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# THE FACE OF FASCISM STAMP IT OUT



**“Immigrant Cleaners” struggles** page 12  
**No Platform for Fascism** page 20

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## Aims of the Solidarity Federation

The Solidarity Federation is an organisation of workers which seeks to destroy capitalism and the state.

Capitalism because it exploits, oppresses and kills people, and wrecks the environment for profit worldwide. The state because it can only maintain hierarchy and privilege for the classes who control it and their servants; it cannot be used to fight the oppression and exploitation that are the consequences of hierarchy and source of privilege. In their place we want a society based on workers' self-management, solidarity, mutual aid and libertarian communism.

That society can only be achieved by working class organisation based on the same principles – revolutionary unions. These are not Trades Unions only concerned with 'bread and butter' issues like pay and conditions. Revolutionary unions are means for working people to organise and fight all the issues – both in the workplace and outside – which arise from our oppression. We recognise that not all oppression is economic, but can be based on gender, race, sexuality, or anything our rulers find useful. Therefore, revolutionary unions fully support and encourage organ-

isation in all spheres of life that consciously parallel those of the society we wish to create; that is, organisation based on mutual aid, voluntary cooperation, direct democracy, and opposed to domination and exploitation in all forms. We are committed to building a new society within the shell of the old in both our workplaces and the wider community. Unless we organise in this way, politicians – some claiming to be revolutionary – will be able to exploit us for their own ends.

The Solidarity Federation consists of locals which support the formation of future revolutionary unions and are centres for working class struggle on a local level. Our activities are based on direct action – action by workers ourselves, not through intermediaries like politicians or union officials – our decisions are made through participation of the membership. We welcome all working people who agree with our aims and principles, and who will spread propaganda for social revolution and revolutionary unions. We recognise that the class struggle is worldwide, and are affiliated to the International Workers Association, whose Principles of Revolutionary Unionism we share.

## Principles of Revolutionary Unionism

1. Revolutionary unionism, basing itself on the class struggle, aims to unite all workers in combative economic organisations that fight to free themselves from the double yoke of capital and the state. Its goal is the reorganisation of social life on the basis of libertarian communism via the revolutionary action of the working class. Since only the economic organisations of the proletariat are capable of achieving this objective, revolutionary unionism addresses itself to workers in their capacity as producers, creators of social wealth, to take root and develop amongst them, in opposition to the modern workers' parties, which it declares are incapable of the economic reorganisation of society.

2. Revolutionary unionism is the staunch enemy of all social and economic monopoly, and aims at its abolition by the establishment of economic communities and administrative organs run by the workers in the fields and factories, forming a system of free councils without subordination to any authority or political party, bar none. As an alternative to the politics of state and parties, revolutionary unionism posits the economic reorganisation of production, replacing the government of people by others with the administrative management of things. Consequently, the goal of revolutionary unionism is not the conquest of political power, but the abolition of all state functions in the life of society. Revolutionary unionism considers that

along with the disappearance of the monopoly of property, must come the disappearance of the monopoly of domination; and that no form of state, however camouflaged, can ever be an instrument for human liberation, but that on the contrary, it will always be the creator of new monopolies and new privileges.

3. Revolutionary unionism has a two-fold function: to carry on the day to day revolutionary struggle for the economic, social and intellectual advancement of the working class within the limits of present day society, and to educate the masses so that they will be ready to independently manage the processes of production and distribution when the time comes to take possession of all the elements of social life. Revolutionary unionism does not accept the idea that the organisation of a social system based exclusively on the producing class can be ordered by simple governmental decrees and maintains that it can only be obtained through the common action of all manual and intellectual workers, in every branch of industry, by self-management of the workers, such that every group, factory or branch of industry is an autonomous member of the greater economic organism and systematically runs the production and distribution processes according to the interests of the community, on an agreed upon plan and on the basis of mutual accord.

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## Anarcho-Syndicalism

**Anarchism** is revolutionary anti-state socialism. Anarchists aim for the destruction of ruling class power and of all relationships based on domination and exploitation. This means taking over our workplaces and communities and changing them to meet the needs of all, as well as the ecological needs of the environment. Without this takeover, we can struggle within capitalism but never replace it.

An anarchist society will be created by millions of people, not by a dictatorial elite, and everyone will have their part to play in shaping it. Power will lie with the organisations created by working people to defend themselves and to transform society, not with political parties which will try to dominate and destroy them.

**Syndicalism** comes from the French word for trade unionism and is a theory which seeks to unite workers in different industries and sectors to fight for their interests.

**Anarcho-Syndicalism:** As syndicalism is a tactic which can be used by a number of revolutionary movements, we advocate its explicit linkage with the creation of a stateless, anarchist society: anarcho-syndicalism. The International Workers' Association unites anarcho-syndicalists around the world, and the Solidarity Federation is the British section of the IWA.

Revolutionary unions, federated inside and outside the workplace, are the best method of defending working-class interests today and for preparing and delivering the new society of tomorrow. In these organisations, power remains at the base and flows upwards. Members elect delegates rather than representatives, and these can be recalled at any time. All decisions are made by the mass membership of the unions.

**The Red and Black Flag** is the primary symbol of the international libertarian labour movement. Its

colours are symbols of the basic principles and goals of anarcho-syndicalism - red is for material and social equality and the black of the anarchist flag is for freedom and solidarity. To that extent the colours of the anarcho-syndicalist flag are a constant reminder both of the libertarian methods by which the anarcho-syndicalist fights and of the goal of freedom from government and wage slavery that she or he fights for.

The red and black flag of anarcho-syndicalism is used by many anarchists around the world in place of their "national" flags. The use of the flag is a statement against nationalism, which is the lie that enslaves and victimises the majority of a people to a minority of exploiters and oppressors in any given country. By the same token, the use of the red and black flag is a statement in favour of internationalism, and of the unity and solidarity of all humanity.

# Why Anarcho-Syndicalism

**A** PART FROM THE OBVIOUS RECURRENT GLOBAL ECONOMIC crises, we live in a world where some 30,000 children continue to die every day, not because of a lack of resources, but because of a flawed set of economic priorities that places the profits of the rich above all others. As capitalism has gone global, the majority of the population suffer growing absolute or relative poverty, increasingly repressive governments, financial uncertainty, and social divisions. As transnational corporations grow ever more powerful, workers across the world face sub-contracting, migration, "race to the bottom" pay policies and non-contract labour in their quest to earn a living.

In Britain, the added uncertainty of unemployment, pension devaluation and the spectre of home repossession have been thrown into the mix. Amidst a burgeoning financial crisis, millions in taxpayers' money has been funnelled into propping up a failing financial system and into funding greedy bankers' ostentatious salaries. As government borrowing goes through the roof, the remaining public services face being sold off, partially or completely, or being ruthlessly cut back over the coming months and years.

Aside from, but linked to the floundering economy, the world is facing a severe environmental crisis, escalating militarism and conflict between imperialist powers over declining resources like oil. Large scale power abuses by corrupt politicians, thuggish police and paedophile priests are exposed in the public domain. As public disillusion grows, increasingly draconian anti-terror laws and population surveillance methods are rubber stamped – measures used to target and marginalise minority groups and dissuade populations from fighting back. These are the inevitable symptoms of a system that always puts profit and power before people.

And what of popular resistance? The old left, social democratic



burning dismissal notices at the Lindsey Oil Refinery

reformism and nationalisation have all failed miserably in their bid to implement anything vaguely representing socialism. The unions, born out of past working class struggle, have morphed into overbearing corporate structures of more value to the bosses than workers. Politicians of all persuasions offer only false solutions and more of the same. Institutionalised sexism and racism still run

rife, despite all the politically correct rhetoric about "equality".

To address all these problems, we need a completely different world system, one based on mutual aid and co-operation. We need to dispense with power structures and markets once and for all. Crucially, we also need to challenge the ideologies that erect false barriers and divide us like religion, patriarchy and nationalism. But revolutionary change can only occur through the conscious will of the majority. A

transitional approach, breaking down barriers to build confidence by winning gains in the here and now, is also needed. This is only the first step on the journey to more

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# Remains Relevant Today

lasting and substantial social reconstruction. This requires grass-roots organisation, constructive action and direct democracy; means by which we can fashion a new world in the here and now. You cannot change the world by throwing stones.

And there are signs that grass roots organisation is beginning to emerge. The workers at Visteon did not wait around for ballots and legal niceties; they took control of their own dispute by occupying the three factories involved. Just as encouraging, support groups were quickly established helping to ensure that the Visteon workers were not left isolated.

Again at Lindsey oil refinery in Lincolnshire workers didn't bother waiting for the trade union bureaucracy and long drawn out legal processes. If they had the dispute would have been lost. Instead, when 51 people were effectively sacked, the 600 workers took immediate action and walked out on strike. They were soon joined by up to 4,000 contract workers at power stations and oil and gas terminals up and down the country who walked out in sympathy. This mass show of solidarity soon had the employers, the oil giant Total, backing down.

Other instances of workers organising beyond the official union structures include immigrant cleaners in London (covered on

pages 12-15) and the actions of London Underground workers over recent months and years (covered in *Beyond the Usual Union Structures* in DA46).

Nor is it just in the workplace that resistance is being organised. Schools threatened with closure in both Glasgow and Lewisham have been occupied by parents and community activists. In Glasgow, the Labour controlled council's decision to close 22 schools and nurs-

an emerging fight back against the state and capitalism. They come at a time where there is a groundswell of opinion emerging that not only rejects capitalism, but also sees political corruption and intransigence as the inevitable by-product of constituted power. From this consciousness, we believe that a mass global movement can coalesce into an irresistible force for social change. Rank and file unions and horizontally organised communities of resistance can form the



Save Our Schools - Glasgow: protest march to the Scottish Parliament

eries was met with fierce resistance by local communities leading to a number of schools being occupied. As we go to press the St Gregory's and Wynford primary schools campaign reoccupied Wynford primary school in protest at the closure attempts. Already they have been successful in blocking attempts by

building blocks capable of changing the world without taking power. Workers' self-management, the assuming of economic and political control of the means of life, is a prerequisite to creating the classless libertarian socialist society we desire.

the City council to demolish the school. (The situation in Lewisham is covered on page 10.)

These examples of working class people using direct action as a means of self-organisation are welcome signs of

Anarcho-syndicalism recognises that the major crises we face are caused by capitalism and the archaic, outmoded structures and beliefs that prop it up. We seek to destroy all power structures and ideologies that divide us. Anarcho-syndicalism offers a practical means of enacting the wholesale social changes needed to build an ecologically sustainable global community; a community founded on the most positive aspects of human solidarity, freedom and equality.

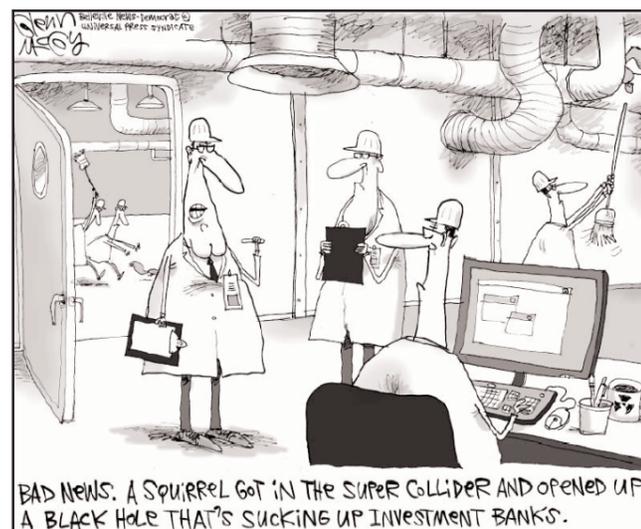
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# A Contradiction at regulation of global financial markets

**IT APPEARS THE WORLD'S GOVERNMENTS HAVE STOPPED CAPITALISM going into total meltdown. But even if it recovers the cost of saving it will be massive and we, the working class, will pay for years to come through job losses, cuts in pay and reductions in public services. Nor is that our only worry. There is every likelihood capitalism will nose dive back into recession at some future point.**

The current crisis is portrayed as the fault of greedy bankers, just as the "dot com crisis" was portrayed as the fault of greedy investors. However, the failure is a symptom of a deeper problem in a system that has become more volatile and prone to crisis in the last 30 years. If the problem can't be fixed, it is only a matter of time before another crisis. All governments seem aware of this and seem to accept the world economy cannot continue staggering from one debt induced crisis to the next. There's also broad consensus that the markets cannot be left to their own devices and that the solution is greater regulation.

This contradiction isn't new though. It's one reason why capitalism is so unstable and why there's never been sustainable international financial management. Indeed, one of the most stable periods of capitalism, the post world war two boom, only came



about partly because the dominance of the USA allowed it to impose global financial regulation. A system of fixed exchange rates, the Bretton Woods system, made the US dollar a *de facto* global currency. All world trade was denoted in dollars, so each country had to buy dollars in order to trade. As US economic power waned it became harder to defend the price of the dollar. In 1973 it was floated on the international money markets and Bretton Woods collapsed.

The roots of the current crisis lie in this collapse as it opened the way for greater currency speculation. After

all, you can't bet on fluctuations in currency prices if those prices are fixed. Currency trading increased dramatically leading to today's situation with vast sums of money constantly moving between currencies chasing ever higher returns.

