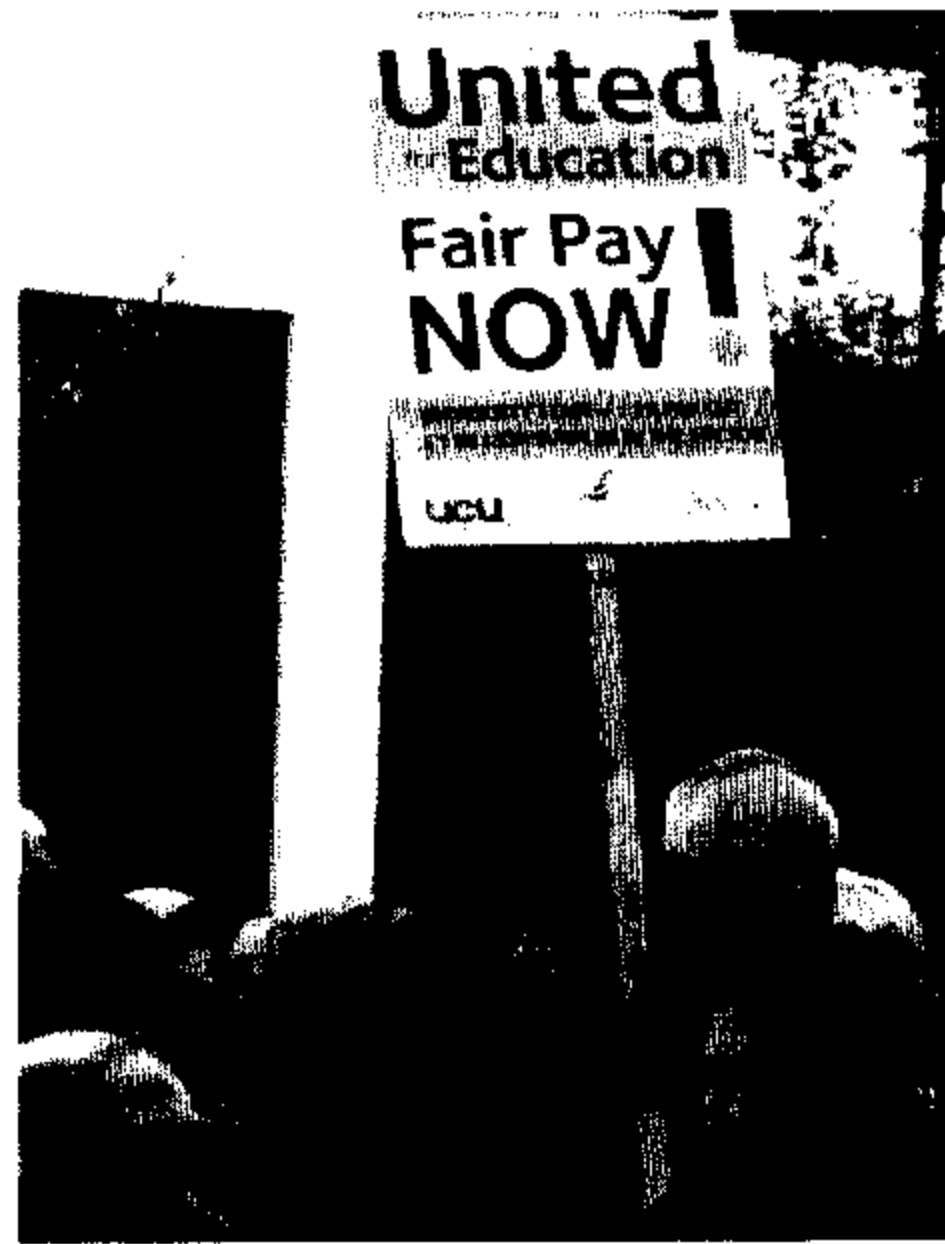
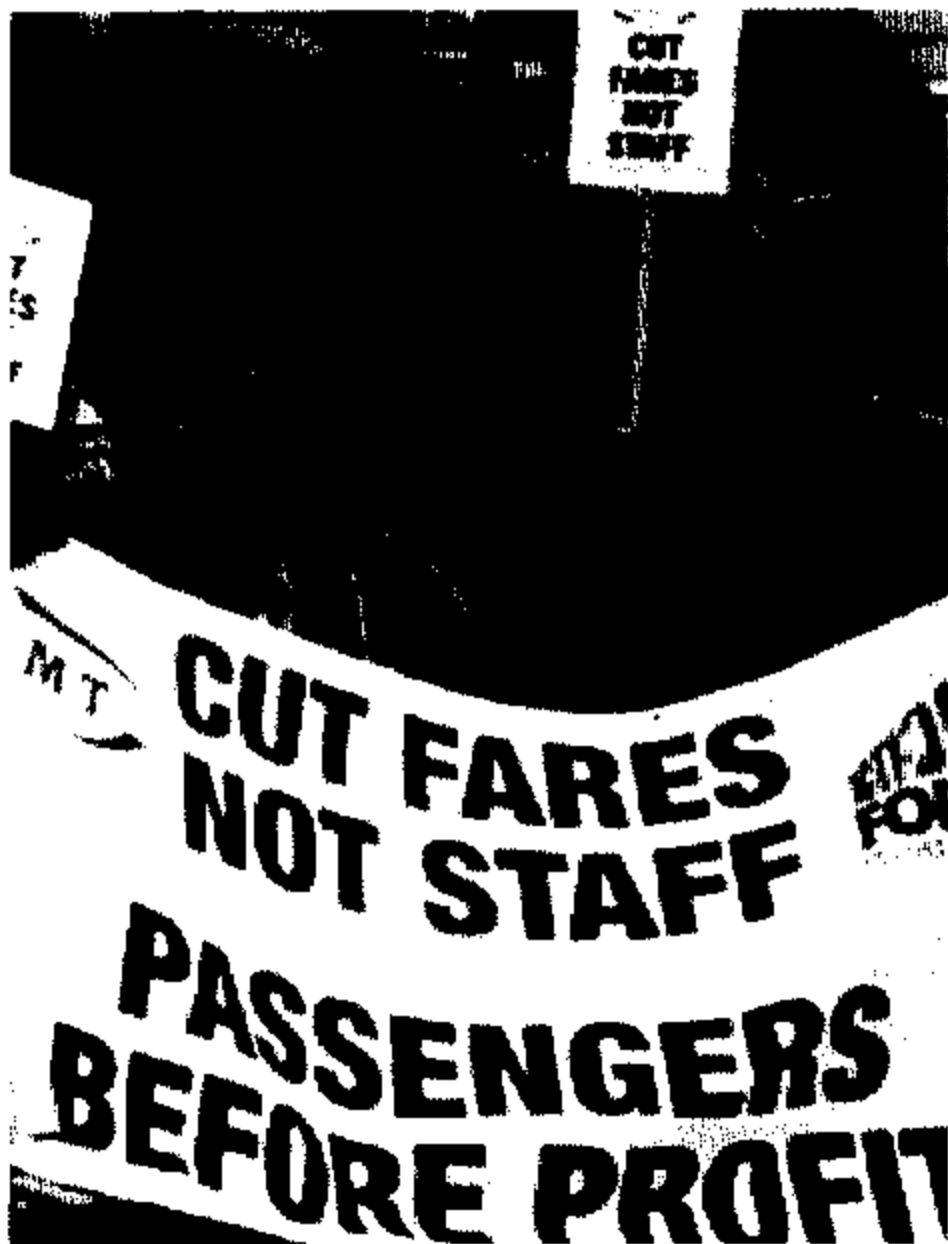


SocialistVoice

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Shameful retreat by CWU, NUT and Unite leaders without fighting



This government is offering nothing to public service workers and neither are the bosses to private sector workers.

