



For a  
workers'  
government

# Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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WORKERS  
NEED A  
FIGHTBACK

Rank and file must control pay fight!

## What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

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

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



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

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

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

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

### We stand for:

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

### Contact us:

● 020 7394 8923 ● [solidarity@workersliberty.org](mailto:solidarity@workersliberty.org)

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

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# Free education in Germany

By Beth Redmond

**As the student movement in the UK gears up for what will hopefully be another mass revival in activism and political engagement amongst young people, Germany is already celebrating free education.**

But the success hasn't come easy, and it is worth reminding those involved in the struggle here that tuition fees will still be in place the day after the national demonstration for free edu-

cation on 19 November. They may well still be here in ten years. Germany won the fight after 15.

In 1999, the Alliance Against Tuition Fees was founded, made up of 200 or- organisations including stu- dent unions, trade unions and political parties. Stu- dents organised fee strikes and occupations in direct re- sponse to the introduction of fees, relentless in chang- ing the minds of as many people as possible.

In 2013, public opinion had changed so much about

how higher education should be structured and funded that students in Bavaria delivered a success- ful petition for a state refer- endum on HE policy, which was signed by 15% of the population there. Days later it was announced that tu- tion fees would be scrapped. Now the last state to charge fees – Lower Sax- ony – has come into line.

Both Germany and the UK are pretty rich and both have conservative govern- ments – and perhaps one of the key things to look at,

which is often overlooked, is how effective grassroots struggles are.

**When persistent, deter- mined and organised, the masses can force the gov- ernment to make 180-de- gree turns on massive issues such as free edu- cation, which is funda- mentally a human right, but is also something which a lot of people going to university now would never even imagine you could change.**

## Bosses get 21% rise

Rich and poor  
By Matt Cooper



**Despite much sound and fury over government regulations on the reporting and control of executive pay announced in 2012, bosses' pay continues to run ahead of workers'.**

The median pay of di- rectors of big companies (FTSE 100) is now £2,433,000; of chief execu- tives, £3,344,000. Last year, so a report from Income Data Services shows, they got a 21% rise: median salary increased by 2.5%, bonuses by 12%, and in- centive payments in the form of shares by 44% ([bit.ly/ids-pay](http://bit.ly/ids-pay)).

Bosses in Media, Mar- keting and Leisure have their snouts particularly deep in the trough, with average earnings of nearly £7 million a year. Bosses in the retail sector have to cope with just £1.3 million a year.

Chief executives' pay has increased nearly four- fold since 2000, while full- time workers' pay has increased by less than 50 per cent (less than infla-

tion).

In 2000 CEOs earned 47 times the pay of the aver- age full-time worker. Now they earn 120 times as much.

The latest TUC quarterly report finds that in the last year, the pay of the aver- age employee has risen by 1.4 per cent, just keeping pace with inflation, while profits have increased by over 10 per cent ([bit.ly/tuc-pay](http://bit.ly/tuc-pay)). Thus, wages remain frozen.

High pay brings power as well as luxury. At the Tories' fund-raising winter party in February 2014, bosses paid £1000 for din- ner so that they could sit with government minis- ters able to affect their businesses.

**The total wealth of the 570 guests added up to £22 billion. Questioned by journalists now, the bosses say piously that at dinner they had only "wide-ranging political discussion", not about specifics of government policy.**

# Yes means yes

By Charlotte Zalens

**California has become the first state in the US to have "yes means yes" consent legislation.**

The legislation, which was passed at the end of September, applies to all post-secondary schools and is a result of a drive across America to tackle sexual as- sault on campuses. Califor- nia State University and the University of California both already have similar legislation, as have most Ivy League universities in the US.

The legislation defines consent as "an affirmative, conscious and voluntary agreement to engage in sexual activity", rather than just a lack of resistance. Under the bill, someone who is drunk, drugged, un- conscious or asleep cannot grant consent.

Another element of the bill means that consent must be "ongoing" and that it can be "revoked any time". Someone could withdraw their consent, meaning con- tinuing to push sexual activ- ity on the basis of "you said yes earlier" is considered as- sault.

Campaign groups say the bill will challenge the notion that victims of sexual as- sault need to have resisted assault in order to have valid complaints.

The bill states that "The existence of a dating rela- tionship between the per- sons involved, or the fact of past sexual relations be- tween them, should never by itself be assumed to be an indicator of consent."

The bill also requires uni- versities to review their methods of dealing with complaints of sexual assault, and invest in training for staff. In addition the bill re- quires access to counselling, health services and other re- sources for women who have suffered sexual assault.

The legislation does not change the criminal implica- tions for a person charged with assault, or the proce- dure of reporting assault to the police. It only changes how assault claims are han- dled by university intuitions internally.

**The California bill echos a growing awareness of sexual assault on univer- sity campuses both in the US and in Britain that is a step forward.**

# Democracy in Donetsk?

By Dale Street

**The Central Election Commission (CEC) of the "Donetsk People's Republic" (DPR) has published a list of the organisations which will not be allowed to participate in the DPR elections on 2 November.**

Pavel Gubarev's "Novorossiia" is among those excluded, although Gubarev is the former "People's Governor of Donetsk Region" and a regular of Moscow's television studios.

According to Roman Lyagin, head of the CEC:

"Novorossiia has not held a conference. They say that they have, but they have failed to inform us about it. Now it is too late to do anything about it, as the final date for submitting documentation was 10 October."

At the moment Gubarev has more important concerns. He is currently fighting for his life after an

attempted assassination on 12 October.

Oplot (closely linked to the Donbas oligarch Rinat Akhmetov) and United Russia (which appears to be an unauthorized attempt to create a Ukrainian counterpart to the ruling party in Russia) are excluded. So are all organisations which oppose separatism and support a united Ukraine.

The "Donetsk Republic" (the creation of current DPR Prime Minister Alexander Zakharchenko and current DPR Deputy Speaker Andrei Purgin), "Popular-Liberation Movement of the Donbas", and "Free Donbas" will be allowed to stand candidates.

According to Yekaterina Gubareva, spouse of the injured Pavel Gubarev and now acting head of the "Novorossiia" party, they will take part in the elections as part of the "Free Donbas" bloc.

The application to stand

candidates by the recently formed Communist Party of the Donetsk People's Republic is still under consideration. Led by Boris Litvinov, President of the Supreme Soviet of the DPR, the new party is calling for a vote for Zakharchenko for the post of head of the DPR.

According to CEC chief Lyagin:

"Alexander Zakharchenko is the only [candidate for head of the DPR] who has provided the (required number of) signatures. Yuri Sivokononko (a former Berkut officer) is collecting signatures. And another four have announced their participation."

But the deadline for nominations has already passed. Oleg Tsarov, a former member of the Ukrainian Parliament for the Party of the Regions who subsequently sided with the separatists and became Speaker of the Parliament of Novorossiia, has fallen foul of the re-

quirement that all candidates have to have resided on the territory of the DPR for at least five years.

The CEC had asked the "Supreme Soviet" of the DPR to postpone the elections until 9 November, on the grounds that damage to intended polling stations from the military conflict meant that more time was needed to prepare for the elections. But the "Supreme Soviet" turned down its request.

DPR representatives say in advance that they expect a low turnout on 2 November. Tens of thousands of voters have fled the DPR. At most 50% of the remaining electorate are expected to vote.

**But turnout will be increased by the DPR authorities' decision to extend the franchise to all foreigners who have joined the separatist armed forces.**

## Philadelphia fights back

By Fran Littler

**Philadelphia teachers and students launched a fight back in the week 6-12 October against unprecedented austerity measures affecting teachers' pay.**

The School Reform Commission (SRC), who were put in place to oversee schools in the area which have suffered from low exam scores due to factors including underfunding in the system, has chosen to implement cuts of \$54 million to teachers' contracts to offset the underfunding,

leaving them stripped of rights to free health insurance and a subsequent cut to their monthly salary of up to \$150.

The Philadelphian Federation of Teachers (PFT), led by Jerry Jordan with a membership of 135,000, is not taking this manoeuvre lightly and is filing a law suit, claiming the decision to be illegal. Jordan has also attacked the move as political, suggesting it is a union busting tactic as well as being a propaganda tool for the Republican Governor's election next month.

Not only this, but school teachers have launched a

campaign called "Turn Up for Truth" and were rallying against the measures outside schools this week, leafleting and making the public aware of the reality that teachers are already forking out huge sums of money from their own pockets to buy resources for their students. They can't afford a further squeeze and shouldn't have to. On Wednesday, school students went on strike to show solidarity with their teachers and protested outside the Philadelphian High School for Creative and Performing Arts.

The austerity measures

arise from the Philadelphia district's "fiscal difficulties"; over the past year they have made a billion dollars worth of savings by making cuts to funding and jobs in the area.

**The district say that the \$54 million cut will allow them to pour \$30 million back into school resourcing including the re-hiring of school counsellors who had previously faced cuts and redundancy. It will also use the remaining \$24 million to ensure there is no deficit in the district next year.**

## Police kill another black youth in St Louis

By Gemma Short

**An off-duty police officer shot dead Vonderrit Myers Jr, an 18 year old black man, in St. Louis, USA, on Wednesday 8 October.**

The unnamed police officer was wearing his police uniform while working for GCI, a private security firm. The practice of police officers taking second jobs as security guards is widespread. GCI alone employed 168 officers in 2012. The wearing of police uniform is permitted by the state police department. It appears that

these security firms are often employed to patrol residential streets.