The collapse of Bretton Woods had other effects. Companies trading internationally had to operate with currency fluctuations which could wipe out profits. Desperately they turned to derivatives as a means to "hedge" against future currency fluctuations. In effect, they could trade safe in the knowledge that they were insured against profits being eaten up by future currency movements. The problem with derivatives was that they allowed speculators to bet on future currency fluctuations. Soon the money made from currency futures led to new forms of derivatives. The launch in 1973 of a formula allowing speculators to bet on the future prices of assets was followed in 1975 by trading in interest rate futures. Under Bretton Woods trade in derivatives was almost non-existent; by 2006 the global trade had reached a staggering \$700 trillion per year.

So the collapse of Bretton Woods led to today's casino culture, a culture that dominates world financial markets, but one that is only a symptom of capitalism's slack international regulation. Yet, when they talk of more regulation, politicians confine themselves only to dealing with the system rather than with the cause. This is precisely because they know that any attempt to set up a common international regulatory system would soon fall foul of the competing needs of national governments.

Attempts to regulate the derivatives trade proves the point. Just about everyone agrees that the way they are traded is crazy, yet nothing is

# the Heart of Chaos to solve boom and bust is a non-starter

ever done about it. As mentioned, this trade insures companies against future risk, otherwise they couldn't operate. So how do you regulate against speculators without damaging companies' ability to trade? You can't. The real solution would be to regulate the risk out of the system. For example, a fixed exchange rate system would mean there's no need for companies to trade in financial derivatives.

There's another obstacle to any meaningful regulation – the rise of China. The Chinese state exploits its workers to produce vast amounts of cheap exports. It then lends huge sums of money to the west, particularly to the USA and Britain, to buy these goods. Cheap Chinese imports have helped hold down inflation in the west, which in turn has kept interest rates low. On top of this, these low interest rates coupled with the loans from China have kept the price of credit down. And it was the availability of this cheap credit that caused the speculative bubble that brought on the current crisis.

Logic dictates that measures be taken to prevent this happening again. But it is in the national interests of both China and the USA that business as usual is restored as soon as possible. So they will both resist any international regulation that limits the flow of global credit.

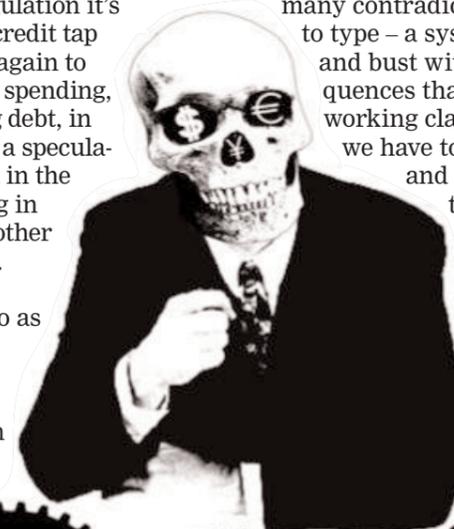
More regulation, then, is not the easy solution it seems. Tough regulation of global financial markets would mean countries putting aside national interests for the greater good of the world economy. And that's not about to happen. The only possibility would be for a country to achieve the economic and military power to impose it, as the USA did after world war two. But even this would only be temporary and, in any case, is unlikely in the foreseeable future.

What will happen, then? There's still a chance the current measures to rescue national financial systems will fail and the world will slide into a long, deep depression. However, what seems more likely is that the massive injection of public funds will slowly pull the global economy out of recession. This will be followed by a prolonged period of public spending cuts as the money borrowed is paid back. However, as public spending is scaled back, the pressure will be on to boost private consumption to fill the gap. At this point all talk of regulation will increasingly be seen for what it is – just talk. In the absence of meaningful regulation it's likely that the credit tap will be opened again to fund consumer spending, in turn fuelling debt, in turn leading to a speculative bubble and in the long run ending in the tears of another financial crisis.

What can we do as workers? Well, we need to forget about placing our faith in regulation, in politicians

or, for that matter, in getting worker directors on to the boards of nationalised banks, as some on the left advocate. Such approaches won't work. The instability stems from the contradiction between the interests of capitalism as a global system and the interests of nation states. This could only be overcome if nation states were to disappear – don't hold your breath on that one.

We also have to recognise that the period of social democratic consensus, based on the idea of full employment and economic stability, has gone. Capitalism, due to its many contradictions, is returning to type – a system prone to boom and bust with all of the consequences that this holds for the working class. In the short term we have to fight for every job and against every threat to cut pay and public services. This day to day struggle has to be linked to the idea of defeating capitalism and replacing it with a system based on workers' control and human liberation.



## MAKE CAPITALISM HISTORY

# Occupy and the Visteon workers' struggle

**O**VER THE SPRING, HUNDREDS OF WORKERS AT THREE car parts manufacturing plants across the UK were made redundant. In response, workers occupied the plants and, in doing so, demonstrated that any protection we might have from the ravages of this recession will come not from the generosity of employers, politicians or trade union bosses but from the action we take as rank and file workers.

In June 2000, Ford Motor Company outsourced production of some of its car parts to Visteon, an apparently independent company, but in reality one in which Ford retained a 60% holding. The relatively smooth changeover was negotiated on the promise that the ex-Ford – now Visteon – workers would remain on Ford terms and conditions, including pensions and redundancy packages.

Flash forward almost nine years to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2009 and Visteon announce the closure of factories in Belfast, Basildon (Essex) and Enfield (north London), sacking 610 workers with only minutes' notice. The company declared insolvency and was put in receivership with no word about where pensions and redundancy payments would come from. Workers who'd been employed for 20, 30 and even 40 years were not only out of a job, but were told they would get nothing.

The Belfast workers acted the same day, immediately occupying their factory with hundreds of local supporters soon arriving at the factory gates. When news travelled the next day, the Basildon and Enfield workers followed suit. Though the Basildon occupation was extremely brief, the

Enfield occupation lasted nine days while the Belfast workers held on for over a month.

Using dubious legal advice, Unite! encouraged Enfield workers to drop their occupation to allow the union to begin negotiations. Talks took place in New York City on April 8<sup>th</sup>, and it was announced that an improved deal was to be offered. However, details of the deal were not passed on to the workers themselves. Realising they could not just hand the plant back and hope for the best, the Visteon workers began holding 24 hour pickets outside the factory to make sure their employers would not attempt to move any of the machinery.

This proved a sensible move. When the results of the negotiations finally came through, the workers were less than happy. After decades of

service for Ford and then Visteon, workers were offered a miserly cash payment equivalent to 16 weeks' pay. The workers rejected the insulting offer and continued their dispute, with Enfield workers barricading the main gate with heavy car parts containers.

Eventually, the workers' resolve forced Ford to cave in and come to the table, a table they had initially claimed had nothing to do with them. After workers agreed to call off a 30-strong picket at Ford's Bridgend plant in Wales, Ford managed to put together a new, much improved deal, which the workers voted to accept.

## *good old-fashioned trade unionism...*

As the dispute wore on, the Visteon workers' disillusionment with the union intensified as it became increasingly obvious that the Unite! bureaucracy wanted a speedy end to the dispute. In Enfield, it took three weeks for financial support to reach the



# Defy & their union

workers and most supplies were funded from the pockets of supporters or workers' families, not from Unite!, let alone the wealthy union leaders. Funds for the Enfield workers were donated first through the bank account of Haringey Solidarity Group, a local libertarian community organising group, and then through an independent account. This was due to Unite!'s inaction in raising funds for the struggle at Enfield, which was also followed by complaints that the few donations that did go through the union's bureaucratic channels were taking too long in getting to the pickets.

Unite! also failed to mention the strike on their website or make any effort to rally its membership's support for the dispute. When compared with the efforts it made to mobilise members for the subdued and non-confrontational "Put People First" demonstration, the union's priorities seem glaringly obvious: lobbying and harmless "A-to-B" demonstrations take precedence over workers taking direct action for their livelihoods.

This unwillingness to support the strike also manifested itself through the culture of secrecy which Unite! maintained around the details of any negotiations. For instance, after the negotiations in New York City, the union announced that a deal had been negotiated and that the occupation in Enfield should end by noon the next day. No details of the deal would be released until the following Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup>, however, and this then turned out to be the insulting 16 weeks pay offer.

Similarly, with the final deal, the union did not give people a printed



document of the settlement nor time enough to consider the deal and discuss what it meant for different groups of workers. The result was that some sections of the workforce got a significantly worse deal than others. Rushing through acceptance was deliberate on the union's part, as was the arrangement whereby the more militant Belfast workers voted on whether to accept after their counterparts in Enfield and Basildon. Many in Belfast felt they should have been allowed more time to read the deal first; many more voted against the deal than in Enfield or Basildon and it would have been a lot more had the two factories not already accepted. On both counts, the actions of the union were not with the intention of securing the best deal for its members, but of ending the dispute quickly.

However, these issues aren't a problem of "poor leadership" or of the union not doing its job properly, but one of the union doing its job too well. Official unions are supposed to mediate between workers and bosses and our highly paid union leaders do not share our interests. It's only a short jump from the top of the trade union ladder to a political think tank or cushy ministerial position. Not to mention that all trade unions are bound by the lim-

its of anti-worker laws and grievance procedures meaning they have to distance themselves from any militant action by their members. Ultimately, there comes a point in all struggles where we find ourselves fighting our union in order to effectively fight our employer.

## *not the way we usually do things...*

The only way to resolve this problem is for the rank and file to take direct control of their struggles and trust in the power of collective direct action. In Belfast, their militancy meant employers had to relinquish control of the plant for the entirety of the dispute while attempting to attack the less militant workers in Enfield and Basildon.

It's important to understand that the deal which the workers secured was won by the strength of their actions alone and despite, not because of, their union's intervention. The struggle at Visteon showed us that we get nothing without fighting for it and that in fighting we can improve and protect our conditions. Furthermore, their struggle showed us, yet again, that when we fight back effectively it poses not only a threat to our employers but also to those who would claim to represent us.

# Lewisham Occupation

**S**INCE 23<sup>RD</sup> APRIL PARENTS OF PUPILS AT LEWISHAM Bridge Primary School in Lewisham, south east London, and their supporters have been occupying a school roof. They are protesting against Lewisham Council's plans to demolish the school building and replace it with a school for children aged 3 to 16. The proposed new school will be squeezed into a site presently occupied by the primary school, which has less than half of the 835 pupils projected for the "all age" school, so play areas and room sizes would fall below government recommendations.

The new school would only have one primary class per year, instead of the current school's two. Eleanor Davies, whose six year old son, attends the school, said:

*It's a really good school and my son is very happy. My concern is for my children's safety and happiness but also for the secondary school children because there isn't the space. Everybody is a loser.*

The council's own figures predict an imminent shortage of hundreds of primary school places. But planned developments in the immediate vicinity of Lewisham Bridge will make matters even worse. Indeed, just metres away, there is barren land awaiting developers' plans (and credit) to turn this part of Lewisham into a mini Croydon.

The need for more secondary places was identified some time ago after the council closed and demolished a failing secondary in New Cross. After losing a local election to an education campaigner and the Socialist Party, the council eventually recognised they had to provide more places. They next targeted the only full size working swimming pool, despite it being too small a site and not in the right area of the borough. After a long campaign, they finally gave up on that one and targeted Lewisham Bridge.

The school has been decanted a mile and a half away to New Cross and the children are taken by bus

from the school site thus losing an hour a day of school time. This started just as year 6 were on the verge of their SATs. Worse still, the council hasn't even got planning permission because the building was listed earlier this year, with the council's appeal likely to take many months. Ever since the proposal was first announced in 2006 parents have expressed their concerns and objections in the form of petitions, letters and lobbies.

Steve Bullock, Mayor of Lewisham, said of the listing: "The future prospects of our children and young people cannot be sacrificed for the sake of somebody's fancy for Edwardian sinks, butterfly designs and tiling." But it can be sacrificed

for his incompetence, it seems.

The planned new school would be a "foundation" school that can set its own admissions policy. Staff would be employed by the governors, not by the local authority. It would probably become part of a "Trust" federation, sponsored by the Leathersellers' Company that backs the Prendergast federation of schools. The council have already handed two schools over to the Haberdashers' Aske's Academy federation and want three more to become a trust backed by Goldsmiths College. This would mean that three unaccountable medieval guilds would be running schools in Lewisham, so Lewisham Bridge is really being knocked down as part of a plan to break up the already limited comprehensive education in Lewisham.

The occupation was inspired by a similar campaign by Glasgow Save Our Schools and by the Visteon workers' action. Both groups gave almost immediate support and Visteon workers from both Enfield and Belfast visited and donated their (very warm) "hi-vis" yellow jackets to the occupiers while two



of the Lewisham parents joined the Visteon workers leading the May Day march in Belfast. There has been widespread local support from parents, residents and many union branches, including Lewisham and Greenwich NUT.

And just as the Lewisham Bridge occupation was inspired by others, so it too inspired parents at a primary school in Deptford in neighbouring Greenwich borough to occupy. Parents at Charlotte Turner primary school have been told the school will close next year, despite a consultation in which 296 out of 297 respondents disagreed that it should be closed. The parents demanded a meeting with the management and got one that day. The council want to close the school as it is "failing", but the alternative offered to those parents who live in Greenwich is bottom of the borough's league tables, as well as being a 30 minute bus ride away.

The roof top has been transformed into a lively campsite with running water and kitchen area and has been used for meetings and even for a rehearsal by local socialist choir, The Strawberry Thieves. The South London local of Solidarity Federation and Autonomy & Solidarity, the Goldsmiths student group, have been heavily involved in the campaign, doing regular shifts and building infrastructure. On Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June the garden area behind the occupied buildings was seized. This seems to have prompted the council to start eviction proceedings which, as we go to press, have been successfully resisted. The protesters have forged ahead with plans to open it up as it's a lot less daunting than climbing a ladder. They've built a compost toilet and are planting flowers, painting a mural and sharing coffee, tea and cake amongst other activities.