Education minister, Michael Gove, has changed teachers' contracts, introducing performance related pay to be determined by each school, fire-fighters have been threatened with an increased retirement age, many public sectors workers have been offered a pay freeze or a one per cent pay rise, such as university workers, and the Royal Mail has been privatised.

The storm of austerity, the class war against workers, is blowing in all directions, forcing five unions FBU, NAPO (national probation officers union), UCU, Unite, Unison to take national strike action.

The will to fight and win was demonstrated in the four national strikes made by the fire-fighters in October and November, the regional teachers strikes on 30 September, in the North-West and on 14 October, in the South-East, when the strike in London showed great combativeness.

Many local and regional strikes have achieved victories as in the North-East RMT strike, Unite at Hovis Wigan, CWU Postal workers Somerset, Fowler&Kings

Liverpool and the UCU at Liverpool University.

The determination and strength of those fights could be repeated nationally and coordination of a national day of strikes could be made by the sectors that have already approved industrial actions, if there is the will and the drive.

The next national strike day for higher education unions is 3 December, which will be joined this time by the EIS in Scotland. Should the UCU in further education achieve a positive ballot on 18 November, they could also strike on 3 December. We call on rank and file union members to demand from their union leaderships to make this a national day of strikes and to start to build it. Let the real fight back begin against capitalism and the bureaucracy that supports capitalism.

Some leaderships retreat without a fight

The CWU held a consultative ballot in June with a 74 per cent turnout, of which 96 per cent voted to fight Royal Mail privatisation. But the CWU leadership stalled an actual ballot until September (after privatisation had commenced) over pay and conditions only, with no

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Life of our parties

Brazil: 1500 women attend PSTU meeting

Saturday, October 5, the First National Meeting of Women in Struggles Movement, in Sarzedo (MG) was one of biggest meetings the PSTU has ever held.

It was attended by about 1500 women from different parts of the country. The general mood was of joy and passion.

The platform was composed of Tamiris Rizzo from the Black Bureau of the PSTU, Amanda Gurgel a PSTU councillor in Natal, Vera Lucia a leader of the PSTU in Sergipe, and Syrian activist Sara al-Suri.

"It is important to get organized in neighborhood associations, trade unions, areas of study, places where there are important struggles, whatever their limits", said Vera.

"But the party is something more, it aims to defend the whole working class", she added stressing, "the most important thing is to tear down a society that oppresses men and women, and for this we need a revolutionary party to lead the struggle".

Vera continued saying that the PSTU "is

the party that allows a woman like me, a seamstress, a poor black woman, to know the world I live in and to express opinions".

Councillor, Amanda Gurgel said, "we are in the party to devote our lives to the fight against exploitation" and she pointed out, "capital is organised, we also need to organise ourselves".

Amanda stressed that, "it's not enough to fight sexism, we must fight for another society without sexism, but also without exploitation, without racism, a socialist society," adding that "this is what we do in the PSTU".

Sara talked of her experience as a refugee from Assad's dictatorship.

She said that despite having met dozens of organisations across the world that claimed to be revolutionary, it was only in Brazil that she made the choice to join the PSTU.

Sara said, "I knew I had a revolutionary spirit, but it was only in Brazil with the IWL and PSTU that I have met a revolutionary party".

Madrid: meeting with Syrian activist organised by Corrient Roja

On 18 November a representative will be in Madrid from the revolutionary council of Manbij, a liberated city of 200,000 in northern Syria, to talk about the reality of the Revolution, of how it is organised in every neighbourhood and town liberated from dictatorship and about the formation and role of the Free Syrian Army brigades.

Abu Maen, student 21 years old, who returned to Syria at the start of the revolution, is on an international tour to publicise and seeks solidarity for the Syrian revolution.

The media only highlights the actions of Jihadist groups so it is important to understand the truth about the revolution, as activists are under threat from those groups.

Revolutionaries are having to face Assad's dictatorial and genocidal regime and Jihadists in armed clashes in total danger because of international isolation.

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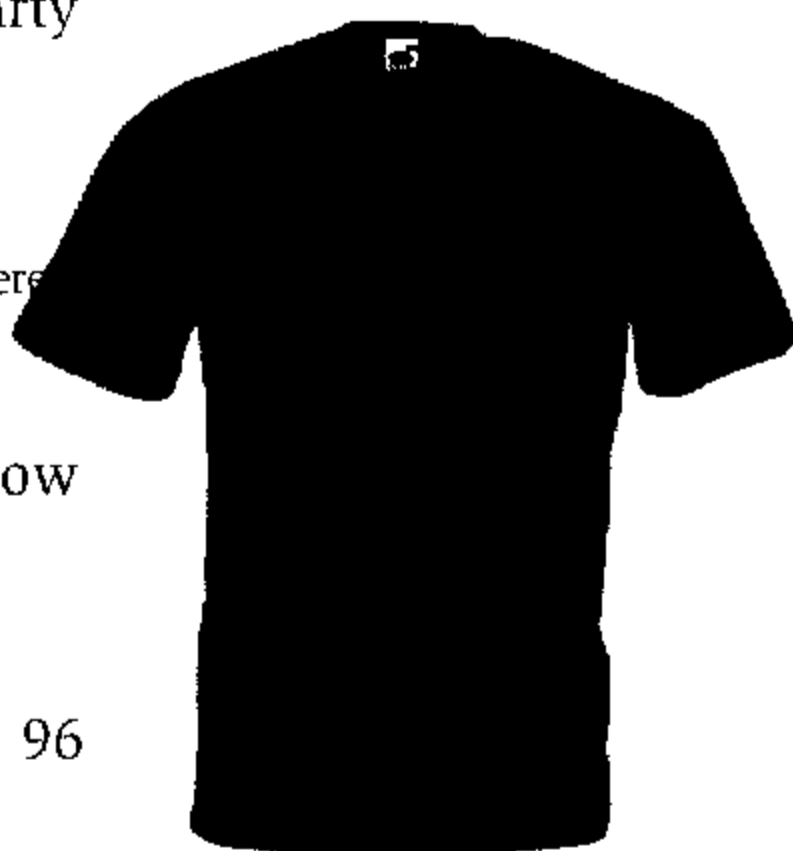
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EDITORS
Margaret McAdam and Martin Ralph

LAYOUT
Joao Simoes and Martin Ralph

(continued from front page)

mention of a fight against privatisation. The day the privatisation was scheduled, the CWU held a meeting at London's Mount Pleasant Mail Centre where general secretary Billy Hayes said: "Is it all over? Not for us it's not. We exist to fight for our members regardless of the owners".

With a pseudo-militant speech he tried to hide the shameful retreat he was making from fighting against privatisation, clearing the path for the government's action. He went on to "forget" his words and called off the strikes just hours before picket lines were due to form. Many workers, angry with the leadership, expressed frustration at the decision to suspend strike action, and at such short notice before the commencement of the strikes, with some workers turning up for picket line duty only to find they had to go into work.

According to the CWU leaders, the Post Office was committed "to resolve the long-running dispute over pay and job security with a series of intensive talks". How quickly they walked away from a fight when all that was on offer was "intensive talks". How can rank and file postal workers have any confidence in their leadership?

The fire fighters' union (FBU) were offered "talks" but only if a national strike was called off, which they did only to find that the government had nothing to offer, so strikes resumed.