St Louis metropolitan police chief, Sam Dotson, said three men including Vonderrit ran away when they encountered the officer. Before any confrontation or crime, the officer chased the three men. It is claimed he suspected one of them of carrying a gun because of the way he was running.

Dotson went on to claim that one of the men turned around and fired three shots. The officer then responded with returning 17

rounds of fire, killing Vonderrit. Dotson was unable to state why the officer fired so many shots.

Relatives of Vonderrit have claimed that he was holding a sandwich that was mistaken for a gun.

Information in this case is much harder to come by than in the recent case of Michael Brown, shot dead by police officer Darren Wilson in St Louis suburb Ferguson. The St Louis police department appears to have learnt some lessons from Ferguson and has not responded to protests with vi-

olence and is keeping information out of the public domain. Whether or not Vonderrit was carrying a gun it is clear that racial profiling plays a role in such cases. The choice to chase the men, on suspicion of carrying a gun, was taken by the officer despite being off duty.

**Thousands have already protested in St Louis in connection with the killing. They have joined up with protests which demand that Darren Wilson is charged with murder over Michael Brown.**

## Italian students lead the way



By Hugh Edwards

**Friday 10 October saw the first mass national protest against the latest reactionary reform of the Italian educational system introduced by the government of Matteo Renzi.**

80,000 university and school students, together with teachers, assistants, cleaners, were joined by thousands of others.

The largest single turnout was in Rome, where 20,000 marched behind a banner reading "They Fear Us United!" and called for a free, secular public system; an end to public subsidy to the schools of the Catholic Church; and massive increase in investment for a comprehensive democratic reconstruction of the system.

Over the last two decades, hundreds if not thousands of decree and circulars from "manager / principals" have drowned teachers in a Babel of "creative recommendations", and sought to impose "business values" at the expense of the quality of education and the freedom to teach.

Renzi's education minister, Stefanina Gianini, a member of the neo-liberal "Civic Choice" party of the former "technocrat" prime minister, Mario Monti, offers more of the same, plus an increase in working hours, the abolition of automatic salary scale increases, and a system of reward "for excellence". "Teachers only work 18 hours a week", opined Renzi as he announced the plan.

The last 10 years or so have seen periodic waves

of student protest which have then gradually dissipated. Still too many live on the hope that somehow, somewhere, a gigantic explosion of mass spontaneous outburst must come, and with it the base for a left-wing political force.

In the meantime Italian workers are left with a politically timid and opportunist radicalism, unwilling and unable to forge and put onto the field of battle a truly democratic movement armed with a bold revolutionary declarative politics.

The Senate has recently voted through Renzi's Job Act — a measure for even more massive precarisation of the labour force — and the almost certain abolition of Article 18, won by the great working-class struggles of the early 70s to copper-fasten defence against arbitrary layoffs.

Renzi is still at 62% in the opinion polls. The confederal union centres started by courting the little would-be Bonaparte as his prospective interlocutors with the masses. When rebuffed they responded with farcical threats of a general strike.

Now CISL and UIL have called off their putative protests. CGIL and the metalworkers of FIOM remain on course for a day of action by FIOM and a march in Rome on 25 October by CGIL.

**FIOM leader Maurizio Landini has somersaulted from assuring his members a few weeks ago that Renzi was a man to trust, to now threatening to call for the occupation of the factories.**

# Tackling Rugby Club sexism

The men's rugby club at the London School of Economics has been disbanded, after circulating a sexist, classist and homophobic leaflet at this year's freshers' fair.

The text of the leaflet mocks students at "poly" universities, describes women as "mingers" and "trollops", and says that the club will not tolerate "outright homosexual debauchery". This is not the first time the team has run into trouble with the students' union over offensive behaviour.

As statement from the LSE student union shows the club have previously been known to dress as Guantanamo Bay detainees and imitate praying as Muslim students were leaving Friday prayers, and to initiate Nazi-themed drinking games. One session led to a Jewish student's nose being broken.

The SU has said that the money that would have been spent on the club for the following year will instead be spent on rehabilitation, and more specifically classes for the club on diversity and liberation. The club will be removed from playing leagues for the entirety of the academic year.

The production of the leaflet comes at a time when misogyny on campuses across the UK is rife and getting a lot of attention from the National Union of Students and the national media. A study into sexual assault and harassment on campus by the NUS revealed that a shockingly high number of women students are raped and assaulted.

A recent article in the *Guardian* by Laura Bates, the author of *Everyday Sexism*, examines the different types of misogynistic "banter" that freshers face, from sexism in academia to assault on a night out. Another rugby club at Durham University has been called out for playing a drinking game called "it's only rape if...".

It is clear that the attitudes expressed in the LSE leaflet, and recorded in the NUS study and in Laura Bates' article, perpetuate a culture which leads to actual damage, physical and emotional, and so I applaud the LSE Student Union for condemning the club in such a loud way.

It is, however, important that we recognise that the culture of banning societies can be dangerous. It can set a precedent for people to think that banning someone who says something you disagree with is the correct course of action.

**When the behaviour of such a club is so threatening and its effects so obvious, disbanding the society, providing "rehabilitation" for the members, and sparking a national debate with which to change the attitudes of such people seems like the reasonable thing to do.**

Beth Redmond, Tottenham

## A reply to Richard Brenner on the Yalta conferences, Ukraine and Russia

Of the various leftists who provided decoration for the conference organised by Russian nationalists in Yalta, Crimea, in early July, Richard Brenner of Britain's Workers Power group was one of the most vocal.

After Workers' Liberty revealed the even more openly right-nationalist and pro-Russian imperialist character of the second Yalta conference, in August, Brenner wrote a 5,000 piece attempting to defend his and Workers Power's participation in the first event.

Dale Street has replied in detail, carefully documenting the character of both conferences, dissecting the Russian nationalist movement in eastern and southern Ukraine, and exposing the collaboration of sections of the international left for it is. [www.workersliberty.org/node/23934](http://www.workersliberty.org/node/23934)

# Yes does not mean left

## Letters



Colin Foster is right to argue that the labour movement and working class will be weakened and divided by a mindset which identifies "yes" (to Scottish independence) with "left", and "no" to independence with "right". (*Solidarity*, 339).

The problem is that that mindset is now hardwired into the pro-independence left.

There are a number of overlapping reasons for this, largely rooted in the political culture of much of the far left in Scotland (and, by extension, of much of the far left outside of Scotland).

Advocating a "yes" vote was, at least in part, the product of a political practice which treats socialist politics simply as an inversion of bourgeois politics. If Cameron, Clegg, Miliband and Farage are all against independence, then, "obviously", the left must be in favour of it.

A "yes" vote was also an expression of the engrained "negativity" of much of the far left.

"Yes" did not flow out of even a half-thought-through idea of what an independent Scotland would look like, or why independence would allegedly benefit the working class.

It was in large part simply a product of being against the British state. Being against the British state took precedence over any requirement to pose a positive alternative.

The ability of sections of the far left to attribute an "objectively progressive" role to political formations unrepresentative of, or even hostile to, the interests of the working class (e.g. in earlier times, the idea that counter-revolutionary Stalinism could create "workers' states") was another factor.

That the SNP stood for the creation of an independent capitalist state in Scotland was never in dispute. Nor could there be any dispute that its "big" economic idea was a race to the bottom, through cuts in corporation tax.

Yet the fact the SNP stood for the break-up of the British state supposedly made it in some way an "objectively progressive" force which, unbeknown to itself, was advancing the cause of the working class.

Support for a "yes" vote flowed out of confusing opposition to capitalism in its development with opposition to the development of capitalism.

## BEYOND

**The socialist alternative to capitalism is not to "turn back the clock" to a less advanced form of capitalism, by recreating the Europe of 1945 (prior to the creation of what is now the EU) or by breaking up national and multi-national states into their pre-capitalist component parts.**

Our alternative to capitalism is to "go beyond" capitalism by building upon the advances of the capitalist epoch ("wonders far surpassing" human achievements of earlier epochs, as Marx put it). Such "wonders" include the creation of an integrated world economy and a global working class.

The mindset — although it is now more an article of faith than a mere mindset — that "yes" equals "left" also reflects, embodies, and reinforces a political culture which frowns upon open political debate.

If support for Scottish independence is so obviously the correct position for the left to have adopted, then this conveniently shuts down the space for political debate and renders argument about that position irrelevant and pointless. An article of faith, by definition, stands above rational challenge.

Finally, for the pro-independence left, advocating a "yes" vote seemed to work — in terms of paper sales, attendance at public meetings, and new contacts and members.

If your concept of a socialist organisation amounts to little more than one that sells papers and recruits, then the politics contained in the newspaper and the political basis of recruitment are matters of lesser importance.

What counts is not political clarity but the material "returns" on the political position adopted to meet and maximise potential consumer demand.