The protest has not just been confined to the roof. Hands Off Lewisham Bridge organised a 300 strong march through Lewisham on 9<sup>th</sup> May. It has also lobbied the council and disrupted Gordon Brown's visit to Prendergast School, run by the Leathersellers, brandishing plac-

ards and shouting and leaping out in front of Brown's motorcade.

Whatever happens with the occupation, this has been an inspiring and empowering experience. Those involved will not just give up, but will continue fighting and building links.



## Fujitsu Attack on Pensions

**T**he IT firm, Fujitsu Services, has announced it is closing its final salary pension scheme to existing members. It was closed to new joiners in 2000.

The union, Unite!, centred around the firm's Manchester site, has condemned the plans. Peter Skyte of Unite! said:

*Fujitsu Services is a highly profitable company and made profits of £177m in the last financial year. The company has yet to produce any proper justification for this latest attempt to raise profits by cutting pension benefits, and this action may hinder future bids for blue chip private sector outsourcing contracts.*

Despite such profits, Fujitsu has been attacking its workforce for some time. Contractors were given a 15% pay cut and employees had bonuses stopped and a pay freeze. You'd expect not to need a bonus but Fujitsu operate on an individual bargaining basis and for many workers the bonus is a substitute for a pay rise. It also suits Fujitsu, as no benefits get paid on a bonus.

About a quarter of the company's workforce, 4000 people, are in the final salary scheme. Others have a

defined contribution scheme. This is what the people being thrown off the final salary scheme will be offered. Defined contribution schemes are totally reliant on the stock market and could potentially pay out less than workers put in. Unite! has promised a "robust campaign" and the Manchester branch have already resolved to organise a ballot on industrial action.

The union is also right to focus on the outsourcing element of this. Fujitsu gets a lot of its business by winning new contracts from the government. Unless the law changes sometime soon, workers transferred from the public sector have protected pensions. Fujitsu isn't currently closing its scheme for such workers, the Comparable

Scheme, but it is surely only a matter of time. They regularly insist that anyone applying for an internal vacancy who's transferred over swap to their internal terms and conditions, which now include losing a final salary pension. Workers at Fujitsu in Manchester equated this to a 20% pay cut.



Fujitsu, Manchester

The stand taken at Fujitsu is just the beginning of a long battle, as big companies like BP and Barclays have also announced closure of their final salary pensions.

# Dirty Deeds Done

## immigrant cleaners: the "hard-to-organise"

**W**ORKERS IN CONTRACT CLEANING face low wages, a lack of basic employment rights, bullying management and victimisation for union activities. However, especially among Latin Americans, self-organisation has sustained struggles against the unscrupulous multinational companies who employ them, and against the immigration controls which are used to sack unwanted workers and victimise union activists. Those struggles highlight the inadequacy of the "organising model" of trades unionism promoted by the likes of Unite!

*In DA43 we argued that the Justice4-Cleaners campaign organised by T&G/Unite! had concentrated on "easy targets" and neglected small groups of workers in so-called "hard to organise" workplaces. Cleaners sacked by Amey at the National Physical Laboratory (NPL) in Teddington outside London, and those working for Lancaster at Schroders bank and for Mitie at Willis insurance company in the City of London have organised themselves, and showed up the union and why it finds such workers "hard to organise".*

## The Amey Five

**T**he Amey cleaners were the first to "go it alone" with the help of supporters, inspiring other workers to organise without support from Unite! They were transferred to Amey when it took over the cleaning contract at NPL on 1st December 2006. They joined T&G/Unite! after their previous employer, PKM, told them Amey was a bad company. So 28 of the 38 workers joined the union; a full time official told them not to worry, that Amey would recognise the union and honour their TUPE [Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)] terms, but did nothing.

Amey thought it impossible that cleaners were paid £7.03 an hour but the lab is a high risk area due to the experiments carried out there and specialist health and safety training is required. After four months Amey tried to cut staffing levels and, on 27th May 2007, workers were invited to a "health and safety training session" where the doors were locked and 60 police and immigration officials carried out paper checks. Seven workers didn't have the right papers, were arrested and sacked. Two were deported to Brazil; a third to Colombia; a fourth was detained. (These are the correct figures for this incident; those cited in DA43 are inaccurate.) They weren't replaced and within a month there were only 22 workers left to do the same amount of work.

As a result of a grievance, Amey promised to hire six more workers but only hired three. More workers resigned because of the increased workload and were not replaced. On 19th June 2008 Amey tried to change shift times to end at 9.55 instead of 9.45, breaking TUPE terms. On 20th June three agency temps were hired but not given the specialised induction on the safety risks in the lab. Usually a security guard opened a special gate to allow cleaners to



25/9/08: Amey 5 picket at an event attended by NPL at the Institute of Directors in Pall Mall

# Dirt Cheap

## are self-organising

## Lancaster Workers

leave the premises but when one temp finished late they found it locked and jumped over the wall. The individual was sacked, and the other cleaners were forced by the manager to leave by another gate, causing them to miss their train back to London.



picket of Lancaster's HQ in Canary wharf

The workers took out another grievance, met the manager and got her to back down over the gate. A promised meeting to discuss a proper solution never happened and Amey unilaterally changed the shift times and exit gate. The workers distributed a leaflet to the laboratory's staff asking for solidarity against these changes on 28th July. The next day the ten workers who'd taken part were suspended. The five main union organisers were sacked on 5th September; the others were threatened with the sack to prevent them supporting the five. Their appeal, heard on 7th November, was rejected in writing on the 18th. The speed of the disciplinary procedure contrasted with the grievance procedure; they got the response to their grievance lodged on 20th June when they were dismissed.

Although the five had joined PROSPECT to link up with NPL employees, they were dissatisfied with the representation they got. In February 2009 they lodged an application to an Employment Tribunal for unfair dismissal and discrimination on the grounds of nationality. Amey offered £1,000 between the five, who had demanded £40,000, then raised the offer to £3,000 in total. The workers then demanded

£5,000 each and were told £3,000 was the final offer. PROSPECT told them to accept this and put solicitors off representing them. The workers decided that, rather than accept the offer, they would fight on and represent themselves.

Their campaign was sustained by support from the Latin American Workers Association (LAWA), No Borders and the Campaign Against Immigration Controls. Other supporters have included SF members from the two London locals. Noisy pickets were organised at Amey's offices in Bristol, London, Oxford and elsewhere, and at events organised or attended by NPL, to embarrass them into taking responsibility for Amey's actions. Pickets at NPL itself got a sympathetic response from some workers, although some objected to NPL being associated with Amey's actions and management instructed them not to get involved. A protest and "teach in" by 80 students and staff were also held on 4th December 2008 at Kingston University, to coincide with an award given to Mel Ewell, Chief Executive of Amey on £970,000 a year, one of its most successful graduates. This is in contrast to the "do nothing" approach of the trades unions and helped to make the workers less "disposable".

**T**he Amey 5 campaign also inspired other workers, starting with cleaners working for Lancaster at Schroders bank. Late in 2007 they had joined Unite! to take part in the Justice4Cleaners campaign for the London Living Wage but they didn't get the support they had expected.

Consequently, they organised themselves to pressure the union, the cleaning company and Schroders. Lancaster responded to their grievances by reducing the workforce from thirty to nine and putting the remaining cleaners on a whole night shift instead of working 7-11pm. A meeting of all the workers called a demo outside Schroders on 17th October 2008. Unite! officials tried to get them to call it off but they went ahead and sent a letter to the company warning them that the demonstration would take place unless their demands were met. The Unite! official told them he could have organised it better!

The workers knew about the Amey protests and contacted Julio Mayor of the Amey 5 and the LAWA to ask them how it had been organised. They asked Unite! for flags, t-shirts and a megaphone for the demonstration but the day before, when they collected them from Unite!'s headquarters the organiser tried to scare them about what the police might do and urged them to wear masks! The demo was very successful; all the workers and their families took part. It won a meeting with the company and a delegation of four cleaners from different ethnic backgrounds was elected to meet the management. Lancaster tried to intimidate the delegates telling them that if the protests continued they would all be sacked and replaced with new workers. They offer- >>>

ed to sack fewer cleaners, transferring three in return for a salary increase. The Unite! official, who was also present, told them in the meeting that they should accept this as the best offer they could expect, but the delegates did not respond and went back to a meeting of all the workers to make a decision.

The meeting decided to reject the transfers and shift changes and to send a letter signed by all the workers to Unite!, to Schroders and to Lancaster demanding a written guarantee and giving an ultimatum that there would be another demonstration and that these would continue until their demands had been met. The day before the next demo the HR manager met them and told them they would get the pay rise without redundancies. Workers at the meeting made the management nervous by not responding as to whether or not there would be more demonstrations. The workers seemed to have won but management resorted to dirty tricks like stopping the pay of activists. Further demonstrations were planned against this but Alberto Einstein Durango, one of the organisers,

was removed from Schroders. Since he had an outstanding grievance Lancaster paid him but sent him to various other buildings where they had cleaning contracts and told him just to walk around.

On 6<sup>th</sup> May 2009 they called him to a meeting in Canary Wharf where he was arrested on suspicion of working illegally. His home was searched and police seized political and trade union literature, including a DVD produced by a Tamil refugee group which the police called “terrorist material”. Supporters got Alberto a solicitor and demonstrated outside the police station. He accepted a caution for working under a false name on legal advice and was released. The police told him that he had no job to go back to. Lancaster did not contact him; they’d obviously expected him to be deported. Alberto was called to a disciplinary hearing at Canary Wharf on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> May, at which he was sacked both for the offence for which he was

cautioned and for “bringing the company into disrepute” by publicising its actions.

Alberto had worked for Lancaster since 1998, initially on a student visa which expired in 2002, and, on company advice, he continued to work for them under a false name, reverting to his real name when he was able to. He has correspondence from Lancaster under both his real and false names and, in the latter, he is still addressed as “Alberto”. He has “indefinite leave to remain”, which is why he wasn’t deported. This case exposes the collusion between cleaning companies and workers who are deemed “illegal”, not because the companies value the workers as collaborators in driving down wages, as nationalists would have it, but because it is the vulnerable status of such workers which allows the companies to do this.

## Mitie Workers

**A**lberto is a strong supporter of the cleaners working for Mitie at Willis. Also members of T&G/Unite!, they won the London Living Wage in April 2008 but were then subject to a similar attack to the Lancaster cleaners involving a change in shifts from 7-11pm to 10pm until 6am and a reduction in the number of workers.

On 11<sup>th</sup> December 2008 six workers were made redundant, including shop steward Edwin Pazmino, and they have conducted demonstrations outside the Willis building on Friday lunchtimes since their appeal was rejected on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2009. On 29<sup>th</sup> February, in response to the demonstrations, the workers were called to a meeting where they were handed a letter threatening them with legal action if they did not stop the pickets. They have continued to date as Willis Cleaners4Justice – a rebuke to Justice4Cleaners.

However, the cleaners fight on without the support of Unite! On 30<sup>th</sup> April, Deputy General Secretary, Jack



29/5/09: Alberto (2nd from left) with some of the Mitie cleaners

Dromey, husband of Harriet Harman, wrote to them withdrawing the union’s support from their campaign. The general drift of the letter is that Unite! and Mitie had made great efforts to accommodate the workers but that they had been unreasonable. The workers are disappointed that their version of events has been rejected by their union in favour of that of Mitie, but they are not surprised. Previously, Unite! officials had boasted of their “good relationship” with Mitie.

A petition against the withdrawal of support, in the form of an open letter to Dromey, was launched on 13<sup>th</sup> May and handed in at Unite! headquarters on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> May. A demonstration by supporters accompanying the petition also highlighted the case of Alberto, urging the union to support his claim for unfair dismissal and victimisation for trades union activities. The pressure has to be kept on the social democratic unions but the self-organisation which has sustained the struggles is the key to building unions run by and for their own members.

# Why the Unions Fail us

**T**his brings home the crucial failure of the “organising model” favoured by Unite! and other unions. They are social democratic in nature and essentially believe capitalism can and should be managed better to benefit workers.

To do this they have to work with the bosses and get the Labour Party to provide a legislative framework. A top down model of union recognition, negotiation controlled by full time officials and a concentration on “headline” issues like the London Living Wage, not the real concerns of workers, are their objectives. Unite!’s relationship with Mitie was always more important to them than the interests of a small, troublesome group of workers.

Social democrats take the fact that cleaning contractors are rich multinationals to mean they should be more willing to pay better wages as they can “afford” it. In fact, they are rich precisely because they constantly cut costs on existing contracts and win more by undercutting competitors. Besides giving investors a greater return, this attracts further investment and keeps share prices up. Their wealth proves they are ruthless but makes them attractive “partners” for social democrats. Winning the London Living Wage has always led first to cutting jobs, like with the shift changes at Schroders and Willis, then to victimisation of union activists. These workers are “hard to organise” due to the level of commitment required from the union to support them. The “organising model” of reformist trades unionism is based on gaining union recognition fol-

lowed by organisation around health and safety and other routine issues; it can’t cope with the class warfare which arises from this race to the bottom.

