

# SocialistVoice★

Nº 11 MAY/JUNE

JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST LEAGUE, BRITISH SECTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL WORKERS LEAGUE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

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In Europe, one of the epicentres of the world financial and economic crisis, workers and oppressed face a deepening social war that aims to destroy all the historical conquests of the working class.

The UK is heading in the same direction.

The government is on course to destroy public services, benefits and jobs, increasing the burden on and poverty of the poorest and vulnerable.

Their policies include cutting disability benefits to the bone by 2015; privatising the Post Office and NHS something even Thatcher dared not attempt and putting £40 million of student loans into private hands.

What is planned is a future under the direct control of big business.

The world-wide demonstrations that were held on May Day provide an inspiring alternative vision of co-ordinated international actions against

attacks by world capitalism on the working class.

An advance in one part of the world will become an advance for all our struggles but we must add our support and join them.

The fight for justice for workers killed in Bangladesh, support for the international union network in Paris (see page 6), support for the workers and people's revolution in Syria is part of our international fight.

We cannot ignore these struggles or we will fail ourselves.

The resistance is growing in Greece with general strikes, in Spain resistance to evictions increases along with the occupation of banks, there are huge demonstrations in Portugal and growing struggles in Italy.

Here the government's spending review for the next five years shows that more

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# Life of our parties



On the last weekend of April comrade Cecilia Toledo, militant of the Brazilian PSTU and member of the Secretariat of Women-International Workers League (IWL), led a course on issues related to the fight against the oppression of women with a group of militants from the MAS, Portuguese section of the IWL.

Participants read and discussed topics on the origin of women's oppression, the relationship between oppression and exploitation and issues of the family. The topic of sexism in working class organisations such as trade unions and left parties was also a key issue as it is a permanent problem that undermines and divides our class.

The participants agreed there had to be an uncompromising defence of a revolutionary morality, and that there was the urgent need to encourage more women to be politically active in the struggle for socialism.

If readers want to know more about future schools in Spain, Portugal and the UK please contact us.

Contact [islinfo@talktalk.net](mailto:islinfo@talktalk.net) for more information.

## Corriente Roja (CR) section of the IWL in the Spanish state falsely accused

At dawn on Wednesday, 24 April three people were arrested at the University City campus (Universidad Complutense de Madrid). Representatives from the government and police have claimed that those arrested were preparing for an attack on a bank using Molotov

cocktails. They claim that the three individuals belonged to a very radical leftist group which they did not name.

On 25 April comrades from CR, to their great surprise read in the main daily newspapers such as El País, ABC or Reason that those arrested were members of their party.

The newspapers reported the accusations without any proof and without giving the accused the right of reply to repudiate the accusations.

People close to the three have released a statement saying that they were making stickers to display at the bank, not molotov cocktails!

CR is a revolutionary organisation that advocates social, regime and system change that can only be achieved by a mass workers' and people's movement. It does not carry out isolated violent or terrorist actions, since they believe that these methods are ineffective and counter-productive to their aims.

The government, police and media reporting is an attempt to criminalise CR as has happened with other social struggles, such as "escraches" of PAH and the workers and neighbourhoods in Vallecas.

CR demands:

— El País, ABC, Reason retract the false allegations and the defamation against CR and give them the right to reply in their pages.

— The government meet a delegation from CR to discuss this serious attempt to criminalise them and to clarify who is responsible for these falsehoods.

### Editorial comment

The second half of the article on Syria is not printed in this month's issue for reasons of space but can be found on the [www.litci.org/en](http://www.litci.org/en).

We also received some comments on our article on Mali, which we will deal with in the next issue of Socialist Voice. Many points that we received we do not agree with. However there was one factual error we made when we said that the oil company BP was in Mali. It is not, as far as we can prove. But it is an important multi-national in the region.

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João Simões and Martin Ralph

(continues from front page)

## Unify the resistance against austerity For a socialist and workers international alternative



For more information see **Facebook: Solidarity with garments workers in bangladesh** and <http://newwavemaha.wordpress.com/>

brutal cuts are planned, despite four years of immiserating cuts targeting the working class. Their policy has led to the vicious scapegoating of immigrants, the unemployed, and young people in order to divide the working class and win support for their disgusting policies.

How does the Labour leadership respond? Do they pledge to remove these horrors of a system that is true to Thatcher's legacy?

Not a bit, they do not make any pledges to reverse the cuts. For them socialism and working class struggle is frightening and has to be stopped.

Since Thatcher's death many commentaries have been written about her but it was a labour government in 1969 (In Place of Strife) that first attacked trade union rights, however their plans were defeated by the rank and file who were determined to end it.

That movement shook the Labour and the trade union leadership.

It must be shaken again, but to do that we have to rebuild that type of struggle.

The union rank and file and social movement must unify their struggles and put the present union leaders under pressure to lead the struggle and develop a new leadership that wants to fight because the majority of present leaderships do not.

A movement is deepening in the unions. Jerry Hicks stood in the Unite elections for General Secretary against the Len McCluskey.

He received nearly 80,000 votes, nearly 40 per cent of the vote, standing on a platform that would put a leader on an average worker's wage; opposing the donation of nearly £10 million to the Labour Party whose councils are sacking Unite workers and imposing cuts; and election not appointment of full time officials.

As Labour continues to impose cuts,

continue to attack the working class, they should not get support from the unions.

The trade unions must break with this class collaboration. We say fight all cuts, mobilise the unions and social movements and build new leaderships from the rank and file.

Every opportunity to build the confidence and strength of the class has to be taken.

### Women and youth

Women are actively participating in the struggles in Europe and North Africa and the Middle East. Their participation and positions of leadership are not accidental. Working women represent half of working class and they suffer dual exploitation and oppression.

Bedroom tax campaigns and some unions are seeing many women come into the fight.

Young people across the world are facing some of the harshest austerity measures and highest levels of unemployment. Youth who are in employment experience terrible conditions low wages and high levels of precariousness. Capitalism has expropriated the future from young people which is pushing them forward to the forefront of the struggles and the revolutions taking place across the world.

### Middle East

In North Africa and the Middle East there has been an historic wave of revolutions. Currently in Syria an armed people are heroically resisting a genocide that is being perpetrated by president al-Assad.

The Syrian revolution urgently needs the solidarity and support of the world's working class. Unfortunately, one of the main obstacles to building material and political solidarity for the Syrian revolution is the shameful support of Castro-Chavez and most of the world's left for the bloody dictator al-Assad.

### Urgent need for revolutionary leadership

The global crisis of capitalism means that there is no national solution to the revolution in Syria or the problems we face in the UK. We need to a socialist strategy, an international strategy. Such a strategy has to be fought for and linked to the construction of an international revolutionary leadership. This is the main objective of the ISL and IWL-FI and the reason for its existence.

## End violence against women

The International Socialist League held a meeting on 3 May about the fight against women's oppression.

Aimi Molloy, FBU (in personal capacity), spoke on her experiences of being a fire-fighter. Sarah Murphy, PCS (in personal capacity) and active in the Wirral against the bedroom tax. They both gave very interesting contributions which will be reported in the next issue of Socialist Voice.