Thus, in that sense, the mindset that "yes" to Scottish independence equals "left" is a perfectly logical one: support for a "yes" vote necessarily flowed out of the inadequacies of the

"political orthodoxy" of much of the actually existing far left.

Colin Foster is also right to say that after the referendum "it's time to move on to class politics" in Scotland. But there is little or no evidence to suggest that this is likely to happen soon.

One element of the pro-independence left does not really "do" class politics anyway. They might recognise the working class as a sociological category which, like many other sociological categories, gets a pretty rough deal from the "Westminster establishment" and the "Westminster elite".

But this has nothing in common with the Marxist understanding of the working class as the decisive force for historical change.

Other elements of the pro-independence left do "do" class politics. But they think that support for independence is class politics. So, by carrying on the campaign for independence, they think that they are engaged in class politics.

The SSP, the Socialist Party, and the Sheridan-cult which trades under the name of "Solidarity — Scotland's Socialist Movement" all think that the demand for Scottish independence is the modern political equivalent of the medieval philosopher's stone which turned base metal into gold.

Consequently, they are determined to press on with the campaign for Scottish independence.

(In fact, the Socialist Party has already discovered a philosopher's stone of its own — one that transforms a misogynist demagogue who sacrificed the SSP on the altar of his own ego into a working-class hero who is to be the fulcrum of a new mass workers' party.)

The sole exception to ongoing campaigning for independence is the SWP, the mostly shamelessly opportunist of the entire spectrum of the pro-independence left.

The SWP has already made a new "turn". At last Sunday's pro-independence rally in Glasgow their leaflet made no mention of continued campaigning for independence (or even support for independence). Instead, what is now needed is "a united left to challenge austerity."

The bulk of the pro-independence left might vacillate between outright collapse into Scottish nationalism and attempts to graft a bowdlerised form of "class politics" onto an essentially nationalist project. But it is now committed long-term to that project.

This is not to say that the politics of the pro-independence left should be passively accepted and not be subject to challenge.

But the starting point for challenging those politics is to recognise that rather than being some temporary aberration, they are the expression of something more fundamental about the political state of the far left.

In late nineteenth century Russia, Plekhanov (the "founding father" of Russian Marxism) explained that the difference between the Populists and the Marxists was that the Marxists wanted a revolution for the working class, whereas the Populists wanted the working class for a revolution.

That is to say: for the Marxists, the working class could realise its interests only through a revolution; the Populists, on the other hand, wanted the working class to be footsoldiers for someone else's revolution.

**In its political regression the pro-independence left is actually worse than the nineteenth-century Russian Populists. Whereas the latter at least wanted some kind of a popular revolution, the pro-independence left wants to make the working class footsoldiers for the Poujadist nationalism of the SNP.**

Dale Street, Glasgow



In what universe is promoting a demagogic egoist like Tommy Sheridan going to help build new mass workers' party?

# Rank and file must control pay fight!

The pay of FTSE 100 directors has risen by 21% in the past year. Meanwhile average wage increases have been just 2% (1.6% in the public sector), below price inflation of 2% (CPI) or 2.7% (RPI).

Over half of the wage rises in the last year were below RPI. In a sample survey of wage settlements for six million workers between August 2013 and August 2014, 13% faced a wage freeze and only 8.3% had a wage rise above 3%.

We are in the longest period of wage depression since records began, as a TUC report found on 12 October.

In four previous crises — 1865-67, 1874-78, 1921-23, 1976-77 — the real-wage drops lasted only two years, or four in 1874-78.

Real wages have now dropped for seven consecutive years, by an average of 8.2%. That figure rises to 15% in the public sector.

However Britain's richest people are wealthier than ever before, with a combined fortune of almost £520bn for just the top 1000. The 100 wealthiest people in the UK have as much money as the poorest 18 million — 30% of all people.

While the wealthy are living in luxury, the worst hit have suffered a decline in living standards of over 20%. The TUC estimates that the average full-time worker in the UK is earning £2,084 less a year, in real terms, than they were in 2010. That equates to 36 shopping trolleys of food, 28 tanks of fuel for the average car, or a year's energy bill for the average household.

## KEEP UP WITH THE FIGHT

A new unofficial blog for Local Government and School workers (whether in GMB, Unison and Unite) has been set up to organise the defence of members' terms and conditions, and to coordinate a rank and file network against cuts, for decent pay and conditions and against privatisation and the break up of local government.

[lgworkers.blogspot.co.uk](http://lgworkers.blogspot.co.uk)



On Saturday 18 October thousands will join the TUC's "Britain needs a pay rise" march in London, after a week in which NHS workers in Unison, Unite, and the Royal College of Midwives and civil servants in the PCS union have struck over pay.

Those workers were to be joined on 14 October by local government workers in Unison, Unite and GMB and by UCU members in Further Education colleges, also in disputes over pay.

Further Education bosses got a High Court injunction to stop the UCU strike.

Local government unions called off their strike on the grounds of an offer of a 2.2% increase from January 2015 to April 2016. That offer means that many workers will not get even a 1% rise for the year April 2014 to April 2015, but Unison, Unite and GMB all called off the strike and said they would "consult" members on the offer.

The offer comes nowhere near Unison's objective of at least £1 per hour increase or the Living Wage for all workers. A worker on pay scale point 5, a cleaner or refuse worker, would be able to buy 13 tins of beans over the whole two years with their gains from this proposal. One on spine point 10, a teaching assistant or administrator, eight tins of beans.

The offer also ties workers into a two year deal, excluding action in April 2015 when the election may make political parties vulnerable on the pay issue.

Activists in local government unions are organising for a rejection of the offer and a return to industrial action.

Further strikes may happen in the NHS, though dates have not yet been publicly named.

Workers need a fightback to end low pay. A pay rise that addresses the 8.2% lost by the average worker from 2008-2013 will not be won by sporadic national one-day show strikes.

Unions should use creative tactics to maximise impact, maximise member involvement, and minimise impact on their members' pay.

Selective and rolling action, financed from strike funds, can increase impact. Strike dates should be decided as part of a calendar of action, not leaving members wondering "what next?"

A strategy to win cannot be got without vastly increased democracy in unions.

Political action, organised pressure by the unions within the Labour Party, and ideological battle against neo-liberalism are also necessary, but without industrial action will lack weight.

**The top union officials have shown themselves inept and inadequate. Now the rank and file must organise to take control over the pay fight!**

**Solidarity 341 will be published on Friday 24 October.**

**342 will be published on Wednesday 5 November.**

## MPs vote to recognise Palestinian state

**On 13 October, MPs voted to recognise the state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel.**

The motion, proposed by Labour MP Grahame Morris, was passed by 274 votes to 12. Labour had a one-line whip to back the motion; most Tories abstained ([bit.ly/palrecog](http://bit.ly/palrecog)).

In 2012, when the UN General Assembly voted on whether to recognise the Palestinian state, the UK was one of the 41 nations which abstained. Nine voted against, 138 in favour — but the nine included Israel and the US, the two states with an ability to bring justice to the Palestinians.

As Morris put it:

"I believe the government's abstention on the vote for Palestinian statehood in the UN general assembly in 2012 was an utterly shameful act that placed Britain on the wrong side of history..."

"... For too long the international community has cruelly refused the Palestinian people this right and by doing so has hindered the realisation of peace and security in the region.

"The two-state solution has been Britain's stated policy aim for decades, but in politics talk often comes cheap. So far the government's support for a two-state solution has been in rhetoric only."

Earlier this month Sweden's government became the first in Europe to formally recognise Palestine.

A vote in the UK Parliament, like the previous vote at the UN, will not change much immediately, but has important symbolic weight. It could add to international pressure on Israel to negotiate for a genuine two-state settlement.

While much of the left in UK and a number of UK trade unions have campaigned for solidarity with Palestine, solidarity has often focused on root-and-branch condemnation of Israel and boycotts of Israeli goods, companies and so on or of stores deemed to be "connected" to Israel, such as Marks and Spencer. Such a stance ignores many questions including ending Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and the necessity of uniting Palestinian and Israeli workers.

The vote has the advantage of being a clear demand for an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. It implies the need for a generous settlement from both Israel and internationally for the Palestinians.

**Such a settlement would be a significant step forward for the Palestinians.**



# China versus Hong Kong unions

By Andrew Casey

**Anonymous emails have been sent to Hong Kong media alleging that the only independent union movement in China — the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions — is in the pay of the United States.**

The South China Morning Post and the Hong Kong Standard have reported that they received emails with attachments showing that the HKCTU had received US\$ 2 million from the AFL-CIO, USA national union centre's key aid agency the Solidarity Center.

"A labour rights group that backs Occupy Central has received grants from a US-based NGO, according to files shared with the media," the *South China Morning Post* reports.

Meanwhile the *Hong Kong Standard* reported the anonymous leak saying they received it from a netizen posting them about 40 zipped files showing e-mails between the HKCTU and both the International Trade Union Confederation and the US Solidarity Center.

There is, of course, a lot of suspicion that malign forces in Mainland China are now flexing their muscles by breaking into the HKCTU computers, stealing data and leaking it to media to harm the union centre who have actively backed the democracy demonstrators, early on calling a strike which was backed by 10,000 Hong Kong workers.