The NUT argued that they could not strike without the NASUWT, who called off their action because Gove offered them "talks". But he insisted that the government's stance on pay and pensions was "fixed" and ruled out any possibility of change (Telegraph 7 November).

Despite NASUWT's capitulation, NUT leadership's behaviour is no better. On 29 September, the NUT leader Christine Blower said from the platform after Tory conference protest march, "I want you to protect our education service. We are fighting deregulation on teachers pay. We stand together. As many of you as can support our programme of rolling action [strikes]". She then forgot her own words of "rolling action" and with the majority of the union's national executive voted not strike.

Many union leaders are now making speeches about strike action next year! Do they think the workers are ready to fight just when they order it? No serious rank and file fighter can have any confidence in anyone who has



called off the recent strikes. It is now essential to build oppositional rank and file organisations in the CWU, NASUWT and NUT against these pro-boss leaders in order to get back on the road of the fight against austerity.

Grangemouth

Unite and its leader Len McCluskey carried out a huge retreat at Grangemouth's oil refinery. The leadership failed to build a plan of struggle and caved into the dictates of the multi-national boss (see page four for article on Grangemouth). McCluskey agreed all the demands, against the the workers' interests — such as freezing wages and prohibiting strikes for three years.

When asked if Unite had been humiliated by Ineos, McCluskey said "There is nothing humiliating about negotiating plans to ensure jobs and communities are safe". It is the worst sort of defeat. A surrender without a fight is a humiliating retreat by this pro-Labour trade unionist and a huge setback for the working class.

Only workers democracy can bring victory

The dismantling of strikes and opposition was conducted peacefully by the union bureaucracy. So what is needed is a unified movement of workers opposing the retreats their leadership.

Decisions need to be taken in assemblies, and all officials need to be elected to restore democracy in the unions. Instead workers are called to hear the decisions of their leaders. The cancellation of strikes have not been voted for by the rank and file, which means the most important democratic union rights do not exist.

But there is a deeper issue. It is the anti-union law in England, introduced by Thatcher, which has been deepened and "perfected", with the collaboration of several Labour governments.

The law requires secret ballots rather

than in workplace meetings with a minimum four week delay between a decision to ballot and the date of any industrial action. These conditions remove a unions' ability to respond quickly and are aimed at reducing the effectiveness of any action taken.

That is what allowed the lockout at Grangemouth before the strike began and, to some extent, the privatisation of Royal Mail in advance of strike action. Of course one of the main factors that remains here is also the collaboration of the unions' bureaucracy. Despite all union conferences agreeing to call for the repeal of anti-union law, there is no campaign to mobilise workers against it.

Therefore the working class has no freedom to organise its own fight. The anti-union law is a direct interference by the bourgeoisie into the workers' organisation and a guarantee of the perpetuation of the bureaucracy.

Need for new unions' organisation

The privatisation of the Post Office and the Grangemouth humiliation are gains for capitalism and represent a blow against workers' will to fight.

Workers have to reshape the union organisation in Britain and they must aim to remove and expel the bureaucracy from the trade unions.

This means that the rank and file should organise groups in each union to take control and discuss how they are going to put their unions back on the road to fight the bosses and the government.

Locally, branches have to work together, no matter which union they belong to, and organise joint meetings to overcome the current separation in workplaces.

The British working class has a double task: to fight capitalists and their parties in order to defeat the government's austerity policy and fight the union leaders who support capitalism.

See comment on the SWP and CWU, pg 7.

Lesson from Grangemouth: no confidence in Unite leadership

Margaret McAdam, International Socialist League

On 25 October, the owners of Grangemouth oil refinery, petrochemical multi-national Ineos, defeated Unite in a deal that forced its workforce to agree to a three-year pay freeze, closure of their final salary pension scheme, and a three-year no-strike clause. Following threats to close the plant, Unite caved in without a fight.

Grangemouth represents eight per cent of manufacturing industry in Scotland. Ineos supplies 70 per cent of fuel used in Scottish petrol stations, as well as supplies to northern Ireland and the north of England.

Ineos have recently negotiated a £9 million grant from the Scottish government and a £125 million loan guarantee from the UK government (plus a subsidy from BP) to help pay for the £300 million gas plant it plans to build.

Workers were ready to fight back

In 2008, Ineos attempted to break the final salary scheme but were pushed back by a short strike that closed off the steam supplies to the pipeline that delivers oil from the North Sea, and the Forties oil field. All of which pushed oil prices to a record high.

In 2013, Ineos attacked again, suspending one of Unite's two convenors at the plant, Stephen Deans, for allegedly using company facilities for union and Labour Party business.

"A ballot for an overtime ban, work-to-rule and two-day strike produced a Yes vote. The strike was due to commence on 20 October. Ineos' response was to preempt the strike and closed the plant on 14 October, laying off over the next two weeks 2,000 contractors and threatening the livelihood of 1,370 employees". Jerry Hicks, Unite Fight Back.

But not the leadership

Encouraged by the Unite leadership's lack of fight, Ineos issued an ultimatum



After the vote

that the plant would remain closed, locking the workforce out until they agreed to cuts in pay and rights.

Unite Scottish secretary Pat Rafferty immediately conceded on the workers' right to strike, "Unite [is] committed to conducting no industrial action ballots or industrial action before 31 December 2013."

Unite also promised to maintain steam supplies to the North Sea oil terminal and retain the plant at "hot standby" mode to ensure a quick resumption of production. Their only demand was that Ineos engage in talks through ACAS! However, Ineos responded with a threat to sack 800 workers and re-employ them on worse terms unless a Unite ballot of its Grangemouth membership ratified their deal.

Of course the media and politicians, from nationalist Alex Salmond to David Cameron, urged workers to climb down. But workers and their shop stewards, who campaigned for a No vote, refused to be blackmailed. On 21 October, the plan was rejected by 665 workers, representing half the workforce and nearly two-thirds of those effected.

After a shareholders' meeting the next day, Ineos retaliated threatening the permanent closure of the plant from 23 October.

Unite immediately caved in. McCluskey, a central union leader in Britain and considered a "spokesperson" of trade unionists in the Labour Party, had done nothing to create a national movement to fight the attacks.

Knowing that Grangemouth workers had been fighting for four months, he could have called on the working class to unite and fight for Grangemouth at the TUC congress, at the Labour Conference, at the People's Assembly or the many other platforms he has addressed. But he never.

He did not call for solidarity for the workers of Grangemouth. He visited the site "to give his solidarity and support", without mobilising a single sector of workers. He kept the struggle isolated and then opted to retreat without fighting, when he could have called for an occupation or a national day of strike. He let the workers down.

Don't blame the workers!

The Grangemouth workers fought as best they could but their leaders failed them. The workers did not retreat but faced a dead end because their leadership told them that they would lose their jobs.

Now in Unite, as in other unions, rank and file combative and democratic organisations have to be built. It is essential to build an opposition and fight these leaders who refuse to fight the bosses and concede workers' rights.

A political campaign is needed, to demand the nationalisation of Grangemouth, and, to seek the support of the millions of workers who agree with renationalising the energy companies, the Post Office and the rail services. The current cost of fuel bills is hurting the majority of the working class. Given Grangemouth's importance in the energy industry this campaign can undermine Ineos and its obedient government, and can win.

Price freezing tomorrow won't solve fuel poverty today

Marcos Margarido PSTU Brazil

After Miliband's speech at the Labour Party conference pledging a 20 month price freeze on energy suppliers should his party win the 2015 elections, the energy issue has become a heavily commented subject in the media.

