



For a
workers'
government

Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

No 327 11 June 2014 30p/80p

www.workersliberty.org



Break pay freeze! Reverse the inequality spiral!

A million to strike on 10 July

Follow-up strategy needed: see page 5

What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

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

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



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

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

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

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

We stand for:

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

Contact us:

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Ukraine: Moscow wants "Bosnia model"

By Martin Thomas

Russia has recognised Ukraine's newly-elected president Petro Poroshenko by opening talks with him (through the Russian ambassador in Ukraine) on 8 June.

The talks have for now dispelled talk of further US or EU sanctions against Russia, and boosted the Russian stock market.

According to the *Financial Times* (9 June), Putin has three chief demands.

Ukraine to "give regions veto powers over foreign policy decisions made by Kiev — in part as a guarantee of Russian interests.

"That would involve arrangements similar to those the 1995 Dayton Agreement produced in Bosnia-Herzegovina" (three governments in the area, loosely coordinated by a



Ukrainian and Russian leaders met briefly at D-Day memorial in Normandy

confederal administration and international control).

Poroshenko is for rights for the Russian language in Ukraine, and greater decentralisation, but can scarcely cede a built-in Russian veto over Ukrainian policy.

Secondly, Putin does not want Ukraine to join NATO. Neither does Poroshenko, so agreement should be possible there.

Thirdly, Putin does not want closer relations between Ukraine and the EU. Ukraine joining the EU is out of the question in the short term, since no-one in Ukraine pushes it as an immediate move, and even if someone did, the EU would be unwilling any time soon to admit a new member state much poorer than Romania.

Poroshenko will find it hard not to go ahead with the trade deal with the EU which Yanukovich concluded last year and then pulled out of, thus sparking the movement which eventually toppled him. Whether some modification will satisfy Putin remains to be seen.

There seems no real possibility for Ukraine to unwind the separatist coups in its east without Russian co-operation. Stepped-up military efforts by Kiev would only give Russia a pretext to intervene directly.

Solidarity supports the right of self-determination for the Ukrainian nation; the Ukrainian left in its efforts to unite workers east and west against the oligarchs and corruption; and real help to Ukraine by the US and EU through the cancellation of debt.

Free Yoo Ki-soo, South Korean union leader!

By Michéal MacEoin

Yoo Ki-soo, General Secretary of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), was arrested on 26 May by the South Korean government, after a protest calling on the government to take responsibility for the Sewol Ferry Disaster.

The ferry was carrying 476 people — mostly South Korean schoolchildren. It sank on 16 April off the southern coast of the country.

The death toll has reached 288, with 16 people still unaccounted for. No bodies have been found since 21 May.

Many people believe the disaster to be the result of deregulation and poor government oversight of industrial health and safety.

The demonstration at which Yoo Ki-soo was arrested followed a rally concerning workers' rights violations at Samsung.

In recent years there have been at least three deaths at Samsung Electronics Service. In October 2013, Yim Hyeon-woo died of a brain haemorrhage caused by overwork.

A month later, Choi Jong-beom committed suicide, in protest against the company's harsh labour disci-

pline and attempts to crush a unionisation drive.

The latest suicide was that of Yeom Ho-seok on 16 May, a 34-year-old trade union representative who faced months of management threats and harassment for his union activities.

On 18 May, around 400 police raided the morgue at Seoul Medical Centre and seized his body after a tense stand-off with 100 hundred trade unionists, at which police arrested 24 people.

The state has apparently cremated Yeom Ho-seok's body against his dying wishes, which were for his body to "remain in state until his local wins [recognition]."

Meanwhile, trade union organisations including the British Trade Union Congress (TUC) and the International Trade Union Congress (ITUC) have called for Yoo Ki-soo's release, and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has hinted that a team may be sent to South Korea to investigate the labour rights situation.

The online campaigning website Labour Start is running an appeal for trade unionists in South Korea:
www.labourstart.org/2013



Eric Cantona joined the picket line

Boycott Picturehouse!

By Katy Dolman

Cinema workers' union BECTU has called for a national boycott of Picturehouse Cinemas until they agree a pay deal with workers at The Ritzy in Brixton, south London, who are striking to win the London Living Wage.

Picturehouse Cinema bosses pulled out of talks with BECTU and unilaterally imposed a 4% pay deal, which still leaves almost all staff paid below the poverty line.