The HKCTU is the only independent, democratic union in all of China, and the only China affiliate of the International Trade Union Confederation.

Key HKCTU affiliates who have organised members to support the democracy de-

mands include the Hong Kong Social Workers General Union who held a rally of 2000 members, and the Hong Kong Professional Teachers Union who called on members to support the students.

But the HKCTU with about 200,000 members is relatively small, competing against the bigger, institutionally backed, pro-Beijing Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions (HKFTU).

The story-line that the democracy protests in the streets of Hong Kong are paid for, and manipulated, by international forces wanting to intervene into China's internal matters, is one that has been coming out of Beijing ever since the near three week long protests began.

The demand for universal suffrage voting rights is one long-supported by the HKCTU who argue that it would strengthen the voice of working people in the local legislature. The HKCTU leader, Lee Cheuk-yan, is also the leader of the HK Labour Party in the local legislature.

The state-run China mainland paper *Oriental Daily* did not hold back — running a page one story claiming the "HKCTU's Lee Cheuk-yan received US funds to orchestrate Occupy Central".

The influential pro-Beijing *Sing Tao Daily* has also run a page one photo story about the HKCTU receiving HK\$20mill over 20 years from the US union movement's aid agency.

Separate to all of this, the Hong Kong journalist unions have protested several times about the treatment of their members by political leaders and police during the democracy protests.

Meanwhile there is some evidence now that the pro-Beijing Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions (HKFTU) has been organis-

ing its affiliates to get union members out to protest *against* the Hong Kong democracy protests.

Until now the big HKFTU has not been heard of in the democracy protests.

Media reports show at least two pro-Beijing HKFTU affiliates organised members to go into the streets to protest against the now near three-week long sit-ins demanding universal suffrage.

Firstly the Hong Kong Construction Industry Employees General Union members marched in the streets demanding an end to the protest because of the effect on their workplaces.

(Of course quite co-incidentally, members the main pro-Beijing construction employer association announced this week they were withdrawing sponsorship of scholarships at a key Hong Kong university because it was a base for student organising of the democracy protests).

Angered by the pro-Beijing union action, another group of construction workers went into the streets on Monday 13 October to the demand universal suffrage. Some of these construction workers have helped to rebuild barricades taken down by police.

However another pro-Beijing HKFTU union affiliate was in the streets, the Motor Transport Workers General Union, angry that members were having trouble getting around town because of the street occupations.

While keeping quite for most of the last few weeks, now it seems the HKFTU has decided to show its colours and come out actively organising their union members against those saying the protest must continue to ensure the campaign to win universal suffrage has a chance.

Divide and conquer of working class people is an old political strategy by authoritarian regimes scared of the power of the oppressed!

The timing of the HKFTU actions came just after an ITUC delegation led by Sharan Burrow, the ITUC general-secretary, left Beijing on Friday 10 October.

Sharan Burrow and other members of the ITUC delegation met with senior Communist Party people who want the ITUC to have closer relationships with the state-run China national union centre, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU).

**The leaders of the HKCTU have been very vocal opponents at global union meetings of any relationship between the ITUC and the massive 134 million member ACFTU.**

- Statement by HKCTU on the slanders, [www.hkctu.org.hk](http://www.hkctu.org.hk)
- Keep up with the struggle for universal suffrage and the different Hong Kong union positions: [labourstart.net](http://labourstart.net)
- Andrew Casey is a long-time Australian trade unionist, journalist and union officer. He one of the original correspondents and editors of the global union news portal LabourStart.



Left, scenes from Occupy Central. Right, on Friday 10 October. Over 200 people attended, shouting slogans such as 'I am a worker'.

## Hong Kong

By Chen Ying in Hong Kong

**The tide has continued to turn against the democracy protest movement in Hong Kong.**

The HK Government became emboldened to break off talks with the HK Federation of Students. It insisted on adherence to the Basic Law provisions and the recent decision of the China's People's Congress to limit chief executive candidates to not more than three, vetted by 50% approval of an election committee packed with Beijing supporters. The students' demands that the HKSAR government files a supplementary report to Beijing was ignored.

When the talks were first cancelled, a surge of protestors went back on the streets. However, the orchestrated complaints by various pro-Beijing unions and the increased inconvenience of the paralysed transport system began to wear down the protestors, who are still struggling on without a clear political focus.

It is hard to know to what extent the protestors' ranks have been infiltrated by agent provocateurs.

Today (14 October), the police made concerted and vigorous moves to clear major barricades so that the key area of Admiralty was opened up to road traffic for the first time since the protest started. Protestors con-



Sharan Burrow of ITUC in Beijing



October the National Campaign against Fees and Cuts held a demonstration, alongside students from Hong Kong, outside the Chinese Embassy in London. "What do we want? Democracy!"

## ng protest: time to regroup

continued to adopt a non-violent stance of civil disobedience, knowing that they have insufficient numbers to prevent the police clearance operation.

So, the HK administration have regained Central, for now. However, the Chief Executive CY Leung's standing has reached an all-time low, with the gap between those who

support him and those who want him out now over 38% of the population. The ability of the administration to govern the city is severely in doubt.

The Australian media published an expose of CY Leung receiving a payment of £4 million from Australian engineering company UGL, allegedly for enabling them to acquire

DTZ, a company based in Hong Kong with Leung on the Board, against a much higher bid for DTZ from another bidder, which turned out to be China's state-owned Tianjin Innovation Financial Investment Company.

Leung had not declared this before, and he maintains that it is all above board and within the law. He has paid no taxes on this

sum. This disclosure clearly does Leung no favours in the eyes of Beijing, because it is both "unpatriotic" as well as undermining the credibility of President Xi Jinping's anti-corruption drive. Some observers in HK even speculated that it is Beijing who leaked this news, as a preliminary move to remove Leung from office should this becomes necessary.

During this past fortnight, there had been open expressions of fear and concern that the PLA troops would be deployed on the streets and fire on protestors. Indeed, a maverick pro-Beijing legislator had wanted to advocate such a use of force but was advised against this by her political advisers.

However, the Beijing regime under Xi Jinping's leadership had no need for sanctioning the use of the People's Liberation Army. After all, Hong Kong is not a threat to the CCP's control of China, unlike the protests of 4 June in 1989 which had split the CCP's top leadership. A military move would indeed clear the streets, but any shedding of blood would render Hong Kong totally ungovernable. After all, this city had over a million protesting on the streets in 1989 after the Tiananmen massacre, and that memory is still vivid.

There would be a massive flight of capital and thousands of families who have overseas passports would leave while many more would seek to apply for asylum. Xi Jinping could not afford to have to pay such a heavy price, while he is so close to marginalizing and knocking out his political opponents inside the CCP. International outcry and sanctions might force him into coming to an accommodation with the Shanghai faction.

The protest movement in Hong Kong must now regroup and sort out its basic principles as well as develop more effective tactics. It must seek to maximize its base of support in the population around its key principal demands for universal suffrage, and not allow the government and the CCP agents to create divisions. Occupying Central with Peace and Love, to give it its full title, is essentially a civil disobedience tactic to put pressure on the government. It has been remarkably effective up to now but some protestors perceive the blocking of all traffic in Admiralty as a fundamental principle.

An orderly retreat to consolidate the campaign now for a further round of struggle based on clear principles and smarter tactics is better than watching campaigners dissipate their energy and getting worn down by the more organized CCP-funded thugs and getting picked off by the police. The crisis of political leadership needs to be resolved by hard and honest debate within the movement, drawing from the lessons of the recent struggles as well as from history.

**Linking up with the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU) to counter the pressure from the Beijing-backed Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions (HKFTU) must be an essential move.**

## Dissidents arrested

Guo Yushan, Chinese activist and human rights lawyer, who has been arrested on the criminal charge of "provoking troubles", is the latest of dozens of people who have been detained in connection with showing solidarity with Hong Kong protests.

Earlier this month, dissident poet Wang Zang was detained prior to a planned poetry reading in support of Hong Kong protestors. Wang Zang had posted a photo of himself holding up a middle finger and holding an umbrella, the symbol of the Hong Kong demonstrations. The message with the picture read "Wearing black clothes, bald and holding an umbrella, I support Hong Kong."

According to Amnesty International, at least 26 people have been detained in Beijing for showing support for protesters in Hong Kong, often on charges of "picking

quarrels and provoking trouble", a charge often used to pick up known activists and prevent the spread of protests.

Those arrested include journalist Miao Zhang, and artists Zhu Yan-guang and Fei Xi-aosheng.

China has been quick to censor images and posts on social media relating to the protests. However many workers travel from mainland China to Hong Kong every day to work, and many from Hong Kong have family in China. News must have spread.