Trouble begins with the transfer to a new contractor, which will have won the contract by offering the same service for less. To make profit they cut costs by sacking the better paid workers and not replacing them, increasing workloads. Contractors rely on convincing workers they have no rights and can’t organise, or that there will be dire consequences if they do. The easiest way to do this is to use immigration controls. Immigration controls don’t keep people out of the UK; they control them when they’re here creating a “good business environment” for contractors. Rich companies thrive in this environment.

Mitie lags behind Capita and SERCO in the “outsourcing” and services stakes, but in 2008 its pre-tax profits were £67.9m on a turnover of £1.4bn. Year on year increases since 2004 had roughly doubled these figures. The NPL building management contract was run by SERCO which also runs immigration detention centres and carries out deportations; it subcontracted the cleaning to Amey, thus making money both from the cheaper workforce provided by immigration controls and from deporting migrants. SERCO is part owned by Ferrovial, a major shareholder in Tubelines, which itself subcontracts cleaning on London Underground. These companies have their fingers in all the pies and are very powerful.

The layers of subcontracting require research to find and pressurise the people who matter; who control the money, have the public profile and can be embarrassed. One reason for subcontracting is to evade responsibility for the workforce, as well as to hamper solidarity and cut costs. Our targets shouldn’t be Amey, but NPL with its standing in the scientific community; not Mitie or Lancaster but the bank that subcontracts to them and who has a reputation. Our aim shouldn’t just be to shame capitalists into acting against their own interests, but to expose their true nature and advocate their abolition. The existing unions can’t and won’t do this; it is not just the methods but the aims and objectives of social democrats which fail the working class.



Mitie cleaners at ...



# Breaking Isolation

## domestic abuse and workplace support

**D**omestic abuse remains a massive problem in Britain with the vast majority of it being carried out by men against women and children. The sheer scale of the problem can be gauged from the fact that, although only half of incidents are reported, the police still receive one call every minute that is related to domestic violence. Many of these calls involve life threatening situations, reflected in the fact that an average of two women each week are killed by their partner or ex-partner.

The abuse experienced by women takes various forms – physical, sexual or psychological – while one in four women will experience domestic abuse at some time in their lives. The effects of this abuse can be devastating and include homelessness, poor physical and mental health and isolation from friends and family. In trying to cope with these effects many women also succumb to drug and alcohol problems.

In the past domestic violence remained hidden. It was very often portrayed as something that women just had to put up with, something that was somehow a part of normal married life. Marriage itself was a relationship in which women were cast as subservient to men. It was not until the rise of the feminist movement in the 1960s and 70s that the reality of domestic abuse began to be forced out into the open. The more radical elements of the movement set up women's refuges which provided a place for women to escape from abuse and acted as a

focal point for the campaign against domestic violence.

Since then the support structures in place for abused women have steadily spread and improved. However, the high incidence of domestic abuse demonstrates that, although women escaping it now have more support available, its root cause, women's oppression, remains firmly entrenched within our society.

In recent years the battle against domestic abuse has been taken into

the workplace. Having to deal with problems at home, as well as in work, often proves too much and abused women end up being dismissed or having to leave, a situation which only adds to their feelings of isolation.

We fully support the aim of trying to raise awareness of domestic abuse within the workplace. Unlike the existing trade unions, we believe that it is only through uniting community and workplace struggles within a single movement that real progress can be made.



the workplace. The aim is to organise support within the workplace for women suffering from abuse as a means of breaking down the isolation of being trapped in abusive relationships within the home.

The campaign also aims to support women with work related problems that stem from abuse. The abuse suffered at home affects all areas of women's lives, including the workplace. Abused women often have poor work records in terms of issues like job performance, time keeping and absenteeism. It is also not uncommon for the perpetrator, or the friends and family of the per-

We do, however, reject the idea of attempting to win over trade union officials and company management in favour of a grass roots campaign aimed at workers within the workplace. The aim should be to raise awareness of domestic abuse among workers and to confront the culture of sexism that exists in many of our workplaces. It is only by demonstrating that there is opposition to domestic abuse and to everyday ingrained sexism, that women suffering from abuse will begin to become confident enough to come forward and break the isolation that traps them within the horror of abusive relationships.

# The Big Green Con

## seeing through the sham of “green” capitalism

**R**aging deforestation, degradation of the soil, sea and atmosphere and rising greenhouse gas emissions. With current concerns over the environment and future of the planet, it seems every business under the sun is doing their utmost to jump on the green bandwagon and convince us of their sound ecological credentials.

Along with this, all sorts of consumer products are advertised with buzz words like “ethically traded”, and “carbon neutral”. Magazines from *The Ecologist* to *The Observer* wax lyrical about how we can all be greener and do our bit to save the planet. The implication here seems to be that if we all buy the “right” products, recycle our rubbish and take a few steps to cut down on our energy emissions then, hey presto!, the planet will be magically saved.

The truth of the matter, of course, is that addressing today’s ecological crisis requires something more substantial than a few tokenistic lifestyle changes. It is now an established fact that levels of consumption in most advanced capitalist economies are way beyond what is sustainable. Nevertheless, “greenwash” – companies using advertising and PR to misrepresent or exaggerate their green credentials – is all the rage as corporations seek to cash in on new markets created by rising environmental consciousness. “Green” consumerism is about increasing consumption, not reducing it, or in Andrew Watson’s words “is largely a cynical attempt to maintain profit margins”. Watson eloquently sums up the con:

*Environmental concern is commodified and transformed into ideological support for capitalism. Instead of*

*raising awareness of the causes of the ecological crisis, green consumerism mystifies them. The solution is presented as an individual act rather than as the collective action of individuals struggling for social change. The corporations laugh all the way to the bank.*

Green consumerism, like green capitalism, is a contradiction in terms. Just as capitalism exploits people, the natural world is one more resource to shamelessly exploit for profit. In predicting the current ecological crisis, Murray Bookchin, cited how the domination of the natural world emerged from the exploitation of human by human. Further, in *Post Scarcity Anarchism* he observed:

*Capitalism is inherently anti-ecological. Competition and accumulation constitute the very law of life, a law ... summarised in the phrase ‘production for the sake of production’. Anything ... has its price and is fair game for the marketplace. In a society of this kind, nature is necessarily treated as a mere resource to be plundered and exploited. The destruction of the natural world ... follows inexorably from the very logic of capitalist production ... An economy that is structured around the maxim ‘expand or die’ must necessarily pit itself against the natural world and leave ecological ruin in its wake ...*



Thus, in enslaving us, capitalism also wrecks the planet. Sure, we can recycle and try to be more personally responsible. But phoney solutions like “green capitalism”, technological fixes and carbon offsetting are just diversions which fail to address the real cause of the environmental crisis. We must look beyond corporate greenwash and strive for the only real solution – an ecologically responsible libertarian socialist society. This means decentralisation of industry, recycling and renewable energy, sufficiency rather than excess, sustainability not waste and, most significantly, an end to the domination of human by human and an end to production for profit.

Anarcho-syndicalism is as much about addressing ecological exploitation as human exploitation; it is about building the framework for a free society within the existing one.

**The oil industry has distinguished itself as one of the worst culprits in using fraudulent and misleading claims to be environmentally friendly. Before announcing plans to reduce investment in renewable energy sources, complaints against Shell advertisements depicting pretty flowers rather than toxic pollution spewing forth from refinery stacks (under the headline “Don’t Throw Anything Away, There Is No Away”) were upheld by the Advertising Standards Authority. Not to be outdone, Exxon-Mobil took third place in the 2007 Worst EU Greenwash Awards, following advertising claims to be “working to reduce emissions”, when in actuality (by their own accounting) their emissions were increasing.**

# The Great Dock Strike of 1889

**T**HE GREAT DOCK STRIKE OF 1889 IN LONDON IS REMEMBERED as the foundation of the modern trade union movement. It was led by social democrats like Ben Tillett and future member of the Liberal cabinet John Burns, and by the future syndicalist and Communist Tom Mann. Its centenary in 1989 was celebrated by the Transport and General Workers' Union, now part of Unite!, which traced its origins back to the strike. However, for the nascent anarchist movement in Britain it was also a significant event which turned abstract talk of revolution and a simple advocacy of expropriation and rioting into what ultimately became anarcho-syndicalism.

Beginning with a small strike in the South West India Dock on 13<sup>th</sup> August, it spread spontaneously across the whole of London's docks. It also provided the inspiration for other groups of workers to organise and strike for increased wages or reduced hours. A near general strike prevailed in London's East End and anarchists thought the area on the verge of revolution. Every day, dockers and other workers marched through the streets and held vast public meetings. *Commonweal*, the Socialist League paper, wrote in September "The East End is like Paris in the first Revolution". Effective picketing was organised and Kropotkin wrote of the strike "showing the powers of the working men for organizing the supply and distribution of food for a large population of strikers". Here was a concrete example of solidarity and mutual aid organised by the workers themselves, not by the state.

A *de facto* rent strike prevailed and as the strike dragged on, citing the fact that "our studied moderation has been mistaken ... for lack of courage or want of resources", the Strike Committee called for a general strike across London from Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> September. But the social democratic leaders of the strike swiftly withdrew the "No work manifesto", ensuring that the character of the strike and of its legacy would ultimately be reformist. Ben Tillett stressed the need to keep "public opinion" on side.

In the best traditions of social democracy, Karl Marx's daughter, Eleanor, was sent by Engels to tell the committee to call off the general strike.

The financial hardship which had led the Strike Committee to call for a general strike was relieved by substantial funds sent to support the strikers from Australia, news of which reached London on 29<sup>th</sup> August. At the same time, Cardinal Manning and the Lord Mayor of London intervened to broker a settlement and a couple of weeks later the dockers went back to work having won their "tanner" (sixpence per hour). Once back at work, however, the bosses chipped away at what they had won and reversed it all. A similar fate befell the other groups of workers who had been inspired by the dock strike to win their own disputes, including Jewish tailors in the East End who would only finally win their demands in 1912 in a strike led by anarcho-syndicalist Rudolf Rocker.

Anarchists were not directly involved in the dock strike, but were active in propaganda work



around it. They aimed "to teach the people self-reliance, to urge them to take part in non-political [i.e. extra-parliamentary] movements directly started by themselves for themselves". Citing the example of the dock strike they argued "that as soon as the people learn to rely upon themselves they will act for themselves without waiting for parliament, it has been disregarded". They deplored the fact that "the strike has gone upon the old Trade Union lines but had it started on the lines of expropriation, who knows how rapidly it might have spread"; and "suggested to the men on strike that the trade unions should take over the work rather than the contractors. They might follow this up until they gradually get control of the whole concern, and they would find the capitalists as unnecessary as monarchs have been found to be".



Anarchists were also directly involved in organising drives and disputes inspired by the great strike. Many carmen, who drove the carts carrying goods unloaded at the docks to their destinations,

had struck in sympathy with the dockers, without assistance from the strike fund, and been sacked for their trouble. A Carman's Union was formed, in which Ted Leggatt was an active member, later becoming the union's full time organiser. Leggatt was prominent in the Syndicalist Revolt of 1910-1914. Charles Mowbray was a lay official of the West End tailors' union and active both in their struggles and in helping those of the mostly Jewish East End tailors. John Turner also formed a Shop Assistants Union. However, anarchists were ambivalent about the trade unions which they saw as insufficiently revolutionary and failing to harness the potential seen in the 1889 strikes.

From 1890 a critique of the leaderships of the new unions developed. Union officials seemed to think that they knew best and seemed to be more interested in electoral activity than the concerns of their members. As social democrats they did indeed see trades unions as inadequate for bringing social change, and tended to see them as mere platforms of support for electoral activity. In December 1890 *Commonweal* denounced Tom Mann and other dockers' union officials as "bureaucrats" and reported on a meeting at which complaints were made by rank and file members that he and the other officials were aloof and difficult to contact. These criticisms were made against a background of defeats for the new unions and the beginnings of an economic depression.

By contrast, the anarchists criticised what they called "officialism" and advocated solidarity between skilled and unskilled workers given spontaneously without official approval, and unity between employed and unemployed workers. They also argued that workers should apply the tactics of industrial struggle to wider struggles, and saw struggles as having the potential to become revolutionary. They vigorously opposed nationalisation, pointing out that the social democrats were "urging us not to wait for the repair of the ancient political machine, i.e. not

1<sup>st</sup> 10,000 marchers had been harassed and attacked repeatedly by them. "Legitimate protest" has always served to legitimise repression of protest which might prove effective.

In 1893, Mowbray was among the delegates at the Zürich Anarchist Congress held during and after the International Socialist Congress from which the anarchists had been expelled for not supporting "political action", i.e. electoral activity. Propaganda for the general strike, as a prelude to revolution, was com-

combined with demands for the 8 hour day and other practical demands to be won through direct action rather than legislation passed in parliament. Solidarity between strongly organised workers and the unemployed was also advocated. Back in Britain, Mowbray argued unions should fight unemployment by imposing the 8 hour day and abolishing overtime and piecework.



to concern ourselves with mere politics but to joyfully confide railways or land or what not to the control of Salisbury and Balfour or Gladstone and Morley or Roseberry and Co. [Conservative and Liberal politicians of the day], tomorrow if only those chosen of the people can be persuaded to undertake the task."