Cecilia Toledo, a Brazilian journalist and Marxist militant, is in the UK to discuss the question of women's oppression. She is part of the Women's Commission of the International Workers League (Fourth International) and has written extensively on the question of women.

Cecilia began by saying that we are facing a worldwide catastrophe, an unprecedented situation, where violence against women has become a daily practice. Two major events have provoked outrage in the world: one was the recent attack against a 23-year-old young Indian woman, raped on a bus by four men; the other occurred within the Marxist left — inside the SWP.

The SWP crisis emerged because of the deep sexist problems in the organisation. A leader was accused of raping a female militant and sexually assaulting another comrade. The two assaulted militants were prevented from expressing their opinions openly and the investigation was done in a superficial manner. The party leader was therefore left unpunished.

The SWP leadership, instead of uniting the party against the offender, chose to turn their backs on the party to protect the abuser.

The many members' reaction was immediate and indignant, demonstrating that many of the militants still had blood running in their veins and wanted to defend Marxism. There were many protests and whole groups broke from the party, some disillusioned with the Left. Even the most recognized public figure of the party, Alex Callinicos, was unable to attend a Marxist forum in India, because his presence could have generate protests.

Contact the ISL for further material and discussion.

# Axe the bedroom tax - fight benefit cuts

*Martin Ralph, interviews Sarah Murphy, member of the PCS, helped form a group against the bedroom tax in March in Leasowe, Wirral.*



**SV: How is the fight against the bedroom tax going?**

SM: Our first meeting had a great turn of at least 70 people and has continued from there.

We organised a small demonstration outside the local housing office and handed them a letter of invitation to our next meeting. The manager came down and asked us to move away, yet she refuses to move and re-house people. No one from the housing office comes to our meetings, they have just sent a letter to us explaining what the bedroom tax is.

We can copy that letter and use it as a newsletter to the local community to show exactly what their housing association thinks. A lot of people living in this area understand how the tax works and what it will mean.

**SV: What points in the fight against the bedroom do you think need further explanation?**

SM: The first point is, even if you are not directly affected, you will be affected because your community is going to be ripped apart when neighbours are forced to move away.

Secondly, there are NO one bedroom or two bedroom properties available for people to move into, which means that about 900 people are going after the same property.

Single people are being refused their request to move from three bedroom properties into two bedroom flats, because it's argued that they will still be living with an 'under occupied' tenancy. And because of the lack of one bedroom flats in our area, people are going to have to leave the home, community and the area in which they grew up, which in some cases is where their parents and grandparents lived.

There are people who do not understand and ask questions such as, "Why should a single person live in a three bedroom property when there are people with three children having to live in two bedroom properties?" One answer is to point out that the housing associations have not invested in providing enough social housing for people to move into, even if they are under occupied. Now, many will be forced to move into private

accommodation.

Thirdly we highlight that if you work and live in so-called 'under-occupied' property, and are not in receipt of housing benefit, then you do not have to move because you pay the full rent. This shows that the bedroom tax is a direct attack on the poorest in your community.

But we also point out that people in receipt of benefits are unemployed or in low paid jobs, all of which is no fault of their own.

While the government argues that the bedroom tax will push people into work and off housing benefit, we all know this is untrue, because many on housing benefit as just stated are in work and at the same time there is rising unemployment and no jobs.

Fourthly, the bedroom tax is a direct attack on the disabled who have been told they cannot have a room to store their equipment. I have spoken to one disabled tenant whose home was adapted with ground floor facilities. She has been asking to move for four years now, but has always been told, "NO, we will not move you as we would have to

adapt another property". This woman lives in a four bedroom home with her son who is her carer.

**SV: Do you think that trade unions should join and support this fight?**

SM: Yes most definitely, unions should support the fight. People in work places are going to feel the affect too. So I try and explain to my union branch members why we should support this fight.

My union the PCS and Unite are supporting our fight.

I am the new Campaigns Officer for the Wirral branch of PCS and we are campaigning to get more members involved.

**SV: Is the PCS currently taking action against the austerity cuts?**

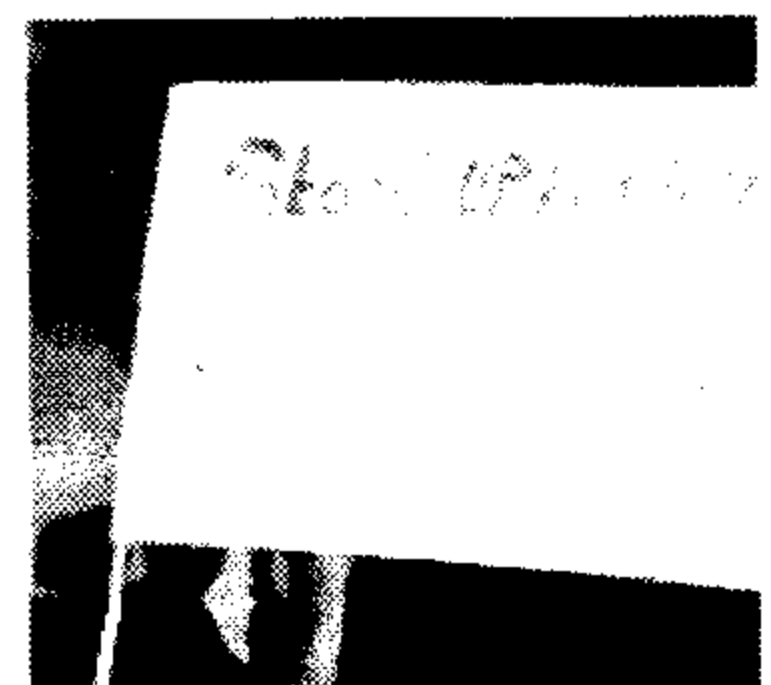
SM: We have been taking strike action since 20 March which will continue up to 20 June. The union have asked us to come up with ideas for the most effective action for our branch to put forward to the national executive committee. And the majority of members are supporting the strike action.

## A storm is coming

MAUREEN ANNE FITZSIMMONS

**M**arching Feet.....in the street...People Meet...  
 People Greet...People  
 Walk.. People talk...Dogs are barking ...Children Larking ...People Stop ...People stare... People Praying ..People Swear...People Chanting ..People Ranting ....

There's a storm coming !!!!



# The Voice of Manchester

BY ANCOATS RAT



Can the Labour council really look us (the Mancunian) in the face and say: "the future is looking great r kid". Can they? Can they say there will be no evictions of men and women out of their houses, flats, or the family homes we've lived all our lives?

Can they?

No they can't.

They tell us, "This is what's happening, this is what's changing, pay your bedroom tax, now shut up and toe the line". We seem to becoming a pool of stagnant zombies being oppressed and stood upon. What is the overall big picture our society is to become? Surely, we've not reached the lowest stage of humanity yet, have we?

Make your statement, whether it be musical or political and shout it to the world! What's happened to the Manchester people.... the belly and guts of the nation? Dare we resist against them.