From the right, Miliband was accused of "Leninism" and his "Red Ed" 2010 epithet was resurrected. The Energy Minister, Greg Barker, said that the proposal would lock out competition, raise the cost of capital and drive away foreign investors. It was no coincidence that the big six energy companies expressed the same opinion. Not to mention that the more exalted, Centrica chairman, argued that a price freeze would lead to "economic ruin".

The Guardian, in turn, hurried to defend Miliband's "saying something" attitude for "at last showing voters who fits into this nation. And who doesn't: namely, multinationals that don't invest in Britain or that don't play fair."

The ISL, on the other hand, has argued in October's Socialist Voice issue that Labour was moving fast to the right. Has his speech proven we were wrong? For us, Labour has not changed its position. His speech, on the contrary, reaffirms what we said.

The prices rise and Labour's answer

The Tories' forecast became reality: the "big six" firms, which control 90 per cent of the energy supplying market, increased their prices by an average of nine per cent in average.

Cameron reacted with predictable hypocrisy. After the first of the "big six" raised its price, he urged the "hardworking people" to find cheaper options rather than passively accept an increase in the cost of living! Now, when all of them have done the same, he wants to roll back the "green charges" claiming they are driving the energy bills up. The problem is that his government has always insisted the "green charges" would help cut energy bills in the long run. Has he forgotten his own assertions?

In response, Miliband merely says that Cameron is not forcing the energy suppliers to freeze prices and that "27 million families would benefit from Labour's price freeze". But "would



benefit" is very different from "is benefiting", and he makes it clear that Labour are not going to do anything to stop rising bills now. It is, after all, a tactic to win labour votes.

The Ipsos Mori poll shows that 36 per cent are satisfied with Miliband's leadership, an improvement on September's 24 per cent. But Miliband's boost has not helped Labour; they are tied with the Tories on 35 per cent. So, we await further false promises from now until the general election.

The fuel poverty

One in four UK households now live in fuel poverty, that is more than five million. Fuel-poor households will have to spend, on average, £450 more on fuel, 50 per cent more than they can afford. On average households spend £9 a week on fuel bills in the summer, but it can jump to over £30 in the winter months.

Since 2004, according to the government, fuel poverty is getting worse. The Energy Conservation Act 2000 was meant to prevent it, but since 2008-09 the funds for Warm Front, the primary policy on energy efficiency, has been cut.

But there is no lack of money. Since 2004 VAT income from energy bills has risen by at least £1bn a year, and sales of carbon emission permits, required by the energy firms, bring in a further £4bn a year for the Treasury. This could be used to end fuel poverty and alleviate the hard choice that poor households have to make between heating and eating, and leading to an appalling increase in the numbers using food banks. But the government preference is to use that money to bail out the banks, through quantitative

easing or to fund private business, such as the Help to Buy programme or public-private partnerships (PPP).

Lower prices now and nationalise the energy sector

It's easy to see that Miliband's pledge cannot solve any of the problems that afflict the population. First, because it's only a promise for 2015, second, it's a temporary and not permanent freeze of prices and, lastly, it won't resolve the problem of fuel poverty that already exists.

What the English working class and the poor need is an immediate reduction in energy prices to an affordable level for everyone, investment of tax income in the Warm Front programme to end fuel poverty; and, which is linked, food subsidies so that poor families do not have to resort to the degradation of food banks.

What we do know that this cannot be done while the "big six" control energy. Giving money to the capitalists, while waiting for a social return is like putting Dracula in charge of the blood bank.

The only way out for this situation is the nationalisation, without compensation and under workers' control, of the entire energy sector – from production to supply.

Nationalisation is supported by 69 per cent of the population, but this will never be a Labour campaign promise. It can only be achieved by the organized struggle of the working class – native and immigrant, communities and oppressed sectors, which is everything the Labour and their aides – the TUC and union bureaucracy – don't want to happen.

Reduce rail travel costs

Increase the quantity and quality carriages

Nationalise the railways

Karl Marsh, International Socialist League

Passenger fares will be increasing above the rate of inflation for rail travel in the New Year. Fares have risen 50 per cent in ten years, and are up to ten times higher than in other parts of Europe. Since the economic crash in 2008, rail fares have increased three times faster than average earnings.

Regular passengers will be familiar with the issues of overcrowding and late or cancelled services. Last year 70500 long distance trains were cancelled or late. There has also been a failure to meet safety targets over the last two years. The idea increasingly peddled is of a meritocracy, where people are rewarded or penalised on the basis of performance. This led Network Rail bosses to judge their "deserved" bonuses to be worth £10 million over the next 3 years. Perhaps we should be grateful for small mercies; the increase in fares is only being increased at 4.2 per cent on average. However, this cap does not apply to Rail Executives whose bonuses have only been limited, this year, to 17 per cent of their salary.

History

Britain's railways were nationalised by Labour in 1948, when there was a broad consensus of worker's demands and a need to re-establish the power of capital through the economic capacity and planning by the state. After this brief period in post-war Britain, a policy of a "managed decline" has been applied to the railways.

The public rail service was privatised in the UK in 1993. This was a classic case of privatisation for profit, with the railways still being publicly funded. To exemplify this, the ticket income from passengers is £7.2 billion, while the government pay the privatised companies a £4 billion subsidy. The subsidy is more than 40 per cent of the running costs of the network. On top of this private deal the Government also guarantees Network Rail's £30 billion debt.

East Coast Mainline became the first network to be renationalised in 2009 after the debacle of two franchises proving unable to operate the service. The East



One in four passengers are forced to stand on Britain's busiest trains.

Coast Mainline has now returned £600 million to the Treasury over those three years. These figures clearly demonstrate how low its taxpayer subsidy is in comparison to other private lines, for example, last year Virgin Rail's subsidy was seven times greater than that of the East Coast Mainline.

The RMT says that £1.2bn a year is squandered through the fragmentation, inefficiency and cash leaking out of the service in the form of profits and dividends as a result of rail privatisation. That is enough to fund an 18 per cent cut in fares.

The cost

When you look at the facts regarding the costs we pay and the service delivered, the whistle starts to sound against the case for a privatised rail network. The Tories argued that privatisation would enable large scale investment, innovation, cheaper fares and a more efficient use of public money. The reality is that on average trains are now older, there's more overcrowding, the fares are the highest in Europe and it sucks up more billions of taxpayer's money, much of which ends up in the pockets of shareholders.

The Labour Party at this year's conference voted unanimously to renationalise Britain's train operations. However, senior Labour sources made it clear that the leadership is prepared to ignore the motions in their election manifesto. They are determined to maintain a privatised service.

What we stand for

Public transport fares are extremely high. Many people cannot afford to use it. Many have no choice so have to

walk rather than take public transport. Therefore we demand the immediate freezing of transport fares, with no increase in the New Year. But that is not enough. We must organize to demand a decrease in fares so that they are affordable to all.

We know that in a privatised market, where the profit is the main goal, companies will never agree to a reduction. The East Coast Mainline's nationalisation showed the way. Only the nationalisation of the railways can meet the users' needs, that is a reduction of fares, new investments for modernisation and an increase in the quantity of trains.

We call on unions that campaign for Public Ownership For Our Railways and Action for Rail to mobilise the railway workers and the users for the freezing and further reduction of rail fares now! Mobilisation is the only way to accomplish nationalization.

The International Socialist League will be campaigning on and demanding:

- A decrease in train fares, both mainline, light railway and underground.
- For modern and quality rolling stock.
- An increase in the level and quality of service for the benefit of the travelling public to end overcrowding.
- Re-nationalisation without compensation and under workers control of the railways including all rail services.
- Full public ownership of the underground systems in the UK.
- No to the EU's proposals for further privatisation of European rail.