These differences were thrown into sharp focus by the question of May Day, which had been declared International Workers' Day by the international socialist congresses in Paris late in 1889. The call for a 1 day general strike on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1890 to demand the 8 hour day and commemorate the Haymarket Martyrs of 1886 was answered by the anti-parliamentary Socialist League and the small Federation of Trades and Industries. The socialists and larger unions held a march on Sunday May 4<sup>th</sup>, when 100,000 marchers were assisted by the police; on May

Later in the decade, anarchists were concerned that unions were either too small to be effective, or too big and consequently dominated by officials leading to branch apathy and lack of control over those officials. They also linked the social democratic strategy of seeking positions in the unions as a base for electoral activity to the inability of those unions to effectively fight over economic issues. In September 1903 and March 1904 Sam Mainwaring, an anarchist active in the Socialist League during the dock strike, published 2 issues of *The General Strike*, a revolutionary syndicalist paper that made detailed criticisms of "officialism" and publicised strikes in Europe which used syndicalist methods.

The legacy of the 1889 dock strike was the Syndicalist Revolt twenty years later, not just the reformist general unions of today.

# No Platform

**T**HE BRITISH NATIONAL PARTY IS A FASCIST PARTY and must be treated as such. Don't be fooled by their growing electoral success. Don't think that because "ordinary" people, and even non-racists, are voting for them and joining them that the party has somehow changed. Elected positions and an influx of "moderate" members will not transform the party.

In the BNP, power and policy flow from the top down and the party is run by veteran fascists who won't deviate from their long held agenda. Whatever they say in public, these people are committed to creating an authoritarian regime, to severe limits on individual and collective freedom in every sphere of life, to racial segregation and eventual removal of non-white people. On top of this, the BNP has a stated commitment to maintaining capitalism and free enterprise, contradicting its claims to be an "alternative", radical or even revolutionary party.

## electoral politics

Yet the BNP will push its electoral strategy to the limit, seeking to capitalise on any and every source of voters' fear and discontent. These range from local community concerns to disgust over MPs' expenses, from fears about the economic crisis to concerns over immigration, radical Islam and terrorism. The BNP don't care what the issue is, or whether people's fears are justified; they just tailor the message in an attempt to win people over. This is what fascists have always done. They will use the electoral system, democratic "freedoms" and the notion of freedom of speech to put across their poisonous message,

For as long as they can, they'll portraying themselves as a democratic party, acting within the law and



how not to campaign against fascism

seeking to gain power by legal means. Ultimately, their aim is to silence all opposition.

## strategy of tension

Yet BNP leaders know that there are limits to their electoral support, even in cases like the recent Euro poll, where the voting system, low turnout, economic uncertainty and popular anger at the "political class" all played into their hands. They know that there will always be a majority opposing them.

How then, can they get around this? In the past, fascists have played the

parliamentary game while also exacerbating tensions in society which they hoped would drive people into their camp. In Italy, in the 1920s and as recently as the 1980s, fascists sought to use class conflict, the strength of the left and the perceived threat of revolution to persuade powerful sectors of society, inside and outside of government and industry, to opt for an authoritarian "solution". In the '20s this "strategy of tension" worked, with

Mussolini's minority fascist party attacking the left and being hoisted to power by its influential conservative friends. In the '80s it failed, but only at the cost of many lives, as fascist gangs and their allies in the state structure engaged in armed actions and bombings.

In Britain today, the organised working class has taken a battering and, despite some encouraging signs lately, cannot be painted as being about to seize control. However, this won't stop the BNP denouncing opposition to it as "red mobs" in an attempt to whip up fears of political violence on the

# for Fascism

streets. Two days after his election, BNP leader, Nick Griffin, was calling on police to "get a grip" on anti-fascist protestors – the first step in the authoritarian solution he advocates for all Britain's ills. But the BNP's main arena will be race and immigration. It will be here that they try to whip up fears of impending social conflict, of the destruction of "traditional" British values and institutions and of the "indigenous" population becoming a persecuted minority in its own country. Here, the BNP will be helped not just by the undercurrent of racism still present in British society, but by those sections of the media and the political elite which feed it on a daily basis with scare stories about everything from asylum seekers, immigrants and Islamists to the EU. Though these media outlets do not support the BNP, their expressions of nationalism and xenophobia inevitably play into the party's hands.

But for fascists, even this fetid mix of fear and paranoia is not enough. They are already seeking to spice it up with racial violence on a frightening scale. The BNP argument will be helped enormously if they can point to actual conflict between ethnic groups, and moves are already afoot to provoke this. While the BNP itself will seek to retain its democratic and legalistic image, other far right groups, some linked to the party, some not, are already taking to the streets trying to ignite violence. The BNP will deny any ties with them, but will seize upon any resulting clashes to argue that multiculturalism doesn't work, that black and Asian youth are attacking whites, and that the "indigenous" population can no longer tolerate this state of affairs.



On May 24<sup>th</sup>, groups calling themselves "March for England" and "United People of Luton" supported a protest in the Bedfordshire town over an earlier Muslim demo against troops returning from Afghanistan. Though some of the organisers denied this was a racist march, around 400 people, some masked, and including known fascists, assembled and roamed the streets waving British and English flags. Asian-owned shops and cars were attacked and police intervened to prevent the mob descending on the Bury Park area, a centre of the town's Asian community. "March for England" have said they are planning future events.

## new phase of conflict

This was barely reported by a mainstream media still playing down the BNP's potential at the Euro elections, but it is a portent of what is to come and a clarion call to anti-fascists. We are entering a new phase of conflict with the far right and we must be absolutely clear about what we are doing and why. Fascism is about far more than racism, and a reinvigorated far right will not just focus on its perceived racial enemies. Its activists are already targeting radical book-

shops, social centres and those on the left. Should the economic crisis deepen, especially in conjunction with the collapse of parliamentary "legitimacy" in the eyes of many and increased racial tension, elements of the state, business and conservatism will begin to contemplate supporting the BNP. By any assessment, this scenario is still far down the road,

and circumstances may never bring it into being. But we can ensure that this cannot happen by attacking the BNP and its ilk now, by preventing them from organising and developing their strength, and thereby eliminating them as a potential or actual ally of other anti-working-class forces in society.

Defeating fascism is an integral part of building a revolutionary movement. It increases our combativeness, forces us to communicate our ideas to ever wider circles of potential sympathisers and exposes as false the liberal arguments that fascists have a right to "free speech", that parliamentary democracy is a defence against the far right, and that relying on the forces of the state is the best way to protect working people from oppression and violence. We must close down fascism as a first step to ridding our class of all of the parasites currently exploiting us and living off our backs.

## what is to be done?

**Build SF** – we have a great tradition of anti-fascism and must recruit on the basis of that and of our work today. We are the revolutionary alternative. >>>

**Support wider militant anti-fascist campaigns** – that means Antifa ([www.antifa.org.uk/](http://www.antifa.org.uk/)) which already has many anarchist adherents. It's the only national anti-fascist organisation with a policy of "no platform" for fascism, of not allowing the BNP to organise, speak or campaign without physical opposition. If there are like minded people in your area, form an anti-fascist group and get affiliated to Antifa.

**New links with those threatened by fascism** – the BNP seeks to "divide and rule", preferring to defeat us piecemeal than to take on a united, militant anti-fascist movement. Anyone who agrees with "no platform", whether part of organised anti-fascism before or not, now needs to organise around it. A primary responsibility for anti-fascists is to make direct links with communities which fascists will target. This does not mean going to "community leaders" (unless they genuinely back a no platform approach), but making efforts to draw in disaffected and angry members of those communities which militant anti-fascism has often previously struggled to connect with. We can much more quickly raise the numbers we need to swamp fascism by dramatically and imaginatively broadening our networks of supporters. New times call for new tactics and we must look outwards and break down barriers between people willing to confront the BNP.

**No platform for fascists** – don't be conned by liberal notions of free speech or of appearing "anti-democratic" by preventing the BNP from organising or speaking. No measure of electoral success can be allowed to legitimise fascism. Organise direct action against all fascist manifestations – stalls, leafleting, meetings, venues, marches. We have made a good start with this. Griffin and Andrew Brons were forced from public view outside Westminster the day after the election. In Manchester the next day, they were boxed into a run down pub owned by a BNP supporter, only fending off protestors with the aid of the police. These protests were organised mainly by Unite Against Fascism, linked to the SWP and reformist trade unions. It has in the past sought to prevent direct action so it remains to be seen whether the BNP's electoral success will prompt it to take "no platform" more literally.

**Keep up the pressure** – Griffin says of anti-fascists that "in the end they will get bored". He clearly intends to put across the party's message in Britain, rather than jet off to Brussels and fiddle expenses. This will be a crucial contest of will with a BNP desperately trying to be an accepted and permanent feature of the political landscape, to "normalise" and "decontaminate" itself in order to rise up the greasy political pole. Anti-fascists must wreck this strategy at all costs.



anti-fascists chase Nick Griffin, June 2009

**Want to comment on anything you've read in DA?**

**Want to bring anything to DA readers' attention?**

**Just email us at:  
[da@direct-action.org.uk](mailto:da@direct-action.org.uk)**

**or write to us at:  
PO Box 29, S.W. DO,  
Manchester,  
M15 5HW.**

## Anarchism & Crime

Dear *DA*,

May I commend *DA* for the article Anarchism and Crime in the Spring 2009 edition. It's nice to read anarchists discuss this issue sensibly.

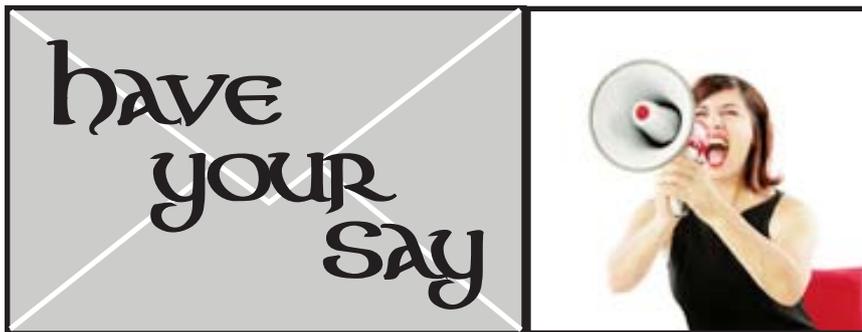
Not sure what exactly "the policing role would...be carried out only as part of a balanced job complex" means.

Can I assume it means we the people policing ourselves and each other, as community militia, workers and residents militia, protecting ourselves and each other and coming to decisions by free association and direct democracy, with former skilled police constables training the rest of us in crime prevention and detection and forensics being retained as needed?

Glad to read about rotation of posts and community direct democracy. Of course there would be no role for judges in an anarchist society. Decisions on proven guilt would need to be reserved to juries, and sentencing also decided by community direct democracy. Judges can be replaced with chairpersons of the court, a position rotated and recallable, and for maintaining order only.

Solidarity, Joey.

*We would argue for society to dispense with police forces per se, but some of their functions, like those you mention, would still be needed. Instead of being the preserve of one group, as now, these should be integrated with other related, "non-policing" roles, always under the control of an appropriate council (rather than militia) whether that be at the community or workplace level, or at the regional or industrial level.*



## The Miami Five

Dear *DA*,

The Miami 5 were trying to prevent Miami fascists, aided by the CIA, from carrying out sabotage in Cuba. They were arrested in 1998 as "terrorists", have been in US jails ever since and have been denied regular family visits.

Join the campaign for their cause by writing to:

Secretary of State  
Hilary Rodham Clinton  
U.S. Dept. of State

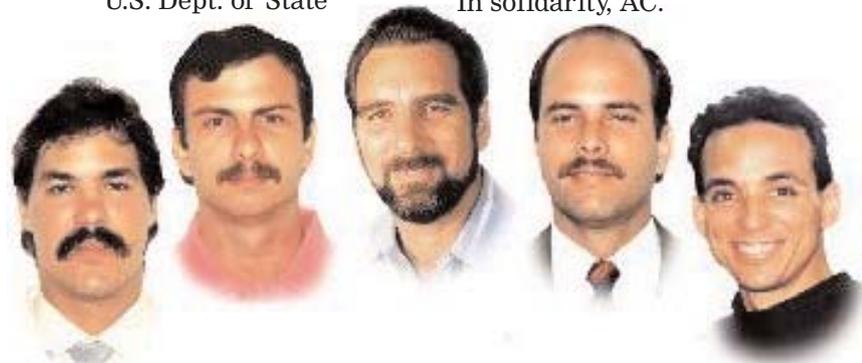
2201 C Street NW  
Washington DC  
20520 USA

Urge her to grant temporary visas on humanitarian grounds to 2 of the prisoners' wives, Olga Salanueva and Adriana Pérez, who have been refused visas nine times and have not seen their husbands for 8 and 10 years.

The Miami 5 are innocent. For details see the Cuba Solidarity Campaign at:

[www.cubaconnect.co.uk](http://www.cubaconnect.co.uk)

In solidarity, AC.



## English National Resistance

Dear *DA*,

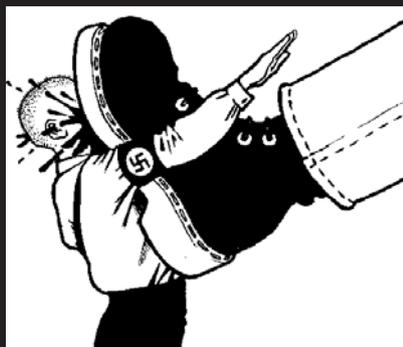
I have been monitoring a little group of Nazifascists, English National Resistance, for a couple of months:

The interesting thing about them is that they are purposely attempting to replicate similar movements in Germany who have taken on the anarchist style of dressing in black; they even have the anarchist antifa flag logo as their logo! From their site it seems they are getting active – graffiti, banner drops, leaflets – in a few cities.