They are laughing at us, the councillors and the rich businessmen are making a profit out of our hard working labour with low wage earnings.

Public money into private pockets, destroying heritage, schools, local services and the NHS. They ignore parents, the working class voice and teachers. Turning schools into academies without proper consultation, 80 per cent of the Department of Education is dedicated to work for these academies, but only 1 in 5 schools are actually academies. The softening up of privatisation for all schools? Then there is the problem of unqualified teachers teaching our children.

What next?

Unqualified doctors treating the sick and needy? Who knows? This bent council and ever growing financial monster elite is intent on stamping out all of the rights won by the working class over decades and decades of struggle. Shout and let your voice be heard, don't sit back any more.

Let's get out there and protest against the wolves in sheep's clothing, Labour councils and general bourgeois society and tell them NO! NO MORE!

# Shame on Sunderland F.C. Boycott Sunderland F.C.

BY OLIVER TRESSELL

On Sunday 30 March Sunderland football club welcomed Paulo Di Canio, a self-confessed fascist, as manager. He admitted in his autobiography: "I am fascinated by Mussolini, I think he was a deeply misunderstood individual. He deceived people. His actions were often vile. But all this was motivated by a higher purpose. He was basically a very principled individual. Yet he turned against his sense of right and wrong. He compromised his ethics."

Di Canio has 'DVX' tattooed on his arm, which is a Latin symbol for Mussolini. Di Canio claimed in 2005: "I am a fascist, not a racist" during an interview with Italian news agency ANSA. This statement came after he saluted Lazio's 'Ultras' (a neo-Nazi organisation), which is one of the most prominent extreme right organisations in Europe. During his time at Lazio he gave the fascist salute several times.

More recently, on 1 April, while being questioned about his political beliefs, Di Canio said: "Talk about racism? That is absolutely stupid, stupid and ridiculous. The people who know me can change that idea quickly. When I was in England my best friends were Trevor Sinclair and Chris Powell (black teammates)". He said nothing to counter his association with fascism: "I don't want to talk about politics because it's not my area. We are not in the Houses of Parliament, we are in a football club. I want to talk about sport."

Di Canio can say what he wants, but Fascism, his chosen belief, is not merely a political parliamentary ideology, it is



not just about racism. Racism, along with homophobia and sexism is a tactic to divide and oppress the working class as a whole. Fascism is about the absolute annihilation of workers organisations and apparatus. It is a system dedicated to reducing the working class into an atomised and subservient class, which has no rights and no organisation.

Whether or not he is an organised, militant fascist does not matter. Fascism must receive no platform in any circumstances. Di Canio's appointment as manager, in the most watched football league in the world, is an attack on working class independence. While football has become detached from its working class roots it is still the working class who fund and support it. It is still the sport of the working class!

By accepting Di Canio as manager, the institutions are legitimising his beliefs at a time where fascism is on the rise across Europe as a reaction to the economic crises.

## Di Canio out!

### No Platform for Fascism, Miners' condemn Sunderland

The secretary of the Durham Miners' Association has written to Sunderland Football Club to demand the return of the Wearmouth Miners' Banner, which is on permanent display in the Stadium of Light in protest at the club's decision to appoint self-confessed fascist, Paulo Di Canio, as head coach. Dave Hopper, who worked for 27 years as a miner at Wearmouth Colliery, the site on which the Stadium of Light now stands, described Di Canio's appointment as an outrage and a betrayal of all those who fought and died fighting fascism.

He said: "Our banner represents the Durham miners' long struggle for the rights of the working class, rights which were annihilated by fascism in Germany, Italy, Spain and Chile."

"Everyone must speak out and oppose this outrage and call on Ellis Short and the Sunderland Board to reverse their decision."



# A new international network of

## Paris conference success

MARGARET MCADAM ISL AND A LIVERPOOL TUC DELEGATE TO PARIS MEETING

In Saint Denis, Paris, 22 to 24 March, nearly 250 delegates from 33 countries attended an international trade union conference. It was hosted by the militant French union federation Solidaires. Delegates came from Europe, Latin America, Canada, Algeria, Morocco, Benin, Senegal, Turkey and Malaya.

They came together to build an international network of unions and social movements to confront the economic crisis and the social war that governments and employers are imposing on workers across the world.

The call for the conference also came from the Brazilian CSP-Conlutas and Spanish CGT federations.

From the UK the RMT sent two delegates, Liverpool TUC sent three delegates and another seven activists attended.

Nara, Solidaires' member and activist in the education union (Sud Education) expected the "creation of an international force against this insane and wild capitalism, a fighting international force".

A delegate from the regional union SPR from Indonesia talked about building "more strength among organisations of workers, peasants and social movements".

Ailson a leader of the civil construction union of Belem (Brazil) and member of CSP-Conlutas, said "For us it is really a great experience. I want to relate this to my comrades and show that a fair and egalitarian society of the working class is possible".

Arturo, a worker who fights layoffs and sacking at UPS-Vallecas, Madrid and who is a member of the union Co.Bas (Spain), wants to develop "a clear idea of what the alternative trade unions must do worldwide to stop what workers are going through".

Nico, of the 28 April Network and of the No to Debt Committee, from Italy, said he wanted agreement "two or three common goals, starting with a European fight against austerity imposed by the troika".

After two days of discussion an international trade union network of solidarity and struggle was born, to create an international united front.

## Alternative trade unionism

CONFERENCE STATEMENT ENDORSED BY OVER 60 ORGANISATIONS

This call is made by European, African, American and Asian trade union organisations.

Our international affiliations or non-affiliations are diverse: we are members of the International Trade Union Confederation, of the World Federation of Trade Unions, of neither of these two organisations, but participants in various international trade union networks and community organisations.

It is intended for all trade union organisations that see themselves as part of a type of unionism that focuses on struggles, worker democracy, self-organisation of workers, and the need for social change.

The effects of the capitalist system's crisis are felt throughout the world.

The current economic and political system organises the plundering of many countries, forcing millions of people to abandon their home regions in order to survive and then denies them of their rights on the grounds of their immigrant status.

The dismantlement of public services, the calling into question of all social rights, the attacks against trade union rights, the violation of trade union freedoms, the growth of precariousness and unemployment in order to put pressure on populations... these same methods are used in all countries!

In order to attain their objectives, similar methods are employed: criminalisation, trials, arrests, police actions, military occupations, various obstacles that constrain collective and individual rights. Repression is one of their weapons against those who resist, who rise up, who promote alternatives. Our solidarity, which transcends national

borders, is one of our responses.

....

Our trade unionism aims to overturn the existing economic, social and political model, based on the supremacy of finance, profit and competitiveness. On the contrary, we want to build a system that is grounded on common goods, the redistribution of wealth among those who contributed to its creation, on the rights of workers and an environmentally sustainable development.

We call for the extension, democratisation and social appropriation of public services (education, healthcare, transport, energy, water supply and sanitation, housing, etc.). Our shared objectives also include the free flow of peoples and equality of social and political rights for all, regardless of their nationality, origin or gender.