Train traveller diary

Karl Marsh, International Socialist League

Many train passengers suffer overcrowding, which is tiring and dangerous. The diary is written by a regular train user.

Saturday 26 October

6.30pm arrived at Manchester Piccadilly for the next train to Leeds. Two trains arrived at the same time, both set off late. One was heading to Hull and the other to Middlesbrough, both stopping at Leeds. Took the nearest train and found that all the seats had been taken. Stood squashed next to the door for a few minutes.

I decided to make a dash for the other train, hoping there would be more room. However, such optimism is not justified in our privatised rail service. It was equally crammed, with passengers standing all the way along the carriage. I had planned to read my newspaper, although space denied such luxuries.

I recalled a colleague a few years ago telling me of the time he purchased a rail ticket in France. Having travelled on our privatised services, he enquired whether he would be able to get a seat. The kiosk worker looking puzzled and said, "Of course, it would be dangerous to stand". As much as people sometimes satirise health and safety legislation, perhaps in actuality the joke is still on us!

Sunday 27 October 2013

1pm. I reached Leeds railway station. I've long given up on saving money buying advance tickets. Even when I had reached my designated train on time, I have found the carriages were not numbered/lettered and announcements relayed that pre-booked seats could not be guaranteed because of this. Or, my train would be cancelled and therefore the pre-booked seats could not be guaranteed on the next alternative service. Or, on boarding my train I had found that because of overcrowding I was unable to reach my pre-booked seat. Or, upon reaching my seat a number of passengers were left standing who I believed were more deserving of a seat for the journey, thus giving up my seat.

This time, I was just planning to jump on the first train that came. Alas, planning is a diversionary pursuit to profit on a privatised rail service. The first was cancelled. The second train was cancelled. I feel obliged to remind you that this is on the ironically named First



The man sat front right is in wheel chair and could not get to a designated area

TransPennine Express.

By now there were a significant number of passengers on platform 16 and I began to wonder whether, like many other public places, there were health and safety rules to limit the maximum number of people in this area. Particularly, when one considers the danger of going beyond the yellow line.

Friday 1 November 2013

Cadged a lift in a car.

Sunday 3 November 2013

1.40pm. Things started out well! The train pulled in on time. But the celebration was cut short by being physically unable to step foot on the train due to the number of passengers. Totally full, all seats taken, and all standing room taken.

These inconsiderate customers must begin to realise by now that the TransPennine Express only provides half the number of carriages needed. Why does this happen? The reason from staff that I spoke to, is that TransPennine are "limited" to the number of carriages they can hire, because of the "limit" in the government's subsidy, of which a significant amount is syphoned off to shareholders.

On the bright side, I actually squeezed onto the next train and stood all the way back. Relaxing back into my standing position after a wee stretch I recalled the protests that began in Brazil over the issues with their public transport. There's hope yet then. Privatised transport, it's the stuff revolutions are made of.

PORTUGAL

Full support to transport workers strike!

Unity of workers and users in defense of public transport!

MAS, section of the IWL

Transport workers of virtually all public companies in Portugal organised two weeks of strikes, between 25 October to 8 November ending with a national demonstration in Lisbon.

The main reason for the strikes are the measures that are included in the 2014 state budget for the transport sector, which will mean:

- cuts in workers' wages;
- dismissing 3 per cent of the workforce;
- reduction of 15 per cent in operating costs;
- end of free transport for employees;
- privatisation of lines.

SWP support for CWU leadership is a scandal

Socialist Worker (no. 2375) published an article (As rich snap up Royal Mail shares, post workers get ready for strikes) that demonstrates the extent of the SWP's role in their united front tactic with the union bureaucracy.

The day the Royal Mail was privatised, the CWU organised a meeting at London's Mount Pleasant Mail Centre where deputy general secretary Tony Kearns said, "don't think we're going away—no matter who the prospective owners are".

Sure, they will not go away; the pressure from below is tremendous with 78.29 per cent approving a strike action. But the leadership have done nothing to prevent the privatisation and in November called the national strike over wages and conditions off.

Socialist Worker has made no criticism of the complete capitulation by the CWU leadership. Even while recognising that "workers know that privatisation will bring more attacks on pay, pensions, jobs and contracts." (Socialist Worker, no. 2374), they think the CWU leaders will fight "no matter who the owners are".

For a free union of Socialist States of Europe and the destruction of the European Union

Contribution by the IWL-FI representative to the ISL Conference

There is a wide debate amongst the European left about what to say and do with the European Union. The European reformist parties, like Izquierda Unida in Spain, the Bloco de Esquerda in Portugal or SYRIZA in Greece have a strategy of refounding or reforming the European Union.

But it is impossible to reform the EU. The imposition of austerity plans and the intervention of the Troika (European Commission, European Central Bank and IMF) in countries like Ireland, Greece, and Portugal (peripheral countries) has resulted in a large sector of the European proletariat rejecting the EU.

In reality those who want to refound or reform the EU are trying to rescue the EU, to make it more palatable to the working class. To demand the reform of the EU is like demanding the reform of the IMF or the UN. It is like demanding that imperialism reforms the institutions and instruments it uses to exploit and oppress; such a demand can have no other meaning.

Workers in the imperialist countries must become aware that the debt of the peripheral countries must not be paid and that the EU is an instrument of exploitation of the European peoples, in order to build a unity of workers in Europe, as is necessary to fight against austerity in any European country. To



Attacks on Madrid refuse collectors starts an indefinite strike

fail to understand the necessity for international workers unity would mean that the leadership of the fight against the EU would be seized by nationalists, reactionaries and fascists.

Reformist parties limit themselves to making general statements against austerity in all countries. While in Germany, France and England there is austerity, in Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain there is social catastrophe.

So our aim is to develop a programme that shows the best way to build unity among European workers. And this unity will only be possible if we fight for common demands and tasks, because workers will not strive for unity in the abstract.

For this reason it is necessary to achieve a real unity of workers' struggle in the most powerful countries of Europe against their own imperialism, with those in the peripheral countries against the

same imperialism that is attacking them. This is the point of unity, as workers in the major imperialist countries are also being attacked.

The tragedy of the European left is that no sector with a real influence intends to fight, first, against their own imperialism and, secondly against the exploitation of the weaker countries of Europe by the same imperialism. But the imperialist role of the EU is centre stage in all these countries.

These two slogans – For a Free Union of Socialist States of Europe and For the Destruction of the EU – sum up our main policy. That is, denouncing the EU as an instrument of imperialism, of which British imperialism is part. These demands express our strategy.

They combine with another demand in the countries suffering from the imposition of Troika policies, that is a call for these countries to split with the euro and the EU.

This combination of slogans differentiates us from all nationalist and extreme reactionary nationalist positions are held inside the imperialist countries, such as UKIP in England, or expressed in the “left” nationalism of Stalinism.

These slogans reaffirm our strategy to fight for socialism, fundamentally that the state and socialism cannot exist in one country only.

Destroy the EU and UKIP

UKIP's position against the EU has nothing to do with ours. They just want Britain to get out so that, in their utopian dream, it will become the great imperialist power of the past. It expresses a typical reactionary nationalism – the desire for the British bourgeoisie to once more rule and profit from workers all over the world. For the economist Tim Congdon, who spoke at the UKIP conference, “Britain would be a much more prosperous nation as well as having the opportunity to restore its traditional constitutional and legal arrangements”, if it left the EU.