Just thought I'll let people

know. No doubt we will run into them at some point – it's always good to be on our guard especially if they turn up in black trying to infiltrate demos, etc.

In solidarity, AN



## Left Luggage

Dear *DA*,

Just to let you know that we have launched a website to promote discussion of strategy on the British left.

We hope to build links and share ideas and experiences with others on the left. Our primary goal is to develop working class self-organisation and to reorientate the left towards this aim. We also aim to encourage a culture of robust self-criticism and internal democracy. The site is independent and run on non-sectarian lines, and welcomes contributions from activists from across the Left.

Please visit our blog at:

[theleftluggage.wordpress.com](http://theleftluggage.wordpress.com).

We'd also be very grateful if you'd be willing to put a link to the blog on your site, or in *DA*. Feel free to use any of the articles on the blog – we just ask that you include an active link to our site.

Best wishes, Joseph

See "Friends and Neighbours", p35.

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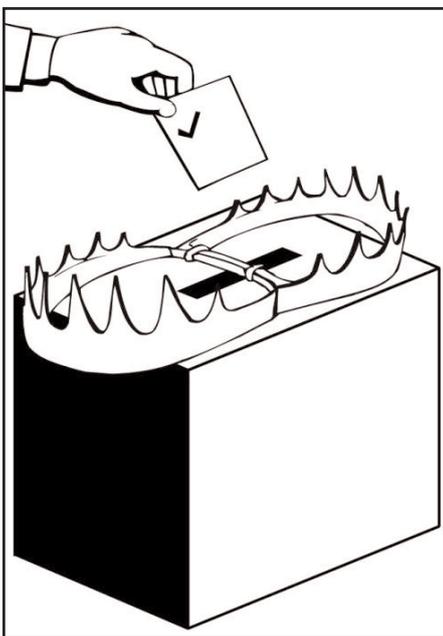
'Direct Action'

return to: *Direct Action*, PO Box 29, South West DO, Manchester, M15 5HW

# A Rebellious Tradition

**I**T'S COMFORTING TO LEARN that in troubled times our fearless leaders are doing their utmost to be paragons of virtue – not. Revelations that public funds are being frittered away on frivolities like moat cleaning, duck islands and non-existent mortgages shows how detached from reality politicians really are. As one member of the public remarked on TV, if ordinary people behaved like that they'd get locked up. As the nation nodded unanimously in agreement, the sheer magnitude of the expenses scandal and the deep seatedness of the corruption exposed came as a real shock to many. But it shouldn't have.

Corruption and self-service is what politicians do best – after protecting the interests of their buddies in banking and big business.



Collusion in extraordinary rendition, foreknowledge of torture at Guantánamo Bay, and rubber stamping of the illegal war in Iraq have similarly come to light – without consequence to the politicians. It seems there's one law for them and one for the rest of us. Small wonder that a princely 69% of the electorate chose not to vote in the European elections.

Back in April, perhaps as a portent of things to come, protests at the G20 summit saw baton wielding riot police wading indiscriminately into groups of peaceful protestors. One act of wanton thuggery, captured incontrovertibly on film, caused the tragic death of paper seller Ian Tomlinson. These actions sparked outrage amongst liberal observers. One *Guardian* article by Paul Kingsnorth remarked:

*Why do we live in a nation of CCTV cameras, email surveillance, DNA databases and masked riot police, watching in silence as more and more of our fundamental liberties are stolen by our government?*

Why indeed? Kingsnorth's article went on to decry the ravaging of rural communities by second homes, the carpet bombing of our high streets by superstores, the demise of the pub, the selling off of the NHS and the erosion of everything quintessentially English by the voraciousness of market forces.

Sadly, the homogenising effects of corporate globalisation, social breakdown and the bitter fallout of recession are being exploited by a resurgent BNP. Scapegoating minority groups suits the moneyed classes and politicians nicely. The tabloid media they control are well versed in fuelling racism (and sexism for that matter). It's an age old concept called divide and rule; a tactic designed to divert the blame from where it truly lies.



As leftist party hacks mouth worn out platitudes, sporadic strike action and social protest simmers. Whether the allure of Britain's Got Talent, East Enders, tabloid gossip, cheap booze and the shopping mall can remain all consuming diversions indefinitely is yet to be seen. Financial uncertainty and rising household debt fuel despondency, acting as a brake on radical dissent. Nevertheless, the heady mix of a gaping wealth gap, a faltering economy, disillusion with all politicians, rising environmental concern and a shared repugnance of racism offer an opportunity for change.

Britain boasts a proud and understated tradition of rebellion, radicalism and resistance. It's a tradition that gave birth to the Levellers, the Diggers, the Suffragettes and the syndicalist revolt; a tradition that came within a whisker of overthrowing feudalism, brought general strikes and poll tax rebellions; and a tradition that has fought for equality and countered every social injustice with defiance.

As the Orwellian state edges closer, savvy liberals and revolutionaries alike seem to agree on one thing; the spirit of domestic radicalism needs to reawaken and rediscover its voice. "Disobedience" as Oscar Wilde wrote, "is (wo)man's original virtue. It is through disobedience that progress has been made, through disobedience and through rebellion". Growing workplace militancy, campaigns from defending the NHS to confronting the arms trade, local initiatives to combat poverty and to oust crooked MPs, show there is still cause for optimism.

## **Spain** CNT vs. Ryanair

**R**yanair workers in Zaragoza, Spain, are currently in dispute. The workers involved are members of the anarcho-syndicalist union, the CNT. The dispute started in March when Ryanair cut the hours of staff by reducing the working day. The strikers are also protesting at Ryanair's refusal to make staff on temporary contracts permanent.

The dispute deepened when the delegate of the CNT's union section in Ryanair received a letter of dismissal, for reasons of unsuitability, claiming a drop in the worker's performance – a claim that is clear nonsense. Ryanair hoped that by sacking the CNT delegate the rest of the strikers would be intimidated back to work.

The move backfired, however, with the sacking only stiffening the strikers' resolve. The strikers have made it clear there will be no resolution of the dispute until their delegate is reinstated. They have also made it clear that they will reject any attempts to pay compensation as an alternative to the full reinstatement of their sacked comrade.

But the dispute should not just be seen in the context of defending

pay and conditions. Since the CNT began organising in Ryanair, management have tried everything possible to discourage staff from joining the union. This should come as no surprise. Ryanair are no lovers of even reformist unions, so it's no shock that they have resisted the spread of the revolutionary CNT. Should the strikers fail there is little doubt that Ryanair will try to break the CNT as a force within the workplace.

As well as demanding the full reinstatement of the sacked worker the CNT is demanding an end to short term contracts and part time working. In pressing their demands, the strikers have not only received the support of the CNT membership across Spain; the anarcho-syndicalist international, the IWA, has also organised two international days of action in support of the Zaragoza strikers, and further such events are planned.

To get involved with the planned days of action, contact:

[solfed@solfed.org.uk](mailto:solfed@solfed.org.uk)

or your nearest SF local (see p.35).

For further details, in Spanish, see:

<http://cntryanair.wordpress.com>



CNT demo at Zaragoza airport

## **Peru**

### General Strike for the Amazon

**T**he rapacious western imperialist oil machine marches on, this time in Peru. After government decrees opened up parts of the Amazon region to plunder by multinationals in April this year, indigenous communities responded by setting up a series of blockades. Leaders of the resistance movement issued a statement saying; "we will fight together with our parents and children to take care of the forest, to save the life of the equator and the entire world".

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of June, a phalanx of troops, gunships and armed police launched a savage assault on one of the key blockades. The ensuing conflict resulted in the deaths of between 30 and 100 protestors. Curfews and martial law were then installed, as the US-friendly president, Alan García, denounced protestors as "savage and barbaric". In spite of this violent repression, indigenous communities vowed to fight on.

Outraged, Peruvian social movements, trade unionists and human rights groups joined forces to stage a general strike on June 11<sup>th</sup> in support of the activists. With solidarity actions taking place around the world, the Peruvian Congress eventually bowed to overwhelming pressure, repealing laws that effectively paved the way for oil drilling. In a humiliating climb down, two government ministers resigned and García has apologised for his "serious errors and exaggerations". While the multinationals will no doubt regroup, this turn around represents an epic victory for the power of solidarity.

For further info, see:

[www.amazonwatch.org/  
amazon/PE/](http://www.amazonwatch.org/amazon/PE/)

[www.aidesep.org.pe](http://www.aidesep.org.pe)

# Killing for Profit

The 2008 Annual Survey of Trade Union Rights is frightening reading. The report documents the murders of 76 trade unionists around the world. By far the most dangerous place for trade unionists remains Columbia where approximately one trade unionist was slaughtered each week. The second most murderous state was Guatemala, where nine trade unionists were killed. Four were killed in both Venezuela and the Philippines, three in Honduras, two in Nepal and one each in Iraq, Nigeria, Panama, Tunisia and Zimbabwe.

These figures are in some ways only the tip of the iceberg. For example, it does not include people killed in strikes or on demonstrations. In Egypt, for instance, after textile workers were forced back to work, a demonstration of support by the general public was put down with

six people being killed. Again, in Equatorial Guinea, a strike by Chinese workers was bloodily suppressed by the security forces, leaving two workers dead and several others injured. Subsequently, 300 strikers were sent back to China.

The report also documents the physical attacks, imprisonment and sacking of thousands of trade unionists, as well as the increasing use of temporary contracts, outsourcing and the use of other “flexible” working practices as a means of undermining collective organisation and driving down pay and conditions. The report highlights the fact that capitalism worldwide remains a brutal system that will kill, main and imprison in its thirst for ever higher profits.

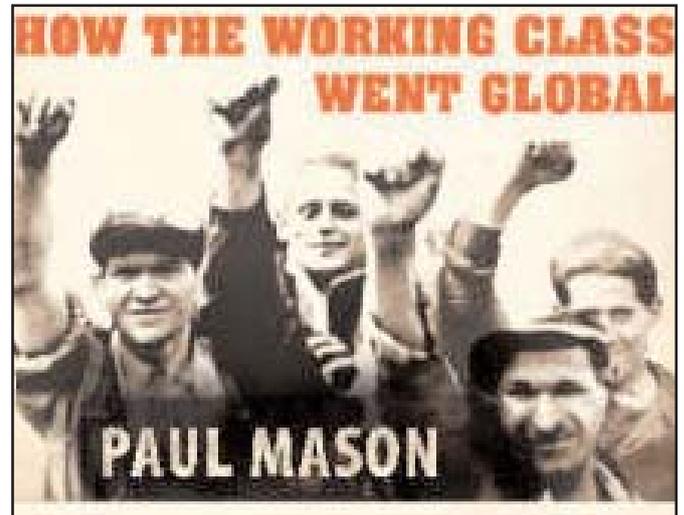
The full report is at:  
<http://survey09.ituc-csi.org/>



San José, Costa Rica: a young worker being beaten by police during a demonstration of street vendors

# Live Working or Die Fighting

Paul Mason – 2008 – Vintage Books  
320 pages – £8.99 – ISBN: 978-0099492887



Newsnight correspondent, Paul Mason's *Live Working or Die Fighting* offers a unique, timely and engaging micro-historical account of the rise and fall of the revolutionary working class. Charting the conditions which gave rise to the mass syndicalist movements in Europe and the Americas during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, contemporary parallels are drawn and interwoven with the experiences of workers in the newly industrialised “global south”.

Mason eulogises key inspirational figures from our past – figures like Louise Michel, Bill Haywood, Tom Paine – telling of bitter struggles fought with murderous bosses and implacable rulers. Latterly, he cites the post-war factors that have seen militant workers' movements fall into seemingly irretrievable decline; welfarism and

workforce stratification, to name but two.

One bone of contention for us, which is raised in the book's closing chapter, is the misguided faith placed by the author in aid agencies as instruments of social change. Nevertheless, Mason observes how market globalisation has sounded the death knell of “consensus” politics, thereby bringing about a renewed convergence between what were previously (economically and geographically) disparate workforces. Whether this convergence is capable of being forged into a worldwide movement for social change remains to be seen.

The future, as they say, has yet to be written, but *Live Working or Die Fighting* provides an invaluable and well researched account of how we got to where we are now. Recommended.

# Meltdown:

## the end of the age of greed - Paul Mason

2009 – Verso Books – 208 pages – £7.99 – ISBN: 978-1844673964

**I**t's almost a year since the proverbial hit the fan and splattered the walls of economic institutions, our workplaces and our homes. While governments and central banks frantically try to clean up the mess, Paul Mason has stepped in to analyse the murky data. Although many explorations of the economic crisis leave the reader cold or confused, Mason has a knack for clear and engaging exposition of the processes at work. There's a good glossary and an accessible style, like using the detailed analogy of a magic trick to explain "structured finance" – OK, I'm still a bit confused.

Getting the details of the crisis also involves understanding the past, something Mason does very well. Moving from recent to historical events with a fluidity well practiced in *Live Working or Die Fighting*, economic history becomes a fascinating story. Today's world of high finance and high politics is also part of the story; a world apart from ours, mediated to us through story tellers. And Paul Mason tells it pretty well. Personal histories are given to key players and personalities are brought in, like ex-Bear Stern's CEO, Jimmy Cane, who stays at a bridge tournament whilst his hedge funds collapse. Mason also tells his own story, one of a BBC reporter wandering bewildered from bank to workplace to news conference, forming a narrative to contextualise the haphazard activity of the economic and political players.