Our trade unionism combines the protection of workers' immediate interests, and a desire for meaningful social change. It does not restrict itself to the economic sphere but includes issues like the right to housing, to land, gender equality, antiracism, environmentalism, anticolonialism.

...

We do not call for the establishment of a new international trade union organisation. We choose to strengthen, broaden, and render more efficient, a trade union network that is combative, democratic, autonomous, alternative, feminist and internationalist.

We want to share our experiences, learn from each other's struggles and victories, build unity across our national borders, and turn international worker solidarity into a reality. Faced with the current crisis and its effects on the populations of all countries, and for which capitalism is



# trade union and social struggle

responsible, it is necessary to coordinate and unite our struggles. We ask all trade union collectives to join us in the struggle to build this trade union unity of action.

...

Following the March 2013 meeting, we have concrete objectives, common commitments.

We will intervene in a unitary and coordinated fashion to support pre-existing international campaigns and struggles, by reaffirming peoples' right to self-determination: support the Palestinian and Sahrawi people,

recognise autonomous trade unionism in the countries of the Maghreb and in the Middle-East, against the military occupation of Haiti, against the European treaties that impose austerity, for the right of all people to decide about their future.

We strengthen and extend the international activities that have been followed in professional sectors (transport, call centres, industry, commerce, healthcare) and with regards to inter-professional questions (right of women, immigration, housing, the

environment, workplace health and safety); that work is already organised in a number of sectors, coordinated by trade union the organisations in our different countries.

We will continue to exchange our ideas and with the implementation of activities on questions related to the crisis of the capitalism and alternatives to it.

Finally, collectively we will supply the material means necessary to achieve success of our collective endeavours; such as a website, email exchange list, coordination of professional sectors.

## May Day manifesto 2013

Over sixty organizations from different countries and four continents participated at the International Meeting in Paris of alternative unionism from 22 to 24 March 2013. We, who met support a fighting unionism, as opposed to trade unionism of social compromise. We affirm that struggle is the only way to achieve social change. We believe in the international struggle of the working class and the oppressed and we are for direct democracy where rank and file union members decide in assemblies as opposed to bureaucratic methods.

On 1 May, the international working class day of struggle, we declare that:

1) The economic, political and social crisis of the capitalist system pushes workers and people to misery and the situation has become a real social disaster in many countries.

2) Governments and international institutions are pursuing social war and the result is disaster, which contrasts with the scandalous giving of multimillions by governments and institutions to the banks accompanied with blatant corruption that runs through everything they touch.

3) We cannot continue this way. Governments, far from taking into account the rejection by the masses, announce further cuts in jobs, wages and social benefits, further privatisation and looting of entire countries.

The defence of workers and peoples requires a resolute struggle against the system that is leading humanity to barbarism and destruction of the planet. There should be no compromise with governments that plan social wars,

political illusions in social dialogue with governments need to be abandoned. There is no turning back in this process of struggle.

4) The working class of the world and especially in Europe, which now leads the decisive battle against the governments of the troika (the European Commission, European Central Bank and IMF), must oppose these social war plans. It must take its own measures to provide a social and popular solution to this crisis.

This is why we say:

**Down with austerity plans! Immediate repeal of social cuts and anti-trade union laws!**

The defence of wages, jobs, health and public education requires all the partial struggles in the public and private sectors that shake the "old continent" to unite around urgent demands against governments and their austerity policies!

**Down with these policies! No turning back!**

We say that the resources exist that can really give a solution to the crisis by defending workers and popular interests. But it requires resolute implementation of anti-capitalist measures. This is why we advocate the immediate suspension of debt payments, an illegitimate debt that we, the workers and the people have not agreed to.

The fight for jobs and job-sharing needs to: take the financial resources out of the hands of speculators, nationalise the banks and key enterprises without compensation, force tax reforms to make the rich pay more. Use the resources to make a unique rescue plan for workers and the social majority (99%).

5) The working class and other social

movements lead the struggle with the oppressed of the world.

We must boldly carry out the fight against sexism and all forms of oppression of women, the fight against xenophobia, racism and all forms of oppression of migrant workers and support the right to self-determination, defending the rights of all oppressed nationalities to exercise their sovereignty. Without a consistent struggle against all these forms of oppression, the unity of the working class for social justice and the necessary transformation is not possible.

6) On this international day of 1 May, we resolutely reaffirm solidarity with all the workers and the people of the world who are against imperialism and dictatorships. Our solidarity is particularly with the Arab peoples of the Middle East, the indigenous communities and all popular struggles.

7) We will prepare for an internationalist and combative 1 May and call on all those who support fighting trade unionism and social movements to make large rallies and demonstrations as a clear reference for class struggle against bureaucratic trade unionism.

8) The particular situation we are living through on the European continent and the recent experience of 14 November general strike in southern Europe means that we can conduct a comprehensive campaign with coordination and initiatives in order to make a general strike throughout Europe, this process must continue until the policies of the Troika are destroyed. **We are the workers of this world, the protagonists of a new society based on participatory democracy, freedom and social justice.**

# IWL statement on

BY INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT/INTERNATIONAL WORKERS LEAGUE

**H**ugo Chavez has died and the political impact is world-wide. There is no doubt that Venezuela's former president has been an important protagonist of the last two decades in Latin America and internationally.

These are hours of grief for the millions of Venezuelans who politically trusted Chavez and regarded him as a leader who identified with their interests and their yearning for a better quality of life.

There are also many sincere social activists and left-wing militants who saw in Chavez an authentic anti-imperialist, and even socialist, leader.

In the IWL, we understand this pain and consternation for we are not indifferent to popular feeling. But even in the midst of all this sorrow, it is necessary to ponder about the meaning of the Chavez government and the current challenges that Venezuelan working class and people must face.

## What was Chavez's government?

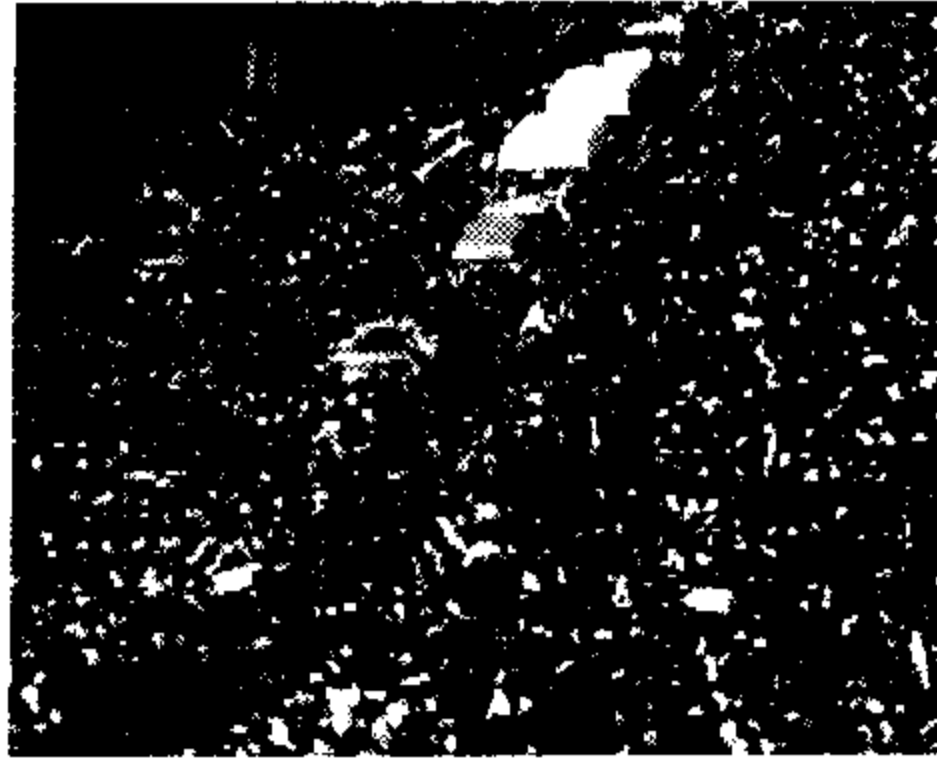
Chavez's death compels us to restate the entire debate on the class character of his government and the political regime that he had set up in Venezuela and his real relations with imperialism.