The other side of UKIP's policy is their hatred of immigrants, which they share with all the parliamentary parties including Labour. For UKIP, the EU is responsible for the presence of foreign workers in Britain and it claims that “jobs may have been lost to some 100,000 UK-born people thanks to mass migration from Eastern Europe”.

Not a word about the exploitation of English workers by their own imperialism, not a word about the exploitation by English

multinationals of the workers in Europe, the semi-colonies they exploit or its colonies. And not a word against the English banks that profit from the poverty of all the European peoples.

That's why the UKIP MEP Gerrard Batten wrote that “the whole EU project is... about the creation of a United States of Europe. It is an undemocratic, utopian, political project advanced by lies and deceit...” The United States of the Europe of the capitalists really is an undemocratic and reactionary utopian project, but not against Britain. On the contrary, Britain, Germany and France are the major European countries using the EU as an instrument of oppression in Ireland and the Southern European countries and exploitation of all European workers.

The IWL-FI and its section in Britain, the ISL, fight for the Free Union of the Socialist States of Europe and the destruction of the EU. In this fight not only will the EU be destroyed, but the imperialist system and its advocates such as the Tories, Labour and UKIP.

National ISL conference report

Martin Ralph. International Socialist League

The International Socialist League held its national conference 5 and 6 October, which was a step forward in the re-founding of the ISL. We agreed our central positions on the national situation and our programme, how we are going to build the ISL, its internal structure and resolutions for campaigns. The ISL is part of the International Workers League/Fourth International whose aim is to rebuild the Fourth International in order to lead the socialist revolution.

Our members and sympathisers work in the hospitals, Post Office, education and are also involved in the community struggles against the bedroom tax, and other benefit cuts.

There was a clear understanding in the discussion, and from experience, of the class nature of the attacks every sector is suffering from.

In our struggles against austerity we also stand with the European working class. The British government does not only attack its own working class, it is also an oppressor nation against Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Greece.

We want to build a party based in the working class, the youth and the oppressed. For this the ISL also aims to be part of the fights of the most exploited workers, including women workers, youth and immigrants, against the government policies.

Building the ISL in the class struggle

There was complete agreement on the need to build the party in a situation where the bourgeoisie is using the economic crisis to destroy all the conquests of the working class of the last 60 years.

Class resistance is growing and workers are beginning to understand that only the unity of all fights can lead to a way out of this situation and the construction of a working class alternative.

In the fight against capitalism we are against the privileges of the archaic, undemocratic institutions of the monarchy and the House of Lords. Which will have to be eradicated in the course of the class struggle for socialism.

The Labour Party and the trade union bureaucracy are recognised as the main obstacles preventing the increase and deepening of class struggles. Since September, six local or regional strikes have achieved victory in the public and

private sectors. It was agreed that these can be built if the rank and file in the unions are strong enough and fight to build their own organisations.

November and December should see an increase in national strikes. The ISL is calling for one day of national strikes against austerity as a step forward in fighting the government. The TUC accepts the need to discuss "the practicalities of the general strike" but will never begin the organisation of one. The organisation of a general strike will have to start with the rank and file.

The unions face big problems organising the youth. From 1991 to 2012, workers under the age of 24 dropped from 22 per cent to 4.1 per cent; just 270,000 members in all.

We, as revolutionists, do not dismiss the progressive role of the trade unions for the organisation of the working class, but see workers who are organised as different from their leaders.

While the current TUC leadership is counter-revolutionary, the unions are the traditional working class institutions to fight against the capitalists. So, we have a dual role.

On the one hand, to be in the existing unions organising the grassroots for the fight against the capitalists, and in this fight, open workers' minds to the treacherous role of their leaders.

On the other hand to stimulate and support the construction of new forms of organisation like rank and file tendencies and pop-up unions, when they come from genuine grass root struggles.

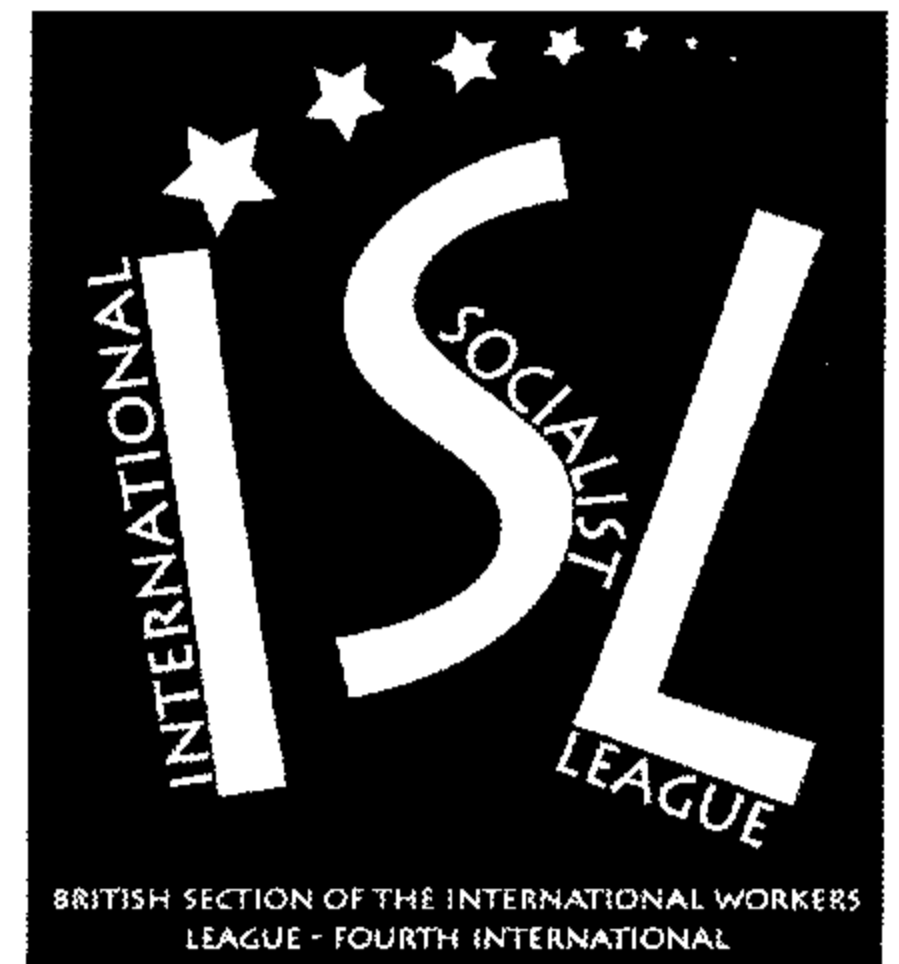
Campaigns

We agreed to organise a campaign to fight for a reduction in public transport fares and for its nationalisation (see pages six and seven).

Fight the oppression against women

The ISL thinks that patriarchy is fundamental to the capitalist system which devalues, discriminates and oppresses women. And that this oppression affects and is embedded in all areas of capitalist society with the result that working class women are doubly affected by exploitation and by sexism, abuse and violence.

We oppose all forms of sexism and violence against women, and demand equality in all aspects of life. The struggle against women's oppression is



a struggle for all the working class, men and women.

The ISL opposes of every form of domination and exploitation, whether based on social class, gender, race/ethnicity, age, education, sexual orientation, or other characteristics:

- **End all discrimination based on gender, sexuality or ethnic background.**
- **Stop rape and physical and psychological violence against women!**
- **For full public provision of rape crisis centres and refuges for women and children.**
- **For full funding of high-quality child care provision for all.**
- **For full support for every woman's right to choose.**

Europe

The working class is not only attacked by the government, but also by the European Union, its organisations and the IMF. Behind the government are powerful international forces of imperialism and capitalism.