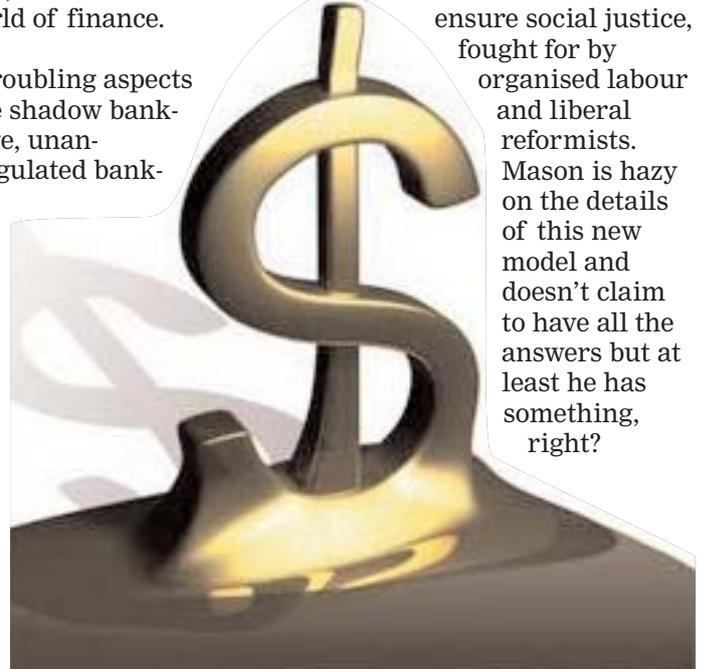
Among the anecdotes and personal histories *Meltdown* sets out the events and mechanisms that have created the current crisis, as well as the faltering attempts to fix it. Mason pinpoints the passing of the 1999 Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act in the USA as the major piece of deregulation that led to financial turmoil. Costing \$300m in lobbying, the Act ended the separation of investment banking from people's savings and allowed banks to behave as insurance companies. This, beside the development of information technology, it is argued, unleashed a new era in the world of finance.

One of the more troubling aspects of this era was the shadow banking system, "a huge, unannounced and unregulated banking network operating with almost no press coverage and little visibility". The off-balance sheet companies known as "conduits" and "structured investment vehicles" ended up crippling the banks when they went bust. Another well documented cock up is the credit default swap, an insurance policy that pays out in the event that somebody else goes bust – "the unwinding of this tangled web of default bets drove the markets towards catastrophe". And of course there was the subprime market which teamed up with the derivatives people, apparently in a coffee queue at Bank of America, to create the accident waiting to happen.

The attempt to fix the subsequent mess is well charted in *Meltdown*,

picking out the reluctance to move away from old ways of thinking and hesitation amongst central bankers and politicians. Essentially Mason believes the old monetarist and interest rate levers aren't working and we need a change; "the search for an alternative to neo-liberalism is on". The suggested alternative is a "socialised banking system plus redistribution" with low profit utility style banking separated from the speculative sector. Essentially, he argues for a more regulated capitalism with state intervention to

ensure social justice, fought for by organised labour and liberal reformists. Mason is hazy on the details of this new model and doesn't claim to have all the answers but at least he has something, right?



The anti-capitalists, he claims, don't have an adequate response to the crisis. We can and should be promoting the end of capitalism but the level of class struggle necessary to support it doesn't exist yet. Should we then be engaging with big ideas of generalised reform alongside "horizontal and granular" struggles?

Either way, *Meltdown* is a fun and illuminating read, a rare treat in economic texts.

## A Grand Cause the hunger strike & the deportation of anarchists from Soviet Russia

G. P. Maksimov

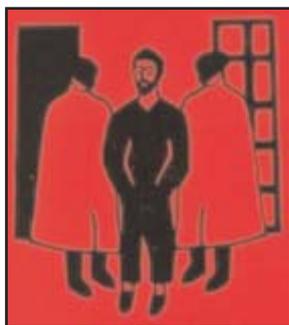
2008 – 34 pages – £2.00 – ISBN: 978-1873605745

The Kate Sharpley Library has an admirable commitment to recovering anarchist history. This has led to pamphlets and books on many fascinating but sometimes obscure topics: the story of the Budapest Commune of 1919, the biography of an anarchist cobbler in Philadelphia, or tales of Italian exiles fighting tyranny in 1930s Argentina, for example. KSL also casts its spotlight on epic struggles which mark the anarchist past. Its series on Spain, from first hand accounts of life in the CNT militias to painstaking reconstructions of the post-war anti-Franco underground, are invaluable.

KSL is currently engaged in a research project on the anarchist movement in Russia. The telling of its story has been hampered in many ways. The Bolsheviks clamped down on left wing opponents almost as soon as they seized power in 1917. Activists disappeared into camps or prisons and many never re-emerged. Others were murdered by the *Cheka* or Red Guards, or shot down at Kronstadt or other, lesser known, acts of resistance. Organisations were liquidated and their records seized or destroyed. The new state strenuously tried to eradicate anarchism from the annals of the revolutionary movement. Lenin's party, glad of the anarchists' contribution to the Tsar's overthrow and the ensuing civil war, was quick to smear them as counter-revolutionaries and wreckers once its power was secure.

However, now that Soviet communism is no more, researchers can

revisit this lost past. Records have re-emerged, archives are accessible and individuals can share diaries, letters and papers passed down by their forebears. Details of KSL's "Anarchists in the Gulag, Prison and Exile Project" are on its website, but an early exercise in publishing its findings is *A Grand Cause*, a pamphlet telling the story of a hunger strike by hundreds of imprisoned anarchists in 1921. Timed to coincide with the presence in Russia of foreign delegates at a conference intended to bring unions into the Soviet orbit, the hunger strikers demanded to be released and to be allowed to leave the country if they wished, and it worked.



The pamphlet is taken from the writings of Grigorii Maksimov, (better known in the west as G.P. Maximoff), secretary of Russia's Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation and himself a hunger striker. Upon release, he left the country and later produced a classic account of the Bolsheviks' destruction of the revolution, *The Guillotine at Work*. However, Maximoff wrote largely from memory, and this pamphlet is augmented by extensive footnotes, shedding new light on many of the people and events covered in the text. It also has an excellent biographical essay on Maximoff by Anatoly Dubovik, who has written extensively on Russian anarchism.

Congratulations are due to KSL – their work is ensuring that despite the best efforts of Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin, the truth will out!

## The Fed- Anarquista crisis, armed struggle translated & edited 2009 – 50 pages – £3.00

This overview of the main Uruguayan anarchist movement takes the form of various articles by and interviews with militants. It may be initially daunting for anyone not familiar with the subject, as the pieces which give a basic overview of the history only appear in the middle and at the end of the pamphlet. However, it is worth persevering as the story of the *Federación Anarquista Uruguaya* (FAU) is instructive.

Though anarchists had been active in Uruguay since the 1860s, the *Federación* was not formed until 1956. Like earlier libertarian organisations in the country, it was a broad based movement, influenced mainly by the writings of Mikhail Bakunin and Errico Malatesta. Though anarchism gained a following in the poorer districts of the cities and in some trade unions, the *Federación* lacked a distinct ideology and, partly due to this, it lost influential activists to Marxism in the wake of the successful Cuban revolution of 1959 – proof again that the effects of selfless activism are all too often dissipated if anarchist movements don't adopt a strategy and organisational model which allow it to present a viable alternative to the parties of the left.

Worse was to follow as a growing economic crisis brought with it increased state repression against the working class. Fascist gangs

attacked union activists and strikers and an intense social conflict led to the suspension of civil liberties by the government in 1968, followed by a military seizure of power in 1973. The FAU had to go



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# **eración Uruguaya**

**& dictatorship, 1967-85**  
by Paul Sharkey  
ISBN: 978-1873605691



underground but continued to operate clandestinely, despite many of its members being rounded up.

It created an armed wing, the People's Revolutionary Organisation, which expropriated funds from the banks for workers' struggles and kidnapped leading industrialists. However, the military proved too strong and many FAU militants had to go into exile. Yet even in neighbouring countries they were not safe. South American dictatorships combined with US intelligence against revolutionaries of all shades in "Operation Condor" – an international collaborative effort launched in 1975 in which information was shared, fugitives and exiles were hunted down and tens of thousands were imprisoned or assassinated.

Ultimately, the Uruguayan dictatorship could not solve the country's economic problems and its repression could not indefinitely contain popular protest. The FAU reemerged with the outbreak of strikes and demonstrations in the mid-1980s and held its refounding congress in 1986. Today, with "democracy" as the preferred political method of the nation's ruling class, it is once more active in community, workplace and student struggles. The definitive English language history of anarchism in South America is yet to be written, but pamphlets such as this are useful steps towards that goal.

# **Salvador Puig Antich & the *Movimiento Ibérico de Liberación***

edited by Anna Key & translated Paul Sharkey  
2008 – 36 pages – £2.00 – ISBN: 978-1873605448

**T**his collection of articles charts the tragic story of Salvador Puig Antich, a Catalan anarchist who was the final victim of the executioner's garrote in Franco's Spain. The pieces, including several by Spanish and Catalan anarchists, also detail Puig Antich's legacy and attempts to expropriate it by those who did not share his ideals.

His political journey began early, his family being steeped in democratic Catalan nationalism and opposition to the forces of Spain's right, which they saw as a lethal threat to Catalonia's identity and integrity. Yet it was the events of May 1968 in Paris and the armed actions of ETA which are generally acknowledged to have inspired Puig Antich to become actively involved in the fight against the Spanish dictatorship in the late 1960s. From initially supporting communist inspired workers' groups, he embraced anarchism and joined a fledgling paramilitary organisation, the *Movimiento Ibérico de Liberación* (MIL).

The MIL was ideologically diverse, incorporating anarchist, situation-

ist and left communist ideas. Tactically, it aimed to use armed force to aid workers' struggles, and though it issued statements explaining its politics and its actions, saw itself in a supporting role rather than behaving as a vanguard. To this end its units robbed banks and distributed the money to strikers, and even seized printing presses with the intention of creating its own underground media.

However, its campaign was largely uncoordinated and lacked the infrastructure to sustain itself, and the MIL announced its disbandment in 1973. This left activists living clandestinely and continuing sporadic actions without the necessary support networks. Franco's security forces were still effective and quickly made arrests. Following a bank robbery at the end of the year, they captured some of the raiders and ascertained that these men had arranged a rendezvous with other MIL activists, including Puig Antich. At the meeting point, the police pounced, arresting him and a comrade, though only after an inspector had died in a close quarters shoot out in which he himself was wounded. He was sentenced to death, which provoked a wave of solidarity actions across Europe and even in South America. Any chance of clemency evaporated though, when ETA assassinated Franco's intended successor, Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco, with a car bomb in Madrid in December 1973. An ailing Franco determined to show he was still in control and sanctioned Puig Antich's execution the following March.

This pamphlet is a timely reexamination of Salvador Puig Antich's life and significance and reminds us that, despite Franco's victory in 1939, resistance to him continued until the very end of his long and repressive reign.



Salvador Puig Antich

# Seeing Sense in alienation, power and the

**I**N VIRTUALLY EVERY SPHERE OF OUR MODERN LIVES, WE are systematically alienated, or separated, from each other by powerful forces. These forces pervade our work, leisure, cultural and social relationships. On a micro level, the prevalence of problems such as crime, anti-social behaviour and the breakdown of community are all symptomatic of this. On the macro level, this alienation manifests itself in acts of war, poverty, imperialism and environmental decimation. Although mainstream opinion usually paints all these problems as separate and distinct, they are all inextricably linked to capitalism and hierarchical power. Throughout the course of history, these mutually dependent entities have reinforced each other in the interests of powerful elites. By doing so, they have cynically negated our collective intellectual, moral and human qualities.

In a world so divided by overbearing nation states, monolithic corporations and religious sectarianism, there's a pressing question that begs to be asked: what's to be done?

### power = alienation = abuse

In the wake of the Holocaust and the Vietnam war, the driving forces behind acts of mass social barbarism became the subject of intense scrutiny for psychologists. Two groundbreaking studies from that period, Zimbardo's prison experiment and Milgram's study into obedience, confirmed the alienating effects of power, on both those exercising it and those subjugated by it.

In the Stanford prison experiment, researcher Philip Zimbardo randomly divided a group of student volunteers into prisoners and prison guards, roles which were fulfilled in a makeshift prison. The volunteers fell quickly into role and their behaviour became so seriously distorted that it was necessary to terminate the experiment prematurely.

A shocked Zimbardo observed: *Within what was a surprisingly short period of time, we witnessed ... normal, healthy American college students fractionate into a group of prison guards who seemed to derive pleasure from insulting, threatening, humiliating and dehumanising .... Prisoner participation in the social reality which the guards had structured for them lent increasing validity to it and, as the prisoners became resigned to their treatment ... many acted in ways to justify their fate ..., adopting attitudes and behaviour which helped to sanction their victimisation. Most dramatic and distressing ... was the ease with which sadistic behaviour could be elicited in individuals who were not sadistic types .... The inherently pathological characteristics of the prison situation ... were a sufficient condition to produce aberrant, anti-social behaviour. The use of power was self-aggrandising and self-perpetuating.*

Stanley Milgram's examination of the role of obedience as "the dispositional cement that binds men to systems of authority" was perhaps



even more controversial than Zimbardo's. The study, conducted at Yale University, revealed that some 65% of volunteers recruited for a learning experiment (so they believed), were prepared to administer a fatal electrical shock to punish a victim on instruction from a white coated experimenter. When confronted by the severity of their actions afterwards, many of those who had administered an apparently fatal shock resorted to blaming the victim for their stupidity.