This debate divides the world Left and the debate becomes even more important in times where there is uncertainty as to the course that Chavism will follow without Chavez.

In our opinion, the Chavez government has never been socialist. His government was bourgeois, that is, in the service of maintaining and defending the Venezuelan capitalist state and system.

This does not mean that the capitalist Chavez government was the same as that of Carlos Andrés Pérez and all the previous governments that were based on the "Fixed Point" agreement made by the Democratic Action (AD) and Christian Democratic Party (COPEI). Those capitalist governments were totally and overtly submissive to imperialism. They were considerably weakened after decades of plunder and corruption and were opposed by the Venezuelan masses. This led to the "Caracazo", a mass revolt. This process and the coup attempt against Pérez was the beginning of Chavez's popularity.

Due to the combination of crisis in the traditional bourgeois parties and



Chavez funeral

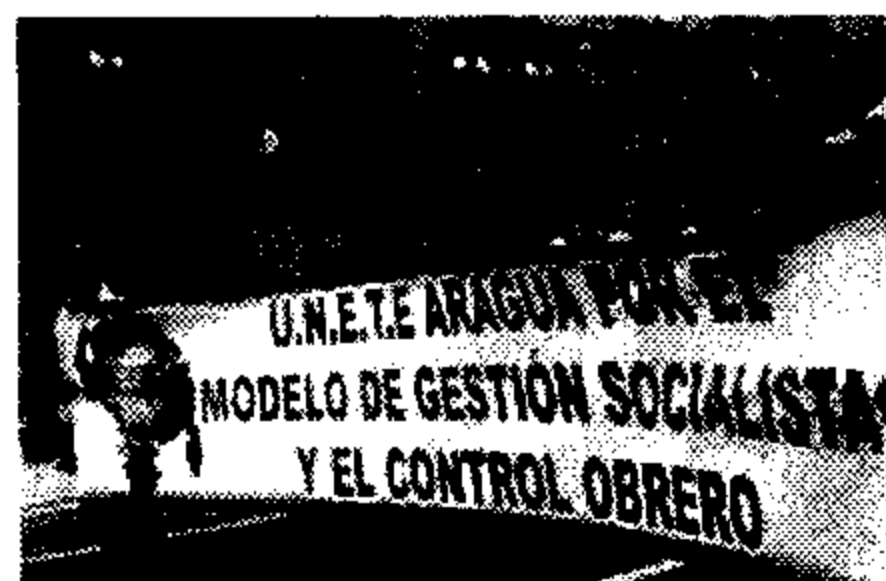
the proletarian and popular struggle, Chavez's project and subsequent government acquired a bourgeois nationalist character. That is why he used "anti-imperialist" and "socialist" rhetoric. That is why his government had to make some concessions, especially through welfare handouts like those called The Missions. But they were much more limited than those of other bourgeois nationalist governments of previous decades, like Peron's in Argentina, Cardenas' in Mexico or Nasser in Egypt.

What he did share with those other governments was that, due to his class character, he found it impossible to continue his confrontations with imperialism to the very end and later he would wind up by capitulating to it.

That is why his entire discourse on "XXI Century Socialism" and the rhetorical attacks against US imperialism, above all in the days of George Bush, had no correlation with his political practice and was always in the service of confusing the masses and was meant to conceal the same old submission and surrender.

## His relations with imperialism

Concrete reality proves that during 14 years of Chavist government and regime, Venezuela is still as dependant on imperialism as ever.



Banner demanding workers control in 2010

Foreign international creditors have always been dutifully paid by Chavez. Venezuelan foreign debt has recently reached a record \$105,000 million, equivalent to 30 per cent of GDP.

Chavez's nationalisations, for example, so widely boasted about by his Latin American trend, were negotiated in all the cases and the 'affected' bourgeois sectors were given handsome indemnities. Moreover, in many cases they proved to be the mere purchase of shares in these companies by the state which meant creating a so-called 'joint-venture' that allowed the multinationals to exploit natural resources and energy together with the state. In this way imperialist companies such as Chevron and Exxon-Mobil not only control the country's oil production and benefit from it but they now own approximately 40 per cent of the oil.

In recent years even the tone of his speeches had been softened. The truth is that Bush was one thing and Obama was something altogether different. It is sufficient if we remember just one of these statements: "If I were American, I would vote Obama. And I believe that if Obama were from Barlovento or any other neighbourhood of Caracas, he would vote Chavez. I am sure of that".

## Is it true that Venezuela has 'XXI century socialism'?

Even here, social reality is different to official speeches. Anti-capitalist measures have never been taken nor has there been a break with imperialism, the people still suffer from the curse of unemployment, supply shortages, high inflation (reaching 30 per cent in 2012), and extreme poverty. Despite all the welfare measures created by the government 29.5 per cent of the population live below the poverty line. According to official figures in 2010 the richest 30 per cent of the population hoards 45 per cent of the national income while the poorest 20 per cent receive only 6 per cent.

To talk about 'XXI century socialism' in the face of such a reality is to assist the campaign against socialism, which has been advanced by imperialism ever since capitalism was restored in the USRR and Eastern Europe. How can



# the death of Chavez

there be socialism with such exploitation of the working class, while the private economy flourishes at the expense of working class poverty and while the bourgeoisie amass the fattest part of national revenue?

This reality cannot be concealed and the so often mentioned Missions have not solved and could not solve the fundamental problems. They are nothing more than the compensatory measures proposed by the World Bank which are based on a minimum redistribution of oil revenue in order to alleviate the desperate situation of those living in extreme poverty. This helps to hold back possible social riots and creates an electorate in support of the government.

On the other side of economic policy is the strengthening of new parasitic bourgeois sectors that exist because of state business, with the creation of joint ventures and the co-opting of trade union leaders and social leaders, the Bolivarian bourgeoisie, known as the boli-bourgeoisie have begun to thrive.

