working class must understand that the capitalist system itself can and must be overthrown by workers revolution. A revolutionary leadership would fight for a series of transitional demands linking the struggle against the current attacks on the working class and the poor to an understanding of the need for proletarian socialist revolution. Faced with mass unemployment, a class-struggle leadership in the unions would demand sharing the work among all workers, with no loss in pay. Against job insecurity, it is necessary to eliminate the differences between workers on temporary and permanent contracts, requiring a fight to organise the unorganised. In the interests of women, who are especially oppressed in the Irish clericalist capitalist state, we call for free abortion on demand and for free, quality, 24-hour childcare. Against the divide-and-rule racism of the bourgeois state, we demand *full citizenship rights for all immigrants!*

We are implacably opposed to the EU, an imperialist trade bloc within which the major European imperialists co-operate against the working class and immigrants, as well as against their imperialist rivals in the US and Japan. Within the EU, Germany, France and Britain dominate the poorer member states. The "second tier" includes East European countries that were devastated by capitalist counterrevolution, which also destroyed the Soviet Union in 1991-92. Today Eastern Europe is used

as a source of cheap labour, raw materials and markets by the big powers within the EU.

The single European currency has enabled German imperialism to increase its competitive edge over other countries in the euro zone. But the single currency, and the EU itself, are inherently unstable entities, subject to the conflicting national interests of Europe's capitalist governments. Our proletarian-internationalist opposition to the EU is counterposed to reactionary "Euro-scepticism" and national chauvinism, which is poison to class struggle, serving to pit workers against each other along national lines and reinforcing racism.

Ireland's extraordinary growth rate during the Celtic Tiger years was based on extremely low corporate taxes, a construction boom and a housing market bubble. US corporations have taken advantage not only of Ireland's 12.5 per cent corporate tax rate but also of a scam known as the "Double Irish". This is not a large Jameson but a method of escaping even the low tax rate by shuttling profits into and out of Irish subsidiaries, as allowed by Irish law. This particular tax dodge is favoured by Facebook and Google.

Ireland's working people have now fallen victim to the boom-bust cycle that is inevitable under capitalism. What must be understood is that the only way out of this cycle is through the workers in Ireland—North and South—joining with the multiethnic proletariat in Britain, which has a large Irish component, in the overthrow of the capitalist order throughout these islands. The working class in Britain, which is currently facing an enormous attack at the hands of the Tory-Liberal Democrat government's budget cuts, must wage class struggle to defend its own interests and forge a new, revolutionary leadership in opposition to Labour reformism.

As proletarian internationalists, we vehemently oppose nationalist protectionism and anti-Irish chauvinism, as virulently expressed in the demand "British jobs for British workers". Our programme for a workers republic in Ireland, part of a voluntary federation of workers republics in the British Isles, is based on the understanding that the fate of the working classes on these islands is indissolubly linked. Socialist revolution will sweep away the reactionary "United Kingdom", the Orange statelet in Northern Ireland which is inherently oppressive of the Catholic minority, and the Catholic clericalist state in the South. Our task is to build Leninist-Trotskyist parties dedicated to the fight for socialist revolution on both sides of the Irish border and both sides of the Irish Sea—an essential part of the struggle for a Socialist United States of Europe. ■

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## Dublin government launches savage attack on working people

# Ireland ravaged by European economic crisis

The following article is reprinted, and slightly updated, from Workers Vanguard no 970, 3 December 2010.

Faced with a dramatic financial crisis that threatens to engulf other European countries, Ireland has been plunged into an economic nightmare. With Irish banks exposed to massive “toxic” debts, the Dublin government was compelled to negotiate a bailout that is somewhere in the region of 85 billion euros [£70 billion] from the European Union (EU) emergency bailout fund. Even before the terms of the bank rescue plan had been agreed by the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Irish government announced a brutal austerity plan to cut €15 billion out of the (already slashed) budget.

The National Recovery Plan drawn up by Fianna Fail party Taoiseach (prime minister) Brian Cowen amounts to the harshest attack on the living standards of the working people in the Irish state’s history. Backed by the Green Party, Cowen’s coalition partner, the plan includes the loss of an estimated 25,000 public sector jobs, vastly increased taxes and student fees as well as further cuts in welfare spending, public sector pay and a vindictive €1-per-hour reduction in the minimum wage. The budget was approved by the Dail (parliament) in early December 2010.