Ritzy workers' sixth strike, on Saturday 7 June, saw solidarity actions at Picturehouse Cinemas elsewhere in London. Actor, documentary maker, and one-time footballer Eric Cantona joined the Brixton Ritzy workers as they protested outside the Hackney Picturehouse cinema.

Ritzy workers have received a lot of support and solidarity from other work-

ers in the local area. They've received solidarity visits from striking college workers, local government workers, transport workers and firefighters. Workers at Lambeth Living, the Housing ALMO, responded to an article in their staff newsletter urging staff take advantage of reduced prices at the Brixton Ritzy Cinema, with a letter calling on people to join the boycott of Picturehouse.

AWL members and supporters gave out hundreds of leaflets in solidarity with the Brixton strikers outside Greenwich Picturehouse. We turned many cinema-goers away and a number asked for their money back for pre-paid tickets.

- Abridged from bit.ly/ritzy-boycott
- For more, see facebook.com/ritzyliving-wage, ritzylivingwage.org, and [@RitzyLivingWage](https://twitter.com/RitzyLivingWage) on Twitter.

Take all religion out of our schools!

By Sean Matgamna

A group of three academies, one other academy, and one council-controlled school in Birmingham have been put into "special measures" by Ofsted government inspectors for allegedly acting like "faith schools".

Ofsted complains that Park View school has weekly "Islamic-themed assemblies", with invited speakers "not vetted", and that from year 9 onwards religious education is almost all Islamic. Faith schools are explicitly allowed to have their assemblies, and their religious education, organised around their chosen religion, and to imbue other subjects with religious ideology.

FAITH

Over 35 per cent of all state-funded schools in England are "faith schools". They can freely do all or most of what Ofsted complained of in Birmingham.

The furore about an alleged "Muslim plot" to turn the Birmingham schools into indoctrination centres for "extremist" Islam rips the covering right off one of the great scandals in British life.

The scandal is not only about Muslims, but goes right across the spectrum of the religious indoctrination of children in Britain. The huge majority of faith schools are Christian. Some of them are bland about their religion, and some of them militant.

It is not only about the Tory/Lib-Dem coalition administration. Faith schools increased under Labour from about a quarter to over 35% of schools.

The Government's answer is that faith schools should continue, but they must be obliged to teach "British values".

That is dangerous nonsense. The real answer is that all schools must be secular. Religious preaching of all sorts must be taken out of them.

The problem is in part the marshmallow language the Government uses — "extremists" and "moderates". It is also that much of the Government's talk about "British values" is "spin" rather than something that

has or will have substance to it.

It is essentially that once schools are run by vigorous, convinced, ardently religious people, mandating "moderate" values is either an infringement on religious freedom, or a nonsense, or both.

The talk about schools inculcating "British values" in children is empty bombast. The government lists among those values "tolerance" and "respect" for those of different faiths.

What does that mean? All serious religious people must believe that their own faith is the one true faith. All of them teach that. Explicitly or by implication, they believe that other religious beliefs and practices are wrong, pernicious, even the work of the Devil.

When a religion ceases to think it bears the only real truth, it is on the road to self-weakening and dissolution, at a quicker or faster pace. Anglicanism is an example. Serious belief in the truth and godly inspiration of one's own religion implies intolerance and contempt for, and desire to subdue, the false religion.

Now the Government says that devout Muslims — often the most convinced and most militant of contemporary religious people — must be "moderate", and must have "respect" and "tolerance" for those whom their religion tells them are mistaken and sinful.

No doubt the majority of British Muslims do not hold the "extreme" positions, but those who do have the moral high ground against them, appealing to precedent, age-old tradition, and sense of historical identity and affinity.

Governments should enforce the law against, for example, those who plot religiously-motivated bombing campaigns. And governments have a right and a duty to interfere with what religious people do when they break the social code — for instance, ill-treatment of children by Christian sects, such as the one Victoria Climbié's murdering religion-crazed aunt belonged to, or mutilation of the genitals of young girls.

But there is no way a government can tell a religious community what to think and believe and pass on to young people. How can a

government eradicate the belief of its devotees that a religion or a sect is the only right one, that its devotees are the only "saved" people? It cannot, not without enormous repression; and that would not succeed either. The opposite: it would drive adherents of the faith being targeted into the camp of the "extremists" and "martyrs".

What follows? That we should "defend" those who might want to indoctrinate children with beliefs and practices that are foul and might point some of them towards jihadism? That we should focus on the demand for "extremist" Muslims to be treated not with suspicion but like bland school-running Anglicans? That would be absurd.