The new rich have been amassing fortunes from state businesses that support the ex-military man and current president of the national assembly, Diosdado Cabello who owns three banks and a number of companies that have major contracts with the state.

## **An authoritative and anti-proletarian regime**

While partially leaning on the workers' movement, Chavez constantly tried to control it. For example he stimulated and fortified a gangster-like trade union bureaucracy that was completely subordinated to him.

That is why the entire official propaganda on the 'defence of Bolivarian revolution' and the 'construction of socialism' against the 'enemies of the motherland' has always been, and still is, in the service of disciplining the working class. That is why the idea that whoever was not with Chavez is with the "counterrevolution" was developed.

In 2006, Chavez made a leap forwards when he created the PSUV (United Socialist Party of Venezuela) with the intention of placing a straightjacket of a "sole party" on the labour movement and left.

Due to this regime, all the sectors (many of them of the working class) who rose

to fight were victims of brutal repression, selective murder and political or union persecution. Among others we can list the repression of the Maracay Sanitary Fittings workers, the Mitsubishi workers, several indigenous peoples sectors and peasants occupying the land of large estates whether 'Bolivarian' or not.

Without exception any sector that fought against the measures of the government were accused of attempting 'destabilisation' or 'counterrevolution', the same accusations that were made against those who refused to join the PSUV or dissolve in to it.

## **Chavez's support for genocidal regimes**

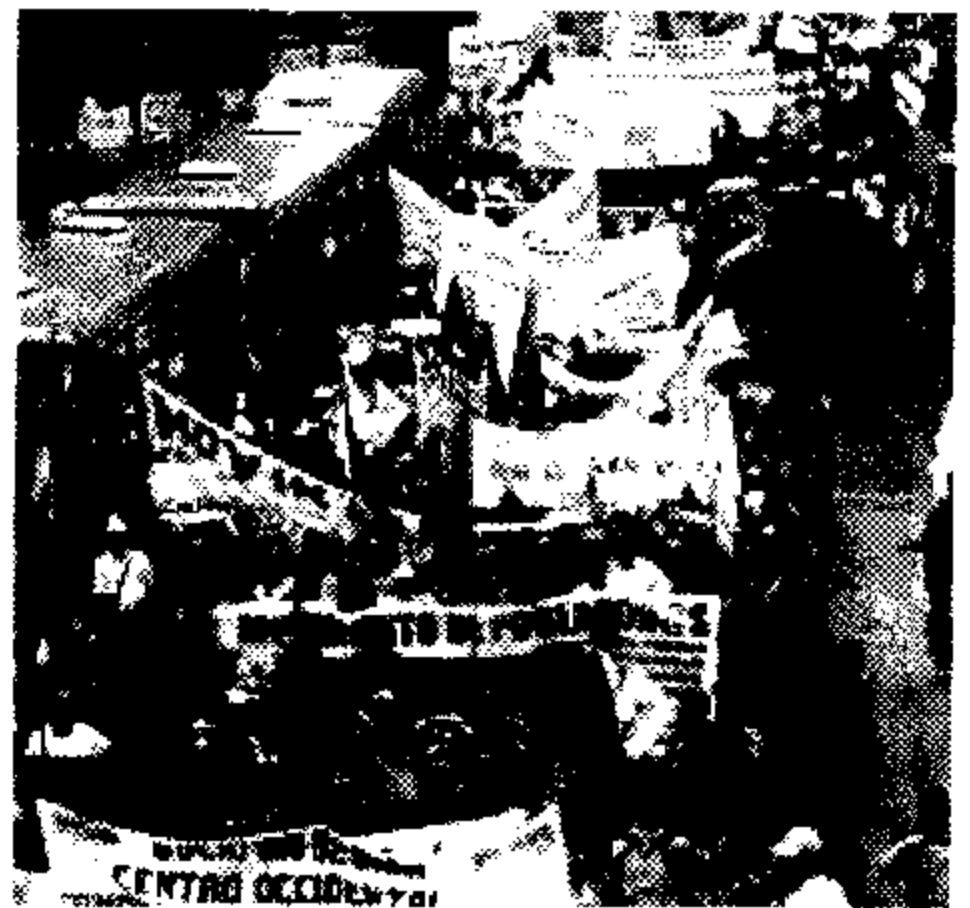
All these fact should be enough to prove that there is not and has never been any socialism. There has been a government that guaranteed fortunes for a sector of the bourgeoisie, paid the foreign debt dutifully and continued to hand over the country's wealth to imperialism. But in order to contain the working class the government combined welfare reform, which was sustained on resources coming from periods when international oil prices were high and with direct repression of any combative sectors in the working class.

We will quote two further facts that prove his class character. The first one fully demonstrates Chavez's submission to the interests of world imperialism, is the shameful cooperation with the reactionary and lackey-like Juan Manuel Santos Colombian government, successor of the genocidal Alvaro Uribe. Chavez handed over activists linked to the FARC (such as journalist Joaquin Perez Becerra and other social fighters) to the Colombian government even though this was in violation of laws valid in Venezuela, simply because Santos requested this from him. How can we categorize somebody as anti-imperialist who cooperates with the main lackey of Latin America who imprisons class fighters in Colombian jails?

When the revolutionary process in the Middle East and North Africa broke out, the 'socialist' Chavez government declared unconditional support for bloodthirsty dictators such as Gaddafi and Assad while the Libyan and Syrian peoples were fighting against these regimes. He presented them as 'anti-imperialist fighters' knowing that for a

long time they had bowed to imperialism. This caused great bewilderment among activists of the revolutions in North Africa and Middle East, who due to the weight of influence of Chavez (and Castro) now identify the left as allies of murderous dictatorships. In this way he betrayed these popular revolutions and gave the struggle for democratic liberties and human rights to imperialism on a silver platter.

It is not surprising therefore that Santos and Assad expressed regret over Chavez's death and expressed their gratitude to him.



Peasants and allies march against assassinations in June 2011

successor appointed by Chavez, took over. Elections were called within 30 days. And even though there is no certainty as to the result most political forces believe that the most probable outcome is that Chavism will win and Maduro will be elected president. But what is certain is that whoever wins, the new president will have to apply adjustment plans that are unpopular and without the figure of Chavez to act as the counterweight to the clash of classes.

To achieve this goal, Chavism will have to intensify totalitarian measures to halt the struggles and protests against any new economic and social attacks.

The traditional Venezuelan right, overtly reactionary and with a strong coup-making tradition, regard Chavez's departure as an opportunity to raise their heads and regain power. Capriles and the old Venezuelan bourgeoisie, who wish to return to power in order to gain the benefits from being direct agents of imperialism, is not a solution for the working class. Capriles stands

# Labour Party attacks immigrants

BY DEREK MORTIMER

Many years ago as an unskilled migrant worker to Australia, I, and hundreds of others, sailed into the magnificent Sydney Harbour, past rocky, wooded headlands and beautiful waterside homes just like we'd seen in the Australia government promotional movies in the UK.