Nonetheless, Dublin’s ruthless budget did little to calm financial markets, and the massive sell-off of government debt continues, driving the government’s borrowing costs sky-high. Ireland’s crisis comes barely six months after the whopping €110 billion EU bailout of Greece; today, heavily indebted Portugal and Spain are already caught up in the panic hitting European financial markets, with countries such as Belgium also at high risk. Ireland’s bailout funds will serve to bolster its biggest creditors, which are pri-



Dublin, 27 November 2010: Some 100,000 people demonstrate against government austerity measures in front of statue of James Larkin, socialist trade union leader during 1913 Dublin lockout.

marily British banks. These include the Royal Bank of Scotland and Lloyds, both of which have already been bailed out by the British taxpayer and together stand exposed to some £80 billion of Ireland’s debts.

German and French banks are also exposed in Ireland. But the real concern is Spain, whose economy (not to mention deficit) is considerably larger than that of Greece, Ireland and Portugal combined and may be simply too big for the EU to rescue. If the crisis extends beyond Ireland, it will call into question the continued existence of the single European currency.

Salvaging Europe’s banks is the primary aim of the imperialist bailouts of Ireland, Greece and any other country under consideration. In Ireland, Britain

and Europe as a whole, each government is determined to make the working masses pay for a crisis that is caused by the capitalist system itself. The austerity measures that governments are trying to ram through, including slashing the wages of public sector workers, gutting pensions and ramping up taxes, hit hardest at the poorest in society. In Ireland and elsewhere this includes immigrant workers.

### For class struggle against capitalist austerity!

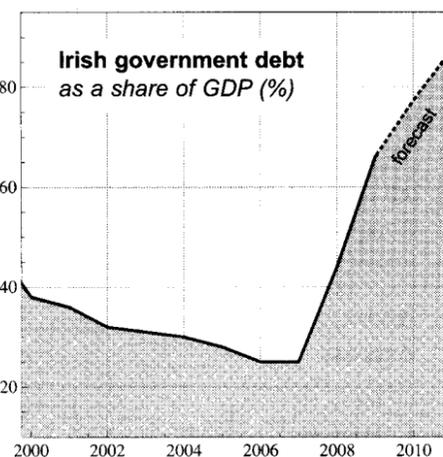
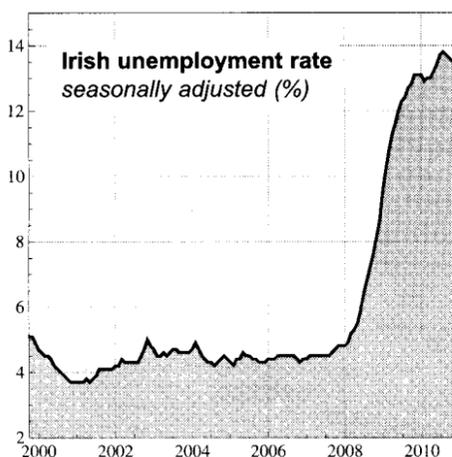
The only way to fight these attacks is through hard class struggle. The Greek working class has already waged several one-day strikes this year against austerity. The French trade unions repeatedly brought the country to a halt—including blockading the oil refineries—during September and October 2010 in opposition to legislation to raise the pension age. And the Spanish and Portuguese trade unions have staged one-day general strikes against austerity measures. However, the effectiveness of the workers’ struggles has been hampered by the political bankruptcy of the workers’ reformist leadership, who accept the inevitability of capitalist austerity while seeking to soften the blows.

What’s needed is the forging of a revolutionary leadership of the working class based on the understanding that there are no common interests between

the proletariat and the capitalist blood-suckers: workers must fight for what we need, not for what the bosses say they can afford. To the capitalist rulers who brought Ireland to the brink of bankruptcy, workers must say: To hell with the savage National Recovery Plan! But to unleash the social power of the organized working class and to forge a class-struggle leadership in the trade unions requires a political struggle against the reformist trade union bureaucracy and Labour Party leaders who are committed to defending the interests of Irish capitalism.

The servility of the trade union bureaucrats was shown earlier this year when the leaders of Ireland’s main unions signed a deal with the government known as the Croke Park agreement, which effectively renounced class struggle against a previously announced round of budget cuts until 2014. One of the signatories, Jack O’Connor, leader of the Services Industrial Professional Technical Union, said there was no alternative. “Let’s assume we could win an industrial battle for a better deal—we’d still have to deal with the deficit”, he told the *Financial Times* (23 May 2010). The Croke Park agreement was the culmination of years of treacherous “partnership” agreements that kept workers’ wages low during the boom years in order to support the “Celtic Tiger” economy. There is no

*continued on page 11*



Workers Hammer graphs, sources: CSO, NTMA, Eurostat