As Milgram noted:

*The essence of obedience consists in the fact that a person comes to view themselves as the instrument for carrying out another person's wishes, and he therefore no longer regards himself as responsible for his actions .... Unable to defy the authority of the experimenter, they attribute all responsibility to him. It is the old story of "just doing one's duty" that was heard countless times at Nuremberg. But it would be wrong to think of this as a thin alibi concocted for the occasion. Rather it is a fundamental mode of thinking for a great*

# the Age of Stupid case for social transformation

*many people once they are locked into a subordinate position in a structure of authority.*

These experiments, both of them successfully replicated with almost identical outcomes, provide a snapshot of how power predisposes humans to behave in ways that are malevolent, degrading and cruel towards others. Little surprise then, that abuse is endemic in a world where unequal relationships and structures are the norm. Over the centuries, dictators, warlords and religious zealots have all used the "dehumanisation of power" to their bloodthirsty advantage. But behind their megalomania lies another sinister motivating force. This force is material greed, a force that underpins capitalist society.

### the big corporate takeover

In 1984 the release of methyl isocyanate at (US corporation) Union Carbide's Bhopal plant in India resulted in the deaths of 18,000 locals and workers in the worst disaster of its kind. However, any corporate admission of liability for the disaster was doggedly sidestepped at all costs in spite of repeated warnings of an impending catastrophe beforehand. To this day, many of the disaster's surviving victims remain uncompensated. Dow Chemical, who bought up Union Carbide in 2001, also refuse to accept any responsibility for cleaning up the 5,000 tons of toxic waste left behind by the leak.

We should not be surprised. The paramouncy of shareholder authority and market survival compel corporations to single mindedly pursue profit above all else. The "externalisation" of the human and environmental costs of business activity are forever ratio- >>>

*Under corporate authoritarianism, the psychological traits deemed most desirable for average citizens to possess are efficiency, conformity, emotional detachment, insensitivity, and unquestioning obedience to authority – traits that allow people to survive and even prosper in the company hierarchy. And of course, for non-average citizens (i.e. bosses) authoritarian traits are needed, the most important being the ability and willingness to dominate others.*  
An Anarchist FAQ, www.anarchistfaq.org



nalised on this basis and the diffusion of any sense of individual responsibility is effortlessly ingrained in the corporate mindset. (See J. Balkan, *The Corporation*, 2004.)

As corporate capitalism has metastasised globally – 1,000 corporations now account for some 80% of world trade – trends reveal growing levels of inequality, resource wars, pollution and the surging rape of the natural world. While a handful of billionaires bask in untold riches, millions go hungry. This isn't due to lack of resources – there's more than enough food to go round. Global arms expenditure eclipses aid budgets. The polar ice caps melt and still governments fail to act decisively to combat climate change. These are no chance or random occurrences; they are all the direct result of the corporate capitalist takeover – power, profit and market forces conjoined in perfect (dis)harmony.

Today, the corporation is the primary form of economic life. Some transnational corporations are now larger and more powerful than many nation states. As a matter of course they pursue their expansionist interests by funding political campaigns and aggressively lobbying politicians, politicians who, it seems, all too readily exchange a seat in parliament for a seat in the corporate boardroom. With the securing of political support, the corporate agenda is thus given an appearance of legitimacy and consent.

### *consensus trance*

So why do so many people passively accept the creeping corporate takeover? Why do they fail to see the interconnection between the many crises which afflict us? Brute force alone is evidently not a sufficient explanation for our compliance. One more credible theory is

***Most people are half awake, half dreaming, and are unaware that most of what they hold to be true and self evident is illusion produced by the suggestive influence of the social world in which they live.***

**Erich Fromm**

***... it is difficult to protect oneself from the slow death caused by consumer culture. Human beings are every day and in numerous ways psychologically, socially, and spiritually assaulted by a culture which creates increasing material expectations; devalues human connectedness; socialises people to be self-absorbed; obliterates self-reliance; alienates people from normal human emotions; and sells false hope that creates more pain.***

**B. E. Levine,  
*Fundamentalist Consumerism and an Insane Society***

that we are calculatingly manipulated into what Marx described as a state of "false consciousness".

Powerful forces – family, school, TV, advertising, parliament, the military – fulfil a role which was once the preserve of organised religion; i.e. they construct a reality that protects and furthers our rulers' interests. Unwitting slaves to work and to the consumer dream, we are

Consensus trance is internalised by us all to such a degree that we also unconsciously become its agents. Parents, for example, initiate their offspring into the rules and taboos of dominant culture, according to the instructions impressed upon them by their parents, teachers and the mass media.

One aspect of today's consensus trance is consumer culture, a culture wherein the trivial and banal take on profound importance. We are daily bombarded and seduced by the artifice of celebrity, designer label fashion, soap operas, commercialised entertainment and the belief that if we don't own the latest "must have" gizmo, or our football team doesn't win, our week will be ruined.



carefully conditioned to accept our (subordinate) place in the grand social factory of profit. Ultimately, we are taught to accept society, values and behaviour as they are, not as they could or should be.

This is achieved by replicating the capitalist power infrastructure of society through the dominant superstructure of relationships, ideas and beliefs. The experimental

psychologist, Charles T. Tart, even goes so far as to argue that this conditioning renders us in a state of hypnosis or "consensus trance".

The same pedagogy dupes us into thinking that at election time we have real choice and that politicians who, of course, have our best interests at heart, *aren't really* lying, conniving slime balls, pandering to the whims of big business. Amongst other lies in the fabricated patchwork of untruths we are subjected to, consensus trance told us there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and that we are all middle class now.

On an interpersonal basis, capitalist consensus trance brings out the worst in us. A paradigmatic obsession with power, wealth and status is relentlessly drilled into us to legitimise the privileges of those on top. Aggressive dog-eat-dog indi-

vidualism is all pervasive. Community breakdown and a whole host of problems, from gang violence to alcoholism, are all symptomatic of this. Growing emotional problems and social dislocation directly correlate with the ethos of consumerism. (see O. James, *Affluenza*, 2006 and *The Selfish Capitalist*, 2007.)



This is what the situationists described as the “poverty of everyday life”, a poverty that goes way beyond the mere material.

### **religious terror**

As western corporate coca-colonisation has stamped its uniform brand across the globe, some marginalised populations have sought refuge in another form of trance reality – religious fundamentalism. But religious fundamentalism, whether of the Zionist, Christian or Islamic variety, has proved to be just as divisive and intolerant as capitalism of those who are unwilling to submit to its doctrines. The legacies of the most resurgent form of fundamentalism, Islamism, are the terrorist abominations of 9/11 and 7/7, the execution of homosexuals, honour killings, the flogging of rape victims, the persecution of non-believers and so on.

For some people, the predatory instincts of corporate capitalism and its imperialist incursions are erroneously explained away, not in economic or political terms, but in religious or racial ones. Nonetheless, as many critics have noted, the rulers of many Islamic states enjoy decadent riches and fruitful business relations with western rulers, obliterating dissent and holding their repressed populations in dire poverty as they do so. Economic power interests evidently transcend national and religious boundaries.

The mind control of organised reli-

gion and corporate capitalism are different means of achieving the same objective – keeping the “haves” in power over the “have nots”. Needless to say, when this mind control breaks down and the masses rebel, the full force of the state kicks in to restore “order”.

### **destroy power, not people**

Fifty four years ago, Erich Fromm’s prescient musings on the state of humanity went like this:

*Man (sic) today is confronted with the most fundamental choice; not between capitalism and communism, but that between robotism (of both capitalist and communist variety), or humanistic communitarian socialism. Most facts seem to indicate he is choosing robotism and that means in the long run insanity and destruction. But all these facts are not strong enough to destroy faith in man’s reason, good will and sanity. As long as we can think of other alternatives we are not lost.*

A unified and coherent explanation of the material, ecological and social crises facing us today,

traces them all back to common sources. These sources are market forces, organised religion and hierarchical power. For us, the only logical solution therefore, lies in their complete removal through progressive social revolution.

Revolution is a process, a process that can be started now by our conscious intervention in every aspect of social life that has been colonised by profit and power. By our everyday defiance, thinking and experiencing life beyond the false consciousness imprinted by religion, patriarchy and corporate trance “reality”, we can truly begin to rediscover ourselves and reaffirm our sense of interconnectedness.

The logical realisation of our collective individuation is not some cheap self-indulgent mystical escapism, but a real, profound and lasting social transformation. This transformation will ultimately pave the way for a new social order, a social order that relies not on robotism, force or mass deception for its survival, but one founded on genuine liberty, equality and unity. This change is only achievable with strong collective organisation, international solidarity and positive grassroots social action.

Our goal, to save ourselves and our planet, is to create an ecologically sustainable global society organised without hierarchical power, based on mutual aid and voluntary cooperation – from each according to ability to each according to need.

In a world that is crying out for change, we simply cannot afford to accept anything less.

**No change of government or system of government, no programme of reforms however “radical” can significantly better our situation. Only the overthrow of capitalism – the system of state and exchange economy which exists in every country in the world – will end the social division and alienation, the exploitation and oppression that make up our lives. Only then will it be possible to achieve a genuine community, without racial, sexual or class division or exploitation.**

**Workers Playtime**

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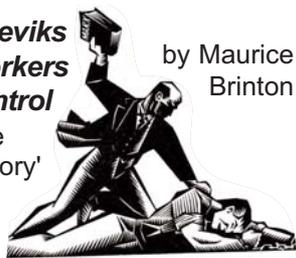
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# Principles of Revolutionary Unionism

(continued from page 2)

4. Revolutionary unionism is opposed to all organisational tendencies inspired by the centralism of state and church, because these can only serve to prolong the survival of the state and authority and to systematically stifle the spirit of initiative and independence of thought. Centralism is the artificial organisation that subjects the so-called lower classes to those who claim to be superior, and that leaves in the hands of the few the affairs of the whole community, the individual being turned into a robot with controlled gestures and movements. In the centralised organisation, society's good is subordinated to the interests of the few, variety is replaced by uniformity and personal responsibility is replaced by rigid discipline. Consequently, revolutionary unionism bases its social vision on a broad federalist organisation; i.e. an organisation organised from the bottom up, the uniting of all forces in the defence of common ideas and interests.

5. Revolutionary unionism rejects all parliamentary activity and all collaboration with legislative bodies because it knows that even the freest voting system cannot bring about the disappearance of the clear contradictions at the core of present day society and because the parliamentary system has only one goal: to lend a pretence of legitimacy to the reign of falsehood and social injustice.

6. Revolutionary unionism rejects all political and national frontiers, which are arbitrarily created, and declares that so-called nationalism is just the religion of the modern state, behind which are concealed the material interests of the propertied classes. Revolutionary unionism recognises only economic differences, whether regional or national, that produce hierarchies, privileges and every kind of oppression (because of race, sex and any false or real difference), and in the spirit of solidarity claims the right to self-determination for all economic groups.

7. For the identical reason, revolutionary unionism fights against militarism and war. Revolutionary unionism advocates anti-war propaganda and the replacement of standing armies, which are only the instruments of counter-revolution at the service of capitalism, by workers' militias which, during the revolution, will be controlled by the workers' unions; it demands, as well, the boycott and embargo of all raw materials and products necessary to war, with the exception of a country where the workers are in the midst of social revo-

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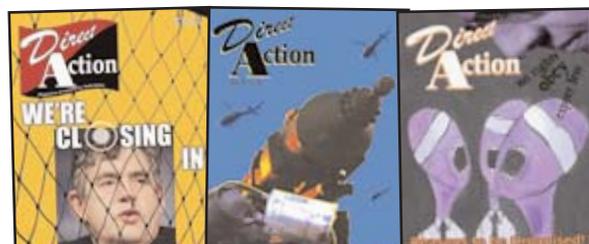
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lution, in which case we should help them defend the revolution. Finally, revolutionary unionism advocates the preventive and revolutionary general strike as a means of opposing war and militarism.

8. Revolutionary unionism recognises the need for production which does not damage the environment, and which seeks to minimise the use of finite resources, and wherever possible to use sustainable alternatives. It identifies the drive for profit, rather than ignorance, as the root of the present environmental crisis. Capitalist production must always seek to minimise costs in pursuit of an ever-increasing rate of profit in order to exist, and cannot protect the environment. In particular, the world debt crisis has accelerated the drive towards cash crops at the expense of subsistence farming. This is responsible for rainforest destruction, famine and disease. The fight to save the planet and the fight to destroy capitalism must go hand in hand or both will fail.

9. Revolutionary unionism asserts itself to be a supporter of the method of direct action, and aids and encourages all struggles that are not in contradiction to its own goals. Its methods of struggle are: strikes, boycotts, sabotage, etc. Direct action reaches its deepest expression in the general strike, which should also be, from the point of view of revolutionary unionism, the prelude to the social revolution.

10. While revolutionary unionism is opposed to all organised violence regardless of the kind of government, it realises that there will be extremely violence clashes during the decisive struggles between the capitalism of today and the free communism of tomorrow. Consequently, it recognises as valid that violence that may be used as a means of defence against the violent methods used by the ruling classes during the struggles that lead up to the revolutionary populace expropriating the lands and means of production. As this expropriation can only be carried out and brought to a successful conclusion by the direct intervention of the workers' revolutionary economic organisations, defence of the revolution must also be the task of these economic organisations and not of a military or quasi-military body developing independently of them.

11. Only in the economic and revolutionary organisations of the working class are there forces capable of bringing about its liberation and the necessary creative energy for the reorganisation of society on the basis of libertarian communism.

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