The ship slid into Circular Quay and moored by the city's famous bridge. It was just like Australia House in London had promised in its enticing pitch for British migrants. This was heaven. This was the workers' paradise. Then we immigrants were off-loaded onto buses, driven out of the city and a long time later deposited at an immigrant hostel, the Nissan huts of a former army camp, beside parched summer paddocks on the far western outskirts of the city. A bit of a disappointment, and not what we'd been given to expect. But, fair enough. You can't expect everything at once.

The name of the suburb was Rooty Hill. It was the very edge of working class Sydney. Fifty-two years later, the same suburb, now part of a dynamic outer Sydney region, but still very much working class, was the starting point of Labor Prime Minister Julia Gillard's desperate attempt to retain these votes for her minority government in the federal elections on September 14.

Gillard was also born in Britain, so was the leader of the Liberal Opposition, Tony Abbott. Twenty-five percent of the nation's 23 million people were born overseas. Seven million have immigrated to Australia since white invasion and settlement. None of this history prevented Gillard unashamedly playing the race card in her desperate attempt to remain in office.

It is a cynical appeal to the angst generated by constant job losses – 1,200 job cuts were announced in a single day in February, the government destroyed 5,400 public sector jobs last year, and the NSW government destroyed a further 15,000. And instead of pointing to the employers and government who are doing the sacking, Gillard is blaming overseas workers for taking Australian jobs.

## Workers as commodities

Her lies target workers who have come to Australia on '457' temporary visas. The visa allows only a four-year period



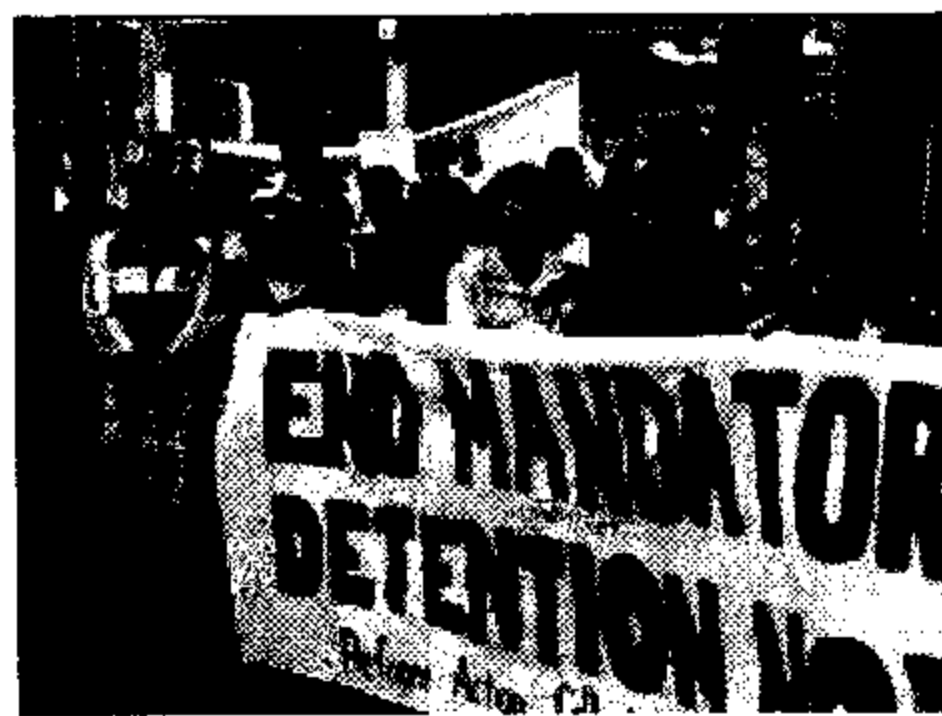
Gillard with her allies

of residence. The scheme puts all the power in the hands of the employers and the agents who organise the deal, while treating the workers as mere commodities with few rights. It was introduced by the former Tory government of John Howard in 1996 to bring in cheap, skilled labour from developing countries like the Philippines and the Pacific region, to plug the labour shortage.

In her speech Gillard pledged "a fight to stop foreign workers being put at the front of the queue with Australian workers at the back." She often reiterates the same sentiments, elevating the alleged threat into a major policy issue.

Her stand echoes that of the trade union bureaucracy. The Australian Council of Trade Unions has launched a phony campaign to defend 'Aussie' jobs against 'trorting' (fraudulent abuse) by employers.

National Construction Division Secretary of the Construction Forestry



and Mining Energy Union, Dave Noonan, said there is an obvious abuse of the 457 visa system by business to import cheap foreign labour while local workers struggle to find work.

The powerful CFMEU is campaigning against the use of 457, particularly in the construction and mining industry, with a

nationalistic and frequently racist call for the protection of 'Aussie' jobs.

Immigration Minister, Brendan O'Connor announced a tightening of the 'rules'. This would do nothing to fundamentally change the scheme. Employers will continue to abuse 457 as long as it exists. That is what 457 is about – cheap labour and abuse of workers.

The right wing Liberal opposition is trying hard to outdo the government's racism. Shadow minister for immigration, Scott Morrison, launched a vitriolic attack on asylum seekers released into the community on bridging visas while they await clarification of their status. He said they should be subject to "mandatory behaviour protocols".

Morrison's pretext for his chilling call was an alleged assault on a woman by a Sri Lankan man. This "should be a wake-up call", he said, and demanded a freeze on all bridging visas.

Going even further, he added that police should be advised of people with bridging visas who were released into the community in their jurisdiction, and there should be an incidence reporting mechanism which would enable the public to report whatever they considered suspicious to the government. His leader, Tony Abbott, refused to dissociate himself from the divisive and inflammatory demands.

The only way to defeat these racist attacks is to repeal 457 and bring workers in as immigrants, with all the rights of any other Australian workers and citizens. Instead of this Gillard and the union leaders have vilified them and tried to divert attention away from the real causes of the growing crisis: big business, the banks and the government she leads.

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# Statement on the death of Chavez

for another political variant of pro-US capitalism that will continue to exploit workers, which is what they have been doing in the provinces where they have been in the office for years now (Miranda, Zulia, Carabobo, etc.). Capriles' programme is to be a better supplier of oil for imperialism and a defender of the big national and foreign entrepreneurs, of which he is one. He will offer nothing to the working class.

## It is necessary to build a proletarian and socialist alternative

At present, a deep reflection on the balance sheet of the Chavez government is a necessity by all social activists and especially for the revolutionary and socialist left.

This is a strategic debate for all those who want to achieve genuine proletarian and socialist solution. The urgent task is to build a third political space, with class independence and in opposition to Chavism as well as the traditional neo-liberal right wing. In our opinion, the only way of solving the problems of the Venezuelan working class remains connected to the independent organisation and mobilisation of working class forces.

We need a political alternative that will hoist the flag of a government of workers, peasants and popular movements, that will expropriate the bourgeoisie and imperialism, that will nationalise the banks and foreign trade and in this way initiate the construction of a classless society. This means the construction of a real socialist, revolutionary and internationalist leadership.

For this purpose it is necessary for the working class to exclusively trust only their own forces and take their destiny into their own hands. This is the only way towards real socialism.