Wang Zang

## The night of the full moon

By Wang Zang

**The moonlight tonight is like a knife,  
full of hope, a life in humiliation.**

**Each of us an enemy of our state,  
a prison inmate, a mental patient,  
a living corpse in a tomb.**

**Only in death do we seem truly able  
to live,  
As though only in becoming ghosts,  
are we no longer slaves.**

# Ebola's victims: "only Africans"?

By Dr Paul Valley

**They are only Africans. They may be dying from Ebola in record numbers, but who really cares? Such are the politics of plague. Ebola, is just another of the apocalyptic four horsemen which for ever stalk that far-away continent of which we know little and care less.**

Of course, no one says as much in such bald terms, not even in the farage of plain-speaking that characterises the demagogic rhetoric of our times. But it is hard to escape the sense that such is the reality of our political priorities.

This is not just the worst single epidemic of Ebola in history. The frighteningly contagious disease, which kills up to 90 per cent of those who contract it, has now slain more than all previous outbreaks put together. Tens of thousands have died, far more than the World Health Organisation's official figure of 3,300. Its progress is exponential; almost 40 per cent of the deaths have occurred in just the past three weeks.

How odd, then, that the news is dominated by stories about the one man who has taken the disease from Liberia to the United States. The Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, whose population are dying in droves, is quoted widely on the "unpardonable" action of the man who took the disease to the world's richest nation.

There are reports about how he will be prosecuted for falsely declaring, when he boarded the plane for Dallas, that he had had no contact with Ebola. In the US there are in-depth accounts of the strict infection-control measures being put in place — the bubble tents, the reporting systems, the

hi-tech gowns and gloves — that will make sure Ebola is swiftly contained.

Meanwhile, back in Africa the news is of how, despite promises of Western aid, local health workers not only lack gowns and gloves, but are even short of paracetamol and mattresses on which the sick can die.

The British government has announced a £100 million aid package to build a series of clinics with 700 specialist Ebola treatment beds. But that has been overshadowed by the revelation from MPs on the cross-party International Development Committee that British bilateral aid to Sierra Leone and Liberia was previously slashed by a fifth — doing grave damage to those nations' health infrastructure. "The weak state of the health system in both countries has greatly reduced the effectiveness of the response to Ebola," the MPs declared.

The final grotesque metaphor for the gap between rich and poor has been the way that ethical concerns about the unproven nature of the experimental serum ZMapp were set aside so the drug could be given to British and American victims of the disease. But none was made available for Dr Sheik



**Sierra Leone's chief physician, Dr Sheik Umar Khan, who died of the Ebola virus, was denied access to experimental treatment.**

Umar Khan, Sierra Leone's chief physician, who died treating those struck down by the devastating epidemic.

It was a grim parody of the principles of global distributive justice. But it violated even a utilitarian calculus. Saving the life of Dr Khan would have allowed him to save a greater number of lives than resulted from saving the life of a British nurse or American doctor.

But Dr Khan is merely a citizen of the global south. Such are the economics of international inequality. Africans are best treated, it appears, by quarantine; the US media has called for travel bans to cut off Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea from the rest of the world. Travellers always get round such interdicts; the only safe way to protect the world is to finance the fight against the disease at its source.

Ebola is one of the most lethal viruses known to humanity. It kills up to 90 per cent of its victims. There are about 500 new cases each week, according to the World Health Organisation, and the rate of increase is accelerating. The virus can mutate rapidly because, like Aids or influenza, its genetic code is a strand of RNA, the less stable cousin of DNA. It could even become airborne. WHO strategists predict 20,000 infections in the next six weeks. The US Center for Disease Control has warned of as many 1.4 million people infected by January.

**But they will only be Africans. So that will be all right then.**

• Paul Valley is visiting professor in public ethics at the University of Chester. This article first appeared in the *Independent on Sunday* on 5 October.

## Solidarity with the Kurds is our first concern

The Left

By Michéal MacEoin



**As fighters from "Islamic State" (ISIS) enter the besieged Kurdish town of Kobane in Syria, Kurds abroad have been demonstrating in several major European cities.**

In a conflict between the democratic, secular Kurdish forces and the fascistic barbarism of ISIS, Kurds should expect the support and solidarity of the UK left.

Over the summer, British socialist organisations were rightly a dynamic force in building demonstrations against Israel's murderous attacks on Gaza, with up to 150,000 marching in London alone.

Like the Palestinians, the Kurds are an oppressed nation struggling for self-determination. Yet, the British left has been conspicuously late in its solidarity with Kobane.

Viewing the events in Kobane almost exclusively through the narrow lens of our own government's actions, groups like the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) have focused on trying to stop Western intervention rather than on solidarity with the Kurds.

There are good reasons not to endorse the bombing by the US and its allies. In Afghanistan over a decade of bombing has, in fact, made the Taliban stronger not weaker. In Kobane, ISIS has now entered the town and aerial bombardments may be of little use to the Kurdish fighters defending street-by-street.

Intervention is motivated by the interests of UK and US imperialism, not those of the Kurdish people. Speaking on 8 October US secretary of state John Kerry said: "As horrific as it is to watch in real time what is happening in Kobane, you have to step back and understand the strategic objective."

Nevertheless negative focus on stopping intervention has left groups saying little or nothing on what to do to positively support the Kurds.

They have plenty to say on what not to do.

On 9 September, as ISIS threatened to massacre the Yazidis, Charlie Kimber concluded an article in *Socialist Worker*: "Islamic State is brutal and offers no way forward for the people of Iraq. But further bombing by US and Britain is no solution. It needs to be opposed."

On 30 September, Tomáš Tengely-Evans mentioned the Kurds briefly in a survey of US imperialism in *Socialist Worker*, but only to complain that "the West is also arming Kurdish fighters to be a proxy army". He concluded that though "the West's propaganda around Islamic State means that a majority of people in Britain support bombing... the tens of thousands who marched for Palestine this year show the potential for building an anti-imperialist movement to stop the warmongers again."

On 19 August, *Socialist Worker* wrote an article entitled "Arming the Kurds won't stop Iraq's brutal civil war", noting that: "Many on the left think this a good alternative to direct Western intervention, which has been responsible for the spread of sectarianism in the region."

Noting that nationalist movements often have no choice where to get arms from, the SWP also equate taking arms from the west with "Western intervention", commenting coldly that "despite the horror at what the Islamic State is doing, Western intervention will only prolong the fighting and intensify the divisions."

### TURKEY

***Socialist Worker's* most recent article (7 October), continues the theme but cautioning against Turkish intervention.**

Again offering no positive demands, the paper concedes that "while the predicament of the Kurds in Kobane makes it difficult... to argue against US bombs and Turkish military involvement... it is important that the argument is put forward. US bombs have never solved any problem in the Middle East or elsewhere. Neither the US nor Turkey are likely ever to do any favours for the Kurds."

Few of these statements taken by themselves, are flatly wrong. Socialists can have no trust in Turkey, a NATO member which is one of the main oppressors of the Kurds, and should not call on it to send in troops or planes.

Nevertheless, they have to be understood as part of the left's "common sense" on the Middle East and imperialism. All of the articles reveal a tendency to treat the Kurdish struggle as worthy of significance only in so far as it is a factor in the actions or ambitions of Western imperialist powers.

They take as their starting point the need to oppose what the US and its allies do, elevated to an all-governing imper-

ative, rather than the need to support and make solidarity with the Kurdish people.

Linked to this is an implication, rarely clearly stated and often balanced by denunciations of ISIS, that the rise of the Islamist group is a challenge to US imperialism.

In an interview with *Socialist Worker* on 28 June, Alex Callinicos came closest to spelling out the logic of the "anti-imperialist" position, writing that "what's happening in Iraq underlines the extent to which the US has been weakened" and that it "means movements from below can strike real blows — not just against US power or the power of particular ruling classes, but against the whole system."

On 23 June, in the SWP's *International Socialism Journal*, he wrote that the "repellent character of ISIS's sectarian jihadi politics shouldn't be allowed to obscure the fact that the renewal of the Sunni insurgency has re-opened the Iraqi political situation" and "that there is no doubt that the ISIS advance adds to the crisis of American imperial power."

What Callinicos does not say is that ISIS have "re-opened the Iraqi political situation", in the direction of civil war which threatens not only American imperialism but the workers' movement, women's organisations, secularists and the hope of a non-sectarian way forward.

Meanwhile, the Socialist Party (SP) typically confines itself to abstract propaganda. Supporting the right to armed resistance, the SP raises the timeless demand that this "should be under the control of democratically-elected, non-sectarian defence committees" and a call for a "voluntary socialist confederation of the Middle East would enable all peoples to freely and democratically decide their own fates."

Armed resistance in Kobane already exists. It is led by the forces including the PKK-linked Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) and Women's Brigades.

Socialists must express clear solidarity with the Kurdish forces fighting in Kobane, demand that countries in the region such as Turkey allow arms and fighters across the borders to reach Kobane, and call on the west to break off its military alliance with Turkey unless it does so.

**Organisations such as the SWP and the Stop the War Coalition (StW) which have concentrated exclusively on organising to stop bombing by the US and its allies should focus their effort and resources on building this positive solidarity with the Kurds.**



# New wave of climate debate

Paul Vernadsky reviews *This Changes Everything: Capitalism versus the Climate*, by Naomi Klein

Another climate moment is upon us, and Naomi Klein appears to have captured the zeitgeist again with her new book.