In the name of religious freedom and the equality of all religions before the law and the state, it would be to "defend" vigorous religious education of all stripes, at whose heart is the systematic and long-term psychological abuse of children. Religious education im-

plants intense emotions, fears, and beliefs in children who as yet have little power of reason and judgement. It is vicious child abuse.

No, the Government has been drawn onto the dangerous ground of threatening to impinge on the freedom of religious belief because its scheme makes no sense.

SECULAR

The real solution is to make all schools — including those now Catholic, Anglican, Jewish, etc. — into secular schools, places where religion is studied only in the cool comparison of different religions, their histories, the origins of their sacred books, the derivation and evolution of their core beliefs, etc.

That would give the children some secular space to retreat to in face of bullying, insistent parents or religious officials, and give them different values to counterpose to the religious values of homes which may

be spiritually from a different age and very different societies.

The children of religious parents are entitled to the protection of society and the social institutions.

In some faith schools today small girls go about covered from top to toe in Islamic religious dress. A society that does not win children freedom from such impositions is obscene, and if it does not use the law to stop them will be convincing neither to itself nor to the serious religious people who have contempt for modern commercial society and for those who would regulate and "moderate" them.

The possible social consequences of the continued development of faith schools are dreadful to contemplate. Faith and ethnicity here often go together. Faith schools are also often race-segregated schools. Instead of schools being a force for integrating communities, they entrench social, ethnic, and religious antagonisms. Children are

moulded and narrowed in one outlook.

Faith schools in Northern Ireland played an important part in maintaining, reinforcing, and perpetuating Protestant-Catholic sectarianism. It was the Catholic Church, the church of the most oppressed people in Northern Ireland, which insisted on faith schools — or rather, on its own right to indoctrinate children with its beliefs.

At the height of the Troubles, a small group of people started "mixed" schools, as a means of helping to destroy sectarianism. The movement has so far had little success. It would have been better to have had "mixed" schools before sectarian conflict had ripped the society apart.

What all this means for Britain now and for what sensible people should advocate for Britain now is plain: take religion out of our schools. Make education public and secular. Make religion a private matter.

Better texts... better vision!

By Francis Jones

GCSE English Literature hit the headlines after outrage on social media at the "banning" of certain well-loved texts including John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

The DfE were swift to claim that they have not banned any texts and denying Michael Gove has "a particular dislike" of *Of Mice and Men*. But what has not been denied is that Gove had significant personal influence over the design of the new syllabus (as distinct from the exams themselves, which the exam boards control).

The DfE called in a "board of experts" who recommended changes and these chime fortuitously with previous statements made by Gove. The changes include the removal of the longstanding requirement to study literature from other cultures and traditions and place greater emphasis on pre-1914 texts.

As each exam board in

turn published its new exams and it became clear none of them had included non-compulsory texts such as *Of Mice and Men*, the DfE changed tactics and through various proxies blamed the "craven" exam boards for only including questions on compulsory elements of the syllabus.

This sort of bluster is either cover for the fact that Gove and Co really do want a narrow, old-fashioned curriculum or it reveals genuine technical incompetence, i.e. that the DfE really didn't understand how exam boards work.

Around 2012 Gove appeared to be serious about the idea of abolishing the free market in exams and having only one national exam board. He soon abandoned the idea (presumably after lobbying by huge education companies like Pearson who make vast profits from the current system).

As long as there is a free market in exams, the boards have no interest in unilaterally including a wider range of study into

their exams, for fear their competitors will then have an easier qualification which schools will rush to adopt.

Ironically the result of Gove's attempts at reform means children in most schools will read fewer texts, spending more time doing endless practice for the new terminal exams. Another — presumably unintended — consequence of the abolition of coursework/controlled assessment is the narrowing of which works can be studied. For example, exam boards are naming four or five Shakespeare choices instead of specifying "a Shakespeare play" as some do now.

With immense pressure on schools to produce results or face a hostile takeover by an academy sponsor, why would a Headteacher allow a Head of Department to teach extra books instead of focusing on systematic essay practice?

Why would individual teachers object to this when their pay is now linked directly to the exam results of

their students?

Why would students or parents fight back when everyone is told that exam results are the single most important link to success later in life?