We are for a unified struggle of the European working class. And for that we have to be against those who are crushing countries, as mentioned above into misery and under the boot of the European Central Bank.

These countries can only recover if their national debt is cancelled and we support the non-payment of this debt.

Read in this issue of Socialist Voice articles from the main conference discussion.

Fighting council cuts in Bootle

Standing against Labour cutters



The local election in Bootle, Derby Ward ended on 7 November. Juliet Edgar stood for the first time and as an independent anti-cuts candidate. She got 7 per cent of the vote. Juliet is secretary of Merseyside anti-bedroom tax federation and works in Merseyside Against the Cuts with other activists in the trade unions and level communities.

Socialist Voice interviewed Juliet about her experience.

Why did you decide to stand against Labour?

Since January 2013, I have been campaigning with a fantastic team of grass roots community activists against the government welfare cuts, particularly the bedroom tax (a cut in social housing tenants housing benefit, due to so-called "spare" bedrooms). It started with Stand Up in Bootle — a group whose meteoric rise to the fame culminated in one of the biggest protests against austerity and welfare cuts on 28 February. That evening the Labour-led Bootle Council were deciding on more cuts to services. A group of us disrupted that meeting for over 40 minutes, which had to be stopped and was eventually moved to another room in Bootle Town Hall.

Since February along with other community activists I have supported tenants by assisting them to appeal against bedroom tax decisions, and to submit forms for discretionary housing payments and for a non-residential carers.

We have taken many actions outside Bootle One-Stop Shop to oppose the bedroom tax, and at the Magistrates Court to oppose the 20 per cent increase

in Council tax for those residents of working age claiming benefits. We have also protested at the Job Centre to oppose the use of sanctions (removal of benefits) against job seeking claimants. In May 2013, a number of us left Stand Up in Bootle to establish the new anti-cuts and anti welfare cuts campaigning group ReClaim.

I have been active in the Bootle community since 1989. First as a detached youth worker, and have campaigned on a range of issues such as: reclaiming the streets to be safe for young women; for resources to support work with vulnerable young women and their families; opposing local Labour leaders plans in 2004, to close many primary schools in Sefton (most in the deprived area of Bootle); and opposing from 2003, until today the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder Programme (HMRIP), which was started by a Labour government.

The HMRIP is a social engineering project to dismantle close, tight and supportive communities and demolish the much cherished Victorian housing. Thousands of these homes have been demolished across Merseyside.

I was a member of the Labour party from 2004 to 2006. A number of us actually took positions in local wards but these were immediately suspended and the whole Bootle constituency was put into special measures by the National Executive. Many of us left at the time, realising we could not effect change from within.

Why did you decide to run as an independent candidate?

We considered standing under the TUSC banner (Trade Union and Socialist

Coalition) but we decided a community activist candidate would stand a better chance. It is very unfortunate in this by-election that TUSC also decided to stand. We met with the TUSC candidate but decided Graham Woodhouse was not the best person to represent Derby Ward because while the TUSC candidate is a trade unionist, member of PCS and lives very close to the ward, he had no relationship with the local community and did not understand the issues in the community.

With the support of fellow activists in ReClaim and others in the community we decided to stand for election. I know the area very well and am well known for the work I have done in this community over the years. I stood primarily on an anti-welfare cuts banner, and of course against all cuts, for public services and against privatisation of local services and the NHS.

Sefton Council have already cut over £71 million from their budget with at least £50 million of cuts planned over the next two years!

How did the campaign go?

The campaign was very hectic. We launched the campaign with a good, but inexperienced team. We do not have the benefit of a member list, or members whose vote we could rely on, we were starting from the beginning.

We received a lot of support from local people and the wider anti-cuts campaigns across Merseyside, from Kirkby and Liverpool. Also we received donation commitments of £400, which is a fantastic achievement in such a little time!

We thank every single person who contributed in any way; getting feet on the streets is one of the most important contributions. We produced two A4 leaflets to post through 6500 doors.

The day before election day we posted "Thank you" cards to encourage people to vote and many from across Merseyside joined us including a number of cars set up with megaphone systems.

Should communities launch independent candidates for the 2014 elections?

There is certainly discussion taking place across the movement about local community candidates for the May 2014 elections.

Women in Struggles Movement National Meeting October

Raíza Rocha and Camila Chaves

The opening of the national meeting, an historical event for working women, took place in Belo Horizonte bringing together 2300 women.

A platform of many left organisations, and workers and feminist movements, opened the first National Meeting of the Women in Struggles Movement (MML), a class and feminist movement affiliated to CSP-Conlutas.

The opening platform included representatives from CSP-Conlutas, Metalworkers Union of São José dos Campos, Front for the Legalization of Abortion, March of Bitches (BH), World March of Women (MML), MTST, People's Struggle Movement, Feminist Network, PSOL, PSTU and LER-QI.

Also attending were international representatives from Argentina, the Spanish State, India, England, Germany and Syria.

The platform reaffirmed the necessity of a feminist and class struggle movement.

Joaninha Oliveira, representative of CSP-Conlutas said, "this meeting reassures us that the project we discussed for CSP-Conlutas is going in the right direction".

She was referring to the idea of building an organisation to unite not only the unions, but the social movements and organisations that fight oppression such as the MML.

Next, the leader of the PSTU, Vanessa Portugal, highlighted the historical character of the meeting, saying, "Perhaps younger women who are here don't appreciate the dimension of this meeting, but we should highlight to them that this is the largest gathering of working women that has taken place in the last 20 years".

She went on to criticise the theory of "women's empowerment", because right now as this meeting was taking place to discuss women's oppression, Brazil for the first time is ruled by a woman, President Dilma Rousseff.

Vanessa went on to establish differences with the feminist movements that reduce the question of women to a question of gender without taking into account the issue of class.



She said, "Without men you cannot fight for socialism, but nor can you without women". Women from different corners of the country chanted, "I'm radical - I'm fighting - I'm struggling at this National Meeting".

Laura Symbalista, from the Front for the Legalization of Abortion said, "this meeting is extremely important to gather and organize the feminist movement".

Helena Silvestre, from the People's Struggle Movement, which is currently leading a land occupation with more than a thousand families in Osasco (São Paulo state), highlighted the importance of the women's struggle saying that, "Historically women have suffered in many areas: in health, in education, in the family; sexism has always imposed a place on her".

She concluded that, "we need to face that imposition and show that a woman's place is in the fight".

Lola Write Lola

Lola Aronovich, literature teacher at the UFC (federal university of Ceará) and author of a blog Write Lola Write, which

is a reference for the feminist movement, noted the coincidence between the start of her blog and the MML, both in 2009. "My blog is personal, virtual, whereas the MML is collective and social ... Many women have learnt about feminism by reading my blog, and I would be very happy if these women were here to find a political tool like the MML, to strengthen their fight for rights".

Lola praised the diversity present, and said, "I think this is a fantastic women's movement because there are so many black, gay, transgender, and women workers. It is necessary for social movements and political parties to give another voice to these women".