Klein participated in the recent New York climate demonstration, which drew over 300,000 people, alongside over two thousand solidarity events in 162 countries. She spoke to 2,000 people in London recently and her book has been sympathetically reviewed by the bourgeois press.

Klein's intervention into climate politics is eloquent and impassioned. She squarely names the enemy as capitalism and especially the pernicious influence of fossil fuel capital. Picking up the theme of her first book *No Logo*, she argues globalisation trends within the latest, neoliberal period of capitalist development have made it much harder to tackle the climate crisis and mean an evolutionary, gradualist approach is now almost impossible. She points out that both the 1992 Rio declaration and the 1997 Kyoto agreement include the caveat that climate action will not interfere with the workings of global free trade. If trade trumps climate, then capitalism will not provide the solution.

Klein pulls apart the modest neoliberal efforts to contain climate change, through small adjustments to the price mechanism such as the European Union's emissions trading scheme. She quotes the Carbon Tracker research that fossil fuel firms have on their asset sheets carbon reserves five times as big as the amount to bring about climate catastrophe. Either we tackle these giants or they will burn this carbon in pursuit of profit and make large parts of the planet uninhabitable.

Klein eviscerates Richard Branson's promise to fund climate action with \$3 billion. In fact he has paid out only a fraction of that sum, and largely to greenwash his own businesses. At the same time he has promoted his vanity project Virgin Galactic and expanded his airline. Cynically, he wants someone to develop a lower-carbon fuel to keep his aviation business in profits. Klein argues for "reversing privatisation" and promoting public ownership as the way to wrestle power from business and tackling climate change.

## EXTREME ENERGY

The book is littered with powerful arguments against shale gas fracking and other forms of extreme energy.

Fracking has numerous ecological problems, from water pollution, toxic chemicals and earthquakes. Principally it involves fugitive methane emissions that are hugely damaging to the climate in the short term. Most of all, unconventional sources will give a new lease of life to precisely the fossil fuel giants that have contributed most to greenhouse emissions. Klein is right to opposed fracking and right to give short shrift to the geoengineering fantasies of some scientists and policymakers. She says such "solutions" will almost certainly make the climate more unstable and in some regions, more damaging.

Klein is an advocate and participant in many social movements across the globe. A cosmopolitan outlook has been a feature of all her work. The book catalogues a wide range of climate struggles, from oil wars in Argentina to the indigenous struggles in North America, illustrating the intricate interdependencies of climate struggles in different places and there connections of other immediate struggles over land rights, food prices and environmental damage.

The book makes a welcome critique of actors within the social movements. She rightly takes apart the way many large environmental organisations — what she calls "Big Green" — have sold out to business, by way of sponsorship, policy and even drilling for fossil fuels on protected land. Many Greens point to the total numbers of people supporting conservation organisations in various countries, but it is clear that these groups are far too diverse and often in hock to business and states to form a coherent counter-power to capital.

Similarly, Klein criticises supposedly left-wing governments including Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia, that espouse ecological discourse but promote fossil fuel capitalism with an "anti-imperialist" face. If only much of the revolutionary left were as honest about these limitations. Klein also rightly criticises Stalinists past and present, from the USSR



and Eastern Europe to China for their appalling environmental record and their bureaucratic, anti-democratic forms of state ownership.

Klein does a decent job in defining the present as a decisive moment in climate political history. She quotes the International Energy Agency that by 2017, a new generation of high-carbon energy generation infrastructure will be locked in for decades, effectively consigning other climate measures to oblivion. There is much fluff around the book "starting a conversation", although Klein acknowledges her own intervention is relatively late. However there is undoubtedly an opening over the next year to revive climate campaigning. The book contributes to that mood.

The book is however limited both on structure and agency. Klein does not have a Marxist conception of capitalism, defined as the exploitation of wage labour by capital. She does not expose the deep structures within capitalism that lead to the exploitation of waged workers (and the market coercion of other exploited groups such as peasants and the self-employed) alongside environmental degradation. As a result she does not articulate a socialist alternative to capitalism. Her conception remains the New Deal or mixed economy model of reformed capitalism. Klein never nails the systematic alternative to capitalism that socialist planning and workers' democracy would entail.

Klein does not identify the agent with both the power and the interest to supersede the waged labour-capital relation — the working class. Far from them being outside the logic of the process, it is precisely the location of workers within capitalist relations of production that provides the unique capability to modify and stop capitalist production, the interest due to exploitation to oppose it (and ultimately to overthrow it), along with the political and organisational structures to replace capitalism with socialism.

Klein does see the organised labour as an agent in this climate movement, but only as one actor among many. Indigenous struggles are far the most prominent in the book, yet her writing is testimony to the weaknesses of most indigenous communities opposing capital. Of course indigenous fighters are valuable allies in the climate struggle, but they are neither sufficiently universal nor sufficiently powerful to constitute the fulcrum of a revived climate campaign.

**This is the role of the global workers' movement. It is organised labour, shorn of its own business unionism and bureaucratic structures, which can coalesce a new climate movement. And this defines the role of socialists intervening in the latest debate — to put socialist climate answers at the heart of the reviving movement.**



## Big politics, real lives

Edd Mustill reviews 'The Village' (BBC, box set now available on DVD)

It's tempting to think of the 'The Village' as the BBC's anti-Downton. It is set during roughly in the same time period as everyone's favourite High Tory soap opera. The two shows were bound to draw comparisons, but they are totally different beasts.

While 'Downton Abbey' approaches the class system of early 20th century England with a sort of Things-Were-Better-Then gentility, at times 'The Village' has been so bleak that it has drawn inevitable criticism for being a cover for lefty, kitchen-sink agitprop.

Written by Peter Moffat ('Cambridge Spies', 'Silk'), 'The Village' is inspired by 'Heimat', the long-running German film series which depicted the impact of the big 20th century political events on a family from the Rheinland. Moffat is keen for his drama to similarly stretch across the years in future series.

The first series takes place mainly during the First World War and is dominated by that conflict's social effects, from the entry of women into factory work as Grace Middleton (Maxine Peake) starts sewing military boots, to the slow erosion of the stigma around married women working as teachers, explored through the career of Martha Lane (Charlie Murphy). The series ends with a poignant exploration of the now-forgotten controversy which surrounded the erection of official memorials after the war.

The second series continues to take on political events under-explored by writers to remind us of the hardships and opportunities of the post-war days, focusing mainly on the election of Ramsay MacDonald's first minority Labour government in 1923. It's good to see writers finding inspiration from the lesser-known stories of the period; another BBC drama, 'Peaky Blinders', chooses to set its first series against the apparently obscure backdrop of the influence of the Irish War of Independence on the criminal gangs of Birmingham.

The village is stirred up by the arrival of miner and Labour parliamentary candidate Bill Gibby (Derek Riddell), who sparks a number of small acts of rebellion, culminating in a mass trespass on the lands of the local aristo family, the Allingham. As a consequence, the Middleton family almost falls apart, while the Aillinghams continue to rule the roost, although not without personal tragedies of their own.

At the conclusion of the series, Gibby makes a return to the village as leader of Sheffield council (although the South Yorkshire pedant in me feels compelled to point out that the people's party didn't take control at Pinstone Street until 1926). His plan, exposed by Grace, is to flood the village to make a new reservoir for the city — perhaps based on the fate of the village of Derwent in 1943.

It raises an interesting political question for the next series: has Gibby, having laboured for years to break the villagers from their deferential relationship to the Allingham, merely strengthened that relationship through his adoption of bureaucratic municipal socialism?

'The Village' reminds us of the capacity of the labour movement to reach every corner of the map in the early 20th century. Even in the sorts of places now regarded as timeless Labour heartlands, the party's breakthrough often didn't come late and after serious struggle (not until the 1960s, for example, in the Derbyshire pit town of Clay Cross). The success of this movement was the result of the actions of hundreds of thousands of people working in unimaginably difficult circumstances.

**Ultimately, what makes the series so good are the outstanding performances on show. But the history provides a fertile bed for actors who clearly know their trade.**

# UKIP's gains and Labour's losses

By Matt Cooper

**The victory of UKIP in the Clacton by-election, and their strong second place to Labour in Heywood and Middleton, on 9 October, mark a shift to the right in British politics.**

These results come on top of UKIP's 27.5 per cent share of the vote in the May European election, the biggest share of any party. The Clacton result cannot therefore be dismissed as a flash in the pan.

While the Clacton result is very bad news for the Tories, who saw their vote halved, and even worse for the Liberal Democrats, who won only one per cent of the ballot, there are also issues for Labour.

The Clacton seat was created in 2010 but Labour had won the previous seat of Harwich in 1997 and 2001. Even in 2010 they won around a quarter of the votes, yet in the by-election they barely struggled over the 10 per cent mark.

Clacton is not a prosperous place; it has a high unemployment rate, around twice the average level of deprivation for England, and patches of some of the worst poverty in the country. If Labour no longer does well, it is not because of prosperity, but because people no longer have a strong working-class identity tied to political affiliation. Instead many have turned to nationalist and anti-immigrant politics as an expression of their position. They have voted Conservative, and now UKIP.