**See [www.litci.org/en](http://www.litci.org/en) for more articles on Latin America and Venezuale**

## Bill Hunter's Archives

## Thatcher's schooling

(Continued from back page)

a return to a free economy the question how the powers of trade unions can be appropriately delimited in law as well as in fact is one of the most important of all the questions to which we must give our attention."

It has to said that there is certainly a difference between the "economic liberalism" of the end of the twentieth century and the ideas of Adam Smith and other classical economic liberals at the end of the 18th century. Then, capitalism was in its youth. The industrial revolution was surging forward creating a capitalist class with confidence and a future.

It was a class, which was unleashing a mighty expansion of production, engineering and scientific achievement, never seen nor envisaged before. With complete self-assurance, they concluded that this system was the last in history and entirely in accord with human nature.



Thatcher ordered the sinking of the Argentine ship Belgrano as it was sailing away from the Malvinas.

Today, "orthodox" economists can explain nothing about fundamental movements in society and are not generally concerned with observing the laws of its development. Most of them search for keys in the financial and share markets, and the movement of credit and capital. They repudiate any scientific observation of capitalism as a whole, building abstract mathematical models or seeking psychological explanations for the crises which shake capitalist society. So the movement of markets and production becomes a matter of psychological analysis. The doctrines of today's "neo-liberalism" are backward, irrational and reactionary. So far as upholding the "natural individual" is concerned, it is a "natural individual" which is a self-seeking, profit hungry, money-grubbing individual who makes his riches in the most parasitic departments of capitalism, linked with speculation and uncontrollable corruption.

The men and women who determine the ruling ideology of capitalism today, under the name of freedom of the individual, are justifying the exploitative relations of a capitalist society which

is spinning more and more rapidly into an anarchy which threatens humanity itself. Their attacks on the working class are propagandised with "scientific" facts of people who refuse to find jobs that are not there, dubious statistics and selective research on everything from unemployment to the development of intelligence and bio-genetics.

The chapters in Marx's Capital on how capital was accumulated for the expansion of capitalism in Britain are filled with the facts and statistics of this change and also have the most moving accounts of the separation of the majority of the rural population from their common property and their herding into the factories. Further, a large part of that accumulation was gathered from the slave trade.

The development of the working class as a class of "free labour" did not come about by peaceful means. Capitalism broke up the old relations in the countryside and created the industrial towns where an industrial working class crowded together under the conditions described by Engels in his Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844.

Capitalists vigorously opposed legislation controlling the "free" workings of capitalism. In the last century, they opposed legislation against child labour and legislation on cutting down the working day to ten hours. As they argue about the minimum wage today, then also, they argued that these reforms would only mean that workers should lose their employment because the factory owners would not be able to continue. To reduce hours from eleven to ten a day, argued Nassau Senior, one well-known economist, would mean a collapse of production because it was in the last hour that profit was made.

In this century, the blind development of societies driven by profit has brought the threat that an exploitative society will subject humankind to untold devastation. The decisive factor which enabled the working class to climb out of brutal and repressive working and living conditions was the counter force of its solidarity and organisation in struggle. The relationship of capital and labour can never be free and equal as the capitalists own the means of production, giving them economic mastery over labour and the force of economic compulsion in a society born in violence and conflict.

# Bill Hunter's Archives

## Thatcher's schooling

### Introduction

Thatcher is proclaimed to be a self-made politician but her ideas, policies and strategies were developed over many decades. Friedrich Hayek inspired Thatcher and Pinochet, the Chilean dictator and mass murderer. Hayek and his followers were economic liberals. Others who followed included Milton Friedman, Alan Walters, Keith Joseph and Alfred Sherman, who once said "As for the Lumpenproletariat, coloured people and the Irish, let's face it, the only way to hold them in check is to have enough well armed and properly trained police." This was part of Thatcher's schooling. Here Bill Hunter deals with some of this important history.

### "Economic Liberalism" today Bill Hunter, 1995

**M**rs Thatcher talked of freeing the economy from state control. However, in reality she was only against particular forms of state control and regulation. It depends which class is being controlled, regulated or assisted by the state.

In 1976, the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS) was founded by Alfred Sherman, Margaret Thatcher and Keith Joseph, from discussion groups which met in the previous two years. Meetings were held throughout the mid-1970s in London and many academics and post-graduate students were invited to attend. Those who did so included F.A. von Hayek and Karl Popper.

The CPS set its aim to place Margaret Thatcher into power in the Tory Party and remove Edward Heath who had been twice defeated in his attempts to introduce legislation to curb working class struggle. Nicholas Ridley drew up the Ridley plan to defeat the miners whilst working for the Centre.

F.A. von Hayek, a member of the anti-Marxist Austrian School of Free Market Economics, was one of the leading lights of the CPS. The ideas of the true pioneers of this ideology, if you can call them that, like Hayek and Robbins were adopted by those who took a leading part in advising the Tory Government. Hayek himself, in the first two years of the Thatcher government was resident in Downing St. four days a week.

They claimed to base themselves upon the classical economists like Adam



Thatcher stood for brutal attacks on the men, women and children of the working class

Smith and one of the chief protagonists of Thatcherism was the Adam Smith Institute. Above all, they were anti-working class. They declared that all intervention by the state was part of the steady advance of collectivisation of which socialism was one aspect.

They aimed to convince the populations of the world that the Stalinist repression was an inevitable product of planned economy and a proof that no other system was possible but anarchic capitalism based on the relationships of the market and production for profit. In 1989/90, with the collapse of Stalinism, they declared there was a democratic revolution in the East and unleashed a wave of propaganda seeking to undermine the struggles of the working class and shake its confidence in its emancipation through its own rule over society. Thatcher, with loud triumphalism, told the people of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union that militant trade unionism, collectivism and the "nanny state" were finished; the present and the future belonged to the "free capitalist market".

The economic liberals not only declared opposition to the interventions of the state in taking over industry, but also were vocal against its interventions in free market relationship between workers and capitalists. Here of course, the hypocrisy of this ideology of "freedom" is revealed very clearly. As always, an ideology of the ruling class about freedom or democracy means freedom or democracy for the ruling class. So, under the banner of free market relations, the Tory government has used the state to carry out the legislation against trade union rights. It has restricted the freedom to strike and actively used state repression in the miner's strike of 1984/5.

In 1995, Richard Cockett published *Thinking the unthinkable: think-tanks and the economic counter-revolution, 1931-1983*. This gives some very interesting quotations from the "economic liberals" setting out their antagonism to Keynes, who they denounced as seeking to evade the problem of dealing with the strength of the working class by finding an easy road that would only pile up problems in the future.

They attacked Keynes for his premise that the biggest danger to the economy was unemployment. They declared that the greatest danger was inflation, due primarily to the working class organisations pushing up wages and creating a "rigidity" in labour costs.

There had to be the destruction of the trade union strength in order to create a "free" economic society. It was a nakedly class theory. Hayek himself made a central question of the trade unions, in a paper to a conference of the Mont Pelerin Society, which he formed in 1947: "If there is to be any hope of

*(Continues on page 11)*

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