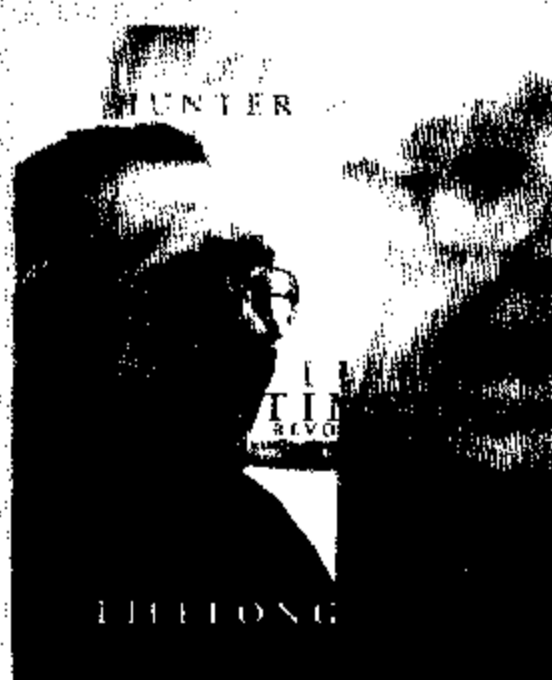
Lola did not fail to criticise Dilma's government, "Although I believe that her election was important", she said she was "very disappointed with Dilma's government...I expected more from the first woman in the presidency of this country".

Expectations exceeded

The preparation for the meeting had already shown the great enthusiasm that existed, with pre-meetings in different states, as well as numerous financial campaigns that were organised by women to enable the delegations to travel to Minas Gerais, while maintaining financial and political independence from the government.

The pre-registration level of 2300 women, which exceeded all expectations, confirmed that lively activities were taking place across the regions to build for the conference.

Lifelong Apprenticeship - Life and Times of a Revolutionary. Bill Hunter



These pages are crowded with thumbnail sketches of Trotskyist and working class fighters of the period before, during and after the second world war.

Lifelong Apprentice shows Hunter's part in the international struggles of the Fourth International against capitalism and Stalinism, and includes an inside account of the Trotskyists' response to the 1956-57 crisis in the Communist Party. It ends with the launching of the Socialist Labour League in 1959.

Price £8 including P&P ISL, c/o News from Nowhere, 98 Bold Street, Liverpool L1 4HY

Bill Hunter's Archives

Rank and file movements after the 2nd World War

In the October issue of Socialist Voice we published a partial article by Bill about the unofficial trade union movements in the Second World War. We will return to that theme in future issues.

This month and in the next couple of issues we will publish a chapter from his book, *They Knew Why They Fought, Unofficial Struggles and Leadership on the Docks 1945-1989*.

This history provides a number of lessons for today. The CWU, NUT and Unite leaders betrayal who called off strikes or failed to fight means that new rank and file movements have to be built.

Bill's material here covers the unofficial strike that started three weeks after the end of the Second World War.

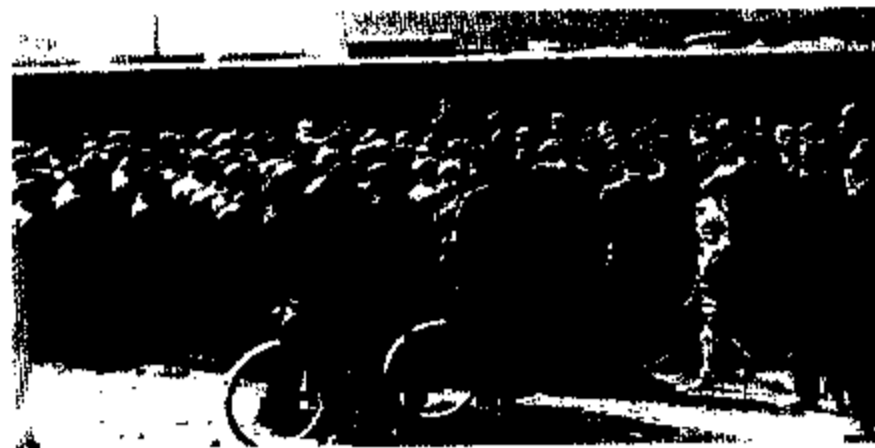
For the ISL that illustrates the real working class spirit of 1945, which is the spirit we need to build today if we are going to stop the onslaught, that is, according to Cameron, to become permanent.

As the Labour government carried through policies of wage freeze and austerity while prices rose, the unofficial strike and the unofficial committee rapidly became a feature of most industries — engineering, mining, road transport, shipping — but, above all, flourished on the docks.

Docksology

The traditions of struggle which mark docks history were found in unofficial leaders after the war. Like Jack London says of Dan Cullen, they "fought the good fight".

They were men who had certain principles by which they worked and lived, principles of solidarity and a belief that it was workers' collective strength and not just the skill of the negotiator which won struggles. They had what they called their "docksology", which included the maxims of leading struggle through all the great ebbs and flows to which it was subject on the docks — ebbs and flows which meant that unofficial leaders addressed massive meetings at one time and tiny meetings another. These leaders were viciously attacked



and vilified by the press during strikes. They would be descended on by Moral Rearmament professionals with money to spend who would seek to use any speck of demoralisation to corrupt them both ideologically and materially.

The MRA was formed out of the "Oxford Group" which began before the war. It was backed by a great deal of American finance. Its well turned out and obviously well-fed professionals took ex-strike leaders round the world, calling on militant workers, preaching conciliation with employers and repeating the slogan "it is not who is right but what is right".

They talked of "absolute honesty" and "absolute truth" and sought to seduce the families of unofficial leaders by talking in the militant's home about great possibilities of holidays at their premises in southern England or Caux, Switzerland, where employers and trade unionists, who had embraced these absolutes, could be met.

The Liverpool docker Crosby, one of the unofficial leaders who was arrested in 1951, later joined the MRA. After this, he was greeted with hostility at meetings of dockers for his opposition to all militant action.

Hugh Cunningham who was a leading member of the National Stevedores and Dockers Union on Merseyside, described how MRA emissaries paid visits to his house during the 1967 strike:

"When we went on strike we went out because we believed in what we were fighting for. In the first week of the 1967 strike the MRA came round to my house. I had a wife and four children. They hadn't had a holiday. The MRA told the wife that if I went on a course at the MRA college in Switzerland, they could have a holiday while I was there. Naturally, the wife and kids really thought this would be great and it took some time until she realised the effect the publicity would have on our fight".

In July 1945, three weeks after the war in Europe had ended, employers on the Surrey Docks in London cancelled the war bonuses and offered revised rates that were set far below what they had been. Dockers refused to accept these new imposed conditions and went on day work — in effect a "go slow" — in protest. The employers suspended 1,500 dockers for going slow and as a result the dispute developed into the first post-war strike. The London dockers were condemned by their own union leadership and in their defence set up an unofficial committee. The striking dockers demanded 25 shillings a day guaranteed minimum — a demand which was soon taken up by the rank and file in every port.

On 24 July, Churchill ordered 600 troops to stand by. On 31 July, five days after being elected, the Labour Government sent in troops to unload ships. Strikes followed in Glasgow, Grimsby, and the South West ports. Ships were moved to Liverpool. The union officials in Liverpool refused to hold a meeting and four unofficial leaders came up from London and addressed men at the dock gates. The Liverpool dockers came out on strike.

This strike saw the beginnings of a salient feature of trade union activity among dockers in the late 1940s and in the 1950s — the attempt to organise a national link up of ports. Unofficial leaders travelled between ports, held meetings of local militant leaders, agitated at dock gates, and fought the denunciations of trade union officials, employers, leaders of both the Tory and Labour parties, and the press alike. Their action built a unity between ports which was to become evident in later struggles, though it was not built easily and not without a hard fight to overcome divisions between dockers in different ports.

At the height of the 1945 strike over 43,000 dockers came out and 21,000 troops were put into the docks. The struggle lasted ten weeks. Union officials were howled down at docks meetings. Unofficial committees were set up in all the major ports.