In Heywood and Middleton, on a low turnout, Labour's vote marginally increased compared to 2010. UKIP's net gain was at the expense of the Conservatives and Liberal Democ-



**Labour is responding to UKIP's anti-immigration stance by semi-copying it**

rats. The media claimed Heywood and Middleton has always been a rock-solid Labour seat (and Labour support is in decline). Not quite true. Well into the 1960s, its predecessor seats, Middleton and Prestwich, had been a Lancashire Tory stronghold. Nonetheless, even before the 1997 landslide, Labour was capable of winning majorities of more than 50 per cent.

As the Conservative and Liberal Democrat votes both collapsed, and since some Liberal Democrat voters will have turned to Labour, probably a considerable number of previ-

ously Labour voters switched to UKIP.

What does this show? Probably Labour is maintaining much of its 2010 vote, votes which might be considered its core votes, but it has not been able to oppose the austerity and cuts of the last four years to build on this vote. Although in most places losses to UKIP are not calamitous for Labour, in some areas such as Rotherham (where in the May 2014 council election, UKIP won just over half the popular vote), they could be.

The Rochester and Strood by-election on 6 November may demonstrate the same issues. The one poll taken (before the Clacton result) suggests UKIP will win on around 40% of the vote, with the Conservative vote not collapsing as seriously as in Clacton. The same poll suggests the Labour vote will hold at its 2010 level of around 25%. But again that relative success masks the fact that this is an area where Labour has previously won seats.

The Labour leadership's immediate response to the by-elections has been to toy with increasing its anti-immigrant rhetoric. Apart from being a scandalous response, it won't solve Labour's problems. When Labour tells voters immigration is the problem, those voters will be more likely to vote for a party they believe will really do the most to halt it — the Conservatives or UKIP.

**Labour's electoral problems stem from the defeats that the working class has faced since the 1970s, and in part have accentuated and worsened those defeats. UKIP's rise and the right-wing shift in British politics will not be halted by the Labour leadership joining in the dash to the right.**

## The wrong "organising model"

Bob Carnegie



**In my last article I wrote about the horrors of contracting-out of civilian work on Australian defence bases, and the drive to force down the wages and conditions of the workers.**

Similar processes are at work everywhere else, be it the private or the public sector.

Just recently my partner Melissa and I did a factory tour of the XXXX (Fourex) brewery in Brisbane, Australia, where I worked some 35 years ago as a young man. In 1979 XXXX had a permanent crew of painters, carpenters and plumbers, and a full time work force of 850. It is still a huge factory, maybe producing more than in 1979, but now has just 175, with no permanent maintenance crew.... But I digress.

As a lifetime militant and a former official in the Seaman's Union of Australia, the Maritime Union of Australia, and the Builders Labourers Federation, and now an organiser with the National Union of Workers, I have seen much of the bitter effects for workers of unions competing in the workplace for the same worker.

In a word, it means de-unionisation.

Currently, a large general-worker-type union, United Voice, has most of the coverage, but not the membership, on the service lines of civilians who work on defence bases.

The union I am currently working for, the NUW, has some rights of representation, but is not in the current enterprise agreement between the company, Serco, and United Voice.

Since I started working, some 100-plus workers have elected to join the NUW. Most of these workers were previously non-union, and only a handful previous members of United Voice.

Now the long-dormant and virtually useless United Voice has sprung to life with a negative campaign against both myself personally and the NUW. It is a campaign of such negativity that Karl Rove of White House fame would be proud of it. The long-held principle of Australian union officials is that

they will cannibalise each other, and the workers themselves can rot, but their coverage or jurisdictional rights are sacrosanct.

For myself, I am a believer in "use or lose it". If a union is not representing its members, and there is very low union density on a particular site, than that union has forfeited its rights to hold a monopoly over workers.

I am looked as a bit of an oddity by the union officials because I want a real campaign launched to get these workers employed by their real employer, the Defence Department, and afford the wages and dignity they deserve. That does not fit into any union's agenda. Why?

### 'SEIU MODEL'

**NUW, and even more so United Voice, are heavily influenced by the SEIU "organising model" from the USA.**

The model relies heavily on young university-educated people employed as full-time organisers. The NUW has several industrial officers or organisers of that type. All of them are diligent and hardworking people.

However, at the absolute heart of the SEIU model is recruitment and the selling of union tickets. Members' problems and concerns are somewhat down the list. That is particularly true of United Voice, but a real problem, in my opinion, with all unions influenced by the SEIU model.

Signing up members and distributing union cards becomes absolutely the most important task. The worth of an organiser is based on how many cards are signed. It turns union organising into a marketing ploy.

Maybe this approach is attractive for many union leaders because it quantifies things. Joe is a better organiser than Sue because Joe got ten signed cards this week and Sue only three.

What if Sue has been helping a worker through a work related or personal crisis that took up a huge amount of time? The "churn" lacks the human heart which I think lies at the core of unionism.

That Australian unions can be so influenced by models from the USA, where trade union density in the private sector has dropped to 6.5 percent of the workforce, is puzzling

in itself.

A real organising campaign in any sector of industry means the expenditure of resources, and, for a while, without necessarily any enumerable success. The current organising model in which workers join and leave in dribs and drabs shows immediate "practical" results, costs little, and keeps union funds coming in. It also keeps malicious employers from baring their fangs. They know the unions are only tinkering around the edges and offering no real resistance to their exploitative ways.

Some workers in the hospitality area employed by SSDS have been working an eight hour day spread over 13 hours! This is clearly in breach of their collective agreement but the workers have not had their union take it to the Fair Work Commission (Australia's labour courts), or even argue out with management. Such behaviour makes the task of building real union representation more difficult.

As the song goes: "money speaks for money, the Devil for his own; who'll come to speak for the skin and the bone?"

Well, it should be a union, and if a union does not, the sad reality is that no-one or no organisation will. We end with workers who feel powerless and apathetic. Some still remain union members out of a sense of loyalty, and some look at their union dues as a type of insurance policy, but most remain or become non-union.

What does the union movement's leadership want in Australia? A workforce fighting for empowerment, or a docile declining movement? The great majority of union leaders will say they want the former. The sad reality is that by adopting flawed recruitment models, most unions in Australia are delivering the latter.

**We need to deliver a fighting, progressive, politicised, inclusive and caring style of union organising, if we are to make any headway in delivering hope to the great majority of workers in Australia, and if the collapse in union membership is to be addressed in a "fair dinkum", i.e. honest, basis.**

• Bob Carnegie is a long-time trade union and socialist activist in Brisbane, Australia

# University pension ballot: Vote Yes/Yes!

By Lucy Clement

**Staff in most pre-92 universities are being balloted for action over massive cuts to their pensions in the Universities' Superannuation Scheme (USS).**

The cuts will see some workers lose over 25% of their income in retirement.

The proposals will end the final salary scheme which was closed to new members and shift everyone onto the poor career average scheme (on terms inferior to TPS,

the scheme that covers post-92 universities and school teachers).

Worse still, for the first time a proportion of the pension will have a "defined contribution" basis. That means the risk is shifted onto individuals rather than institutions. Although the plans suggest this is a small element of the scheme, there is no doubt that if we accept this now the employers will try to increase it in future.

There has been lots of propaganda from universities about the "deficit" in

USS. On current accounting rules there is indeed a deficit, but it is declining. Moreover, the rules that claim there is a "deficit" are designed to ensure that single company schemes can cover their pay-outs in the event of bankruptcy. USS — a scheme with 375 member institutions — should not have to run its finances on the ridiculous premise that all 375 of them might collapse at once!

There is plenty of spare cash to pay for staff pensions if universities chose to

prioritise them. Instead, since student fees were hiked up to £9k there's been an increasing tendency to spend on big, showy capital projects the better to impress potential "customers" at Open Days. Money is being poured into hiring senior managers to run these schemes and PR people to market them.

**Students should support university staff in their struggle for a decent pension — staff should vote Yes/Yes and prepare to fight!**

## Outsourced hospital staff strike

**Outsourced workers at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Woolwich, employed by ISS struck for the first time in their campaign to win parity of pay, terms and conditions with directly employed NHS staff on October 8.**

There were several lively GMB picket lines outside the hospital in Woolwich (South London).

About 50 workers were on the pickets at 9am, and picketing continued late into the evening.

GMB members were also

out in force for the national NHS pay strike on 13 October.

The dispute is for the same pay rates, weekend enhancements and unsocial hours rates as the staff directly employed by the Trust.

**The GMB members are employed as cleaners, security, ward hostesses, caterers, on the switchboard and as porters.**

• Messages of solidarity to [nadine.houghton@gmb.org.uk](mailto:nadine.houghton@gmb.org.uk)



## Recycling workers strike for pay and decent conditions

By Dave Harris

**GMB members struck at and picketed five major recycling plants in Sheffield over a four day period this week.**

The strikes are part of an ongoing dispute with The Green Company, who runs recycling centres as a subcontractor to Veolia, itself a subcontractor for Sheffield City Council.

The recycling workers have been fighting this battle in various forms over the last several years. Their demands are for a decent living wage — workers currently work weekends and evenings without a premium wage — and protection of their income as decreased working hours make their job an increasingly precarious one.

However, this is only one aspect of the dispute; unbelievably, not all recycling operated by The Green Company have shower or even toilet facilities. Striking workers told me that at one plant, in the event of a serious chemical accident, they would need to go to nearby houses for water or to wash down.

The Green Company is owned by Salvaire, a regis-

tered charity. Salvaire's website describes its objectives as "to assist in the resettlement and rehabilitation of offenders; to promote the prevention and reduction of crime; and to assist the integration of socially-excluded people into society". As part of this, the plant employs young people on probation, who are "encouraged" to operate the plant on strike days.

A local news report suggested that a number of companies connected with Salvaire through mutual board members received large payments for consultancy services.

Peter Davies, regional GMB officer said that "£60,000 is being paid out" at a time when staff hours are being savagely cut.

**These figures show a callous disregard for a workforce that, at some sites, doesn't even have a place to get changed.**

## TSSA union staff strike

By Gerry Bates

**GMB members working for another union, the TSSA, struck on 8 October in a dispute over a "botched restructuring exercise".**

GMB national officer Gary Smith said "TSSA management told over 30 employees that they have been displaced from their jobs. All full time officials and support staff have been told they will need to go through an assessment process and apply for their own jobs."

TSSA General Secretary, Manuel Cortes, has been accused by the GMB of using profoundly anti-union language, including labelling strikes as "blackmail".

**The GMB claims their demands are not "blackmail" but the legitimate demands of a trade union supporting its members, just as the TSSA would do for its members.**

## Picturehouse Cinemas renege on Ritzy deal

**Picturehouse Cinemas have reneged on parts of a deal won by Ritzy strikers over pay.**

From Ritzy strikers' Facebook page: "It has come to our attention in the last two weeks that the back pay section of our agreement has not been fulfilled by the company, leaving workers out of pocket by at least two thirds of the back pay due. This has come about due to 'bonus pay' having been taken out of back pay.

"At every single point of this campaign we have fought hard to make the company realise that we do not recognise bonus as pay and have consistently rejected any deal which includes bonuses. On several occasions we have made it 100% clear to senior man-

agement that we the workers deserve better pay and nothing less...

"We are gathering our workers and are officially disputing the misleading way in which the company have treated their commitment to paying us back pay to October 2013. Please be aware that this could result in industrial action.

**"It should also come to your attention that Picturehouse/Cineworld have employed someone with a reputation as a union buster to deal with all union relations, including BECTU's attempts to gain union recognition at other Picturehouse branches."**

• More information — [fb.com/RitzyLivingWage](http://fb.com/RitzyLivingWage)

## Lambeth needs a pay rise

**Vida Walsh Centre  
October 23 at 7:00pm  
[on.fb.me/1z7i0N4](http://on.fb.me/1z7i0N4)**

## Tube strikes suspended

By Ollie Moore

**London underground strikes planned for 14-16 October were called off, after RMT union negotiators decided the concessions won from LU management were enough to suspend the action.**

Those concessions are real, and will make a difference to workers' lives.

They include: The inclusion of medically-restricted staff in salary/location guarantees; a slight reduction in the level of staffing cuts; less disruption of the negotiation/representation structures; and a continuation of negotiations and consultations.

Industrial action has already forced LU to guarantee that no-one will face a pay cut through re-grading, and make a "30 minutes travelling time" commitment on potential relocations. Until now, though, that commitment did not include medically-restricted staff. This meant some staff could have been effectively

been forced out of a job by being redeployed into a role they can't perform because of our medical restrictions.

The original figure of 953 job cuts has now come down to 897 — a tiny reduction, but is accompanied by a commitment by the company to look at ways of further reducing the figure. This is progress from their previous stance that the level of cuts was fixed and inevitable.

The company had wanted the RMT, along with the other unions, to move from a negotiation/consultation phase into an "implementation" phase. This would have effectively ended our fight against cuts and forced us to engage with how they're implemented, rather than whether they happen at all. The removal of this demand keeps the dispute alive.

**Tube workers are still facing a huge fight. Management still wants to slash jobs and close every ticket office on the network. We should still try and stop them.**





## Help the Kurds against ISIS!

By Simon Nelson

**Kurds and their supporters demand that the Kurdish Peshmerga, YPG (People's Protection Units) and other militia be armed with heavy weapons, armour-piercing bullets and tanks in order to resist the ISIS ultra-Islamists who threaten them with massacre in Kobane (near Syria's border with Turkey) and elsewhere.**

Masrour Barzani of the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq told the BBC: "We have not asked for any ground forces. Our Peshmergas are here, they are giving their lives, and all we need from the rest of the world is to help us with effective weapons to protect these people".

Kobane remains under siege by ISIS ("Islamic State"). Undated video footage released by ISIS shows them fighting in the daylight, seemingly unfazed by US airstrikes.

ISIS has also recently tried to advance on Baghdad, and been driven back only with difficulty. ISIS is again surrounding the Shingal Mountain where thousands of Yazidi refugees remain trapped, with the only way out by air.

Kurds continue to come into Kobane to help defend the city, but they arrive unarmed and untrained. ISIS fighters have weaponry and military capability derived from seizing Iraqi and Syrian government arsenals and winning Iraqi and Syrian army defectors.

ISIS continues to shell Kobane and send in groups of suicide bombers.

The US and its allies have failed to persuade Turkey to open the so-called "humanitarian corridor" which would allow people, aid, and weapons to flow to Kobane. On 15 October the Turkish military intervened — to bomb Kurds (PKK, they said) in Hakkari, in the south-east of Turkey, near the borders with Iraq and Iran.

Turkey's government is happy to see the Syrian Kurds crushed, thinking Turkey can then sponsor compliant forces within Syria to counter ISIS, and reckoning a confident Kurdish movement a greater danger than ISIS. The Turkish government says it plans

to train "moderate" Syrian rebels to fight ISIS.

Hundreds of thousands have demonstrated in Turkey and across Europe to condemn Turkey's stance.

Many of the Syrian rebels whom Turkey favours are firmly anti ISIS, but they remain Arab chauvinists who have attempted to exclude Kurds from the fight against Bashar al-Assad from the beginning.

Turkey's leaders say that there is no difference between ISIS and the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) guerrillas who have fought a war with Turkey for Kurdish autonomy for the last 30 years.

**On the basis of that attitude, they are ready to see Kobane fall to ISIS in a bloody massacre.**

## Who are the Kurds?

**"Kurdistan" is a largely contiguous and predominantly mountainous area stretching from eastern Turkey through Syria to Iraq, Iran, and Armenia, inhabited by around 30 million Kurds.**

The area is not officially recognised as "Kurdish", except the Kurdistan Regional Government area in Iraq.

For centuries it was part of the Ottoman Empire, ruled from Constantinople (today's Istanbul). The Kurdish people were largely nomadic, and their mountain regions were not closely policed by the Ottomans.

After World War One, the Ottoman Empire collapsed. The Kurds were increased forced to abandon their nomadic way of life, but they never got the independent state they were promised in peace talks.

The Kurdish people are predominantly Sunni Muslims, with substantial religious minorities such as the Yazidis. They have faced hostility from Arab Sunni Muslim states, Turkey and the Shia-Muslim Iranian regime. Kurdish politics have generally been secular.

Each attempt at the establishment of an independent Kurdish state has been stopped, often with brutal repression. Kurdish identity, lan-

guage, and culture have faced constant attack. Turkey outlawed the Kurdish language and denied a separate Kurdish people existed, calling them "mountain Turks".

The Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) was formed in 1978. It remains at war with Turkey over the demand for Kurdish autonomy. 30,000 people have died in this conflict. PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan remains in prison, but is currently in peace negotiations with the Turkish government.

The 1978-9 Iranian revolution allowed a brief moment of autonomy for Iran's Kurds, but that was soon crushed by the Khomeini regime.

The Kurds in northern Iraq rebelled several times in the 1920s against British rule over Iraq, and were poison-gassed in 1920 on the instruction of Winston Churchill.

**Under Saddam Hussein they faced similar repression.**



## Showing solidarity with the Kurds

**A Kurdish Solidarity Campaign has been launched in Nottingham. Contact it via Pete Radcliff at [peteradcliff@gmail.com](mailto:peteradcliff@gmail.com).**

**The Worker-Communist Party of (Iraqi) Kurdistan are also campaigning for defence against ISIS, and can be contacted via [dashtyjamal@gmail.com](mailto:dashtyjamal@gmail.com).**



Kurdish solidarity demonstration in Sheffield 11 October

## Kurdish solidarity in Glasgow

Kurdish activist Roza Salih, NUS Scotland's International Students' Officer, has been organising protests in Glasgow in solidarity with the Kurdish struggle. She spoke to us:

"This battle is now focused on Kobane, but it is a much bigger issue, bigger than Kurdistan. If Kobane falls, 'Islamic State' will increase their power and strength; the war will escalate; there will be more battles and massacres... I've got to say the response from non-Kurdish trade unionists, student activists and socialists has been weak. People are letting the issue of Western intervention get in the way of making solidarity. Even if you are against the US bombing, why does that mean you can't come and demonstrate with us?"

• Full interview at [www.workersliberty.org/rozas](http://www.workersliberty.org/rozas)