What is necessary to fight for a broad curriculum is a totally different vision of education. Some reasonable initial demands would be for independent bodies completely separate from the DfE to design syllabi, establishment of one single exam board and abolition of exams at 16 altogether, as recommended by that bastion of lefty teacher radicalism the CBI.

With teacher autonomy declining, many do not even see it as their role to question what is handed down from above.

The National Union of Teachers and others have a lot of work to do in getting teachers involved in helping design and fight for the curriculum our children deserve — one which should be "broad" in every sense, including helping them to question the world around them.

Labour needs a new leader, and not one of the usual suspects

Eric Lee



After Labour's abysmal showing in the Newark by-election, which closely followed on its poor showing in the European elections, it is becoming increasingly clear that the party faces defeat yet again in the 2015 general election. That would mean another five years of Tory rule, something which would be a disaster for working people in this country.

There's considerable discontent and unease in Labour's ranks, and disappointment at Ed Miliband's role as party leader, making the question of who should lead Labour into the election a crucial one. Yet there are very few good suggestions.

Tony Blair seems to want to return to political life, but that's not going to happen. Gordon Brown already proved himself a completely ineffective campaigner when he lost to Cameron in 2010. Ed's brother David has wandered off to do good work for the International Rescue Committee. There seems to be no one around to step in and provide leadership

at a time when it is sorely needed.

But let's try to imagine for just a moment what the ideal Labour leader might look like.

First of all, if Labour is to be in touch with the party's working-class roots, to re-capture those communities from UKIP, Labour should choose someone who shares those roots, who comes out of the working class.

Second, Labour needs to rebuild its links — already quite tenuous — with the trade union movement. The 54 TUC-affiliated unions have nearly six million members, all of them potential voters, and a leader who could appeal to them specifically would do well in attracting many of them back to the party that bears their name. That leader would also need to appeal to the many millions of working people who are not currently in trade unions, and who often do not vote — the people who feel excluded, disengaged and ignored.

Third, Labour needs to understand how deeply disillusioned voters are with the political class. Its next leader shouldn't come out of the ranks of Labour's contingent in Westminster. Labour needs a fresh face, someone who's not been an MP or Minister.

And finally, the time has come — indeed, it is long overdue — for Labour to have a female leader. Nearly 40 years have

passed since the Conservatives accepted that a woman could lead a party (albeit with disastrous results for the country). Why has Labour in opposition and in power always been led by those who are "stale, pale and male", as I once heard them described?

The person who I heard that from more than a decade ago was running the TUC's innovative experiment in trade union revitalisation — the Organising Academy. Her name was Frances O'Grady and today she's the first female general secretary of the TUC in its history.

I think she should also be first female leader of the Labour Party, and the sooner the better.

I doubt very much if Frances would want to do this.

And yet she meets all the criteria I mentioned above. She's a committed trade unionist, on the left, articulate, experienced and a proven leader.

If anyone could re-energize the Labour Party, she's the one.

People who can't bear the thought of David Cameron being re-elected Prime Minister in 2015 should be prepared to take risks, to do what's not been done before.

That's why Labour supporters should launch a "Draft Frances" movement today.

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Solidarity is a unique publication within revolutionary, left-wing politics. Through donations and funding we are able to consistently share our critical thought and provoke discussion on current issues, industrial struggles and historical events both nationally and internationally. Donate or set up a regular payment to help us provide you with a regular, reliable outlook which isn't found in any other newspaper.

We want to raise £12,000 by our AGM in October 2014

You can set up a regular payment from your bank to: AWL, sort code: 08-60-01, account: 20047674, Unity Trust Bank, Nine Brindleyplace, Birmingham, B1 2HB). Or send a cheque to us at the address below (cheques payable to "AWL"). Or donate online at workersliberty.org/payment. Take copies of *Solidarity* to sell at your workplace, university/college, or campaign group, or organise a fundraising event. And get in touch to discuss joining the AWL!

More information: 07796 690 874 / awl@workersliberty.org / AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, 58 Riley Road, London SE1 3DG. Over the last month we have raised £744 in increased standing orders, donations and book profits.

Grand total: £3884.

How the rich live

Press
By Dan Katz



For once the *Guardian* (on 7 June) contained a useful article which asked: what can a week sat in an inner London courtroom tell us about the condition of British society?

A parade of poor people, many accused of micro-scale shoplifting or petty theft, passed through the court.

Mamadu earns £200 a month as a cleaner. He was caught on camera taking a small amount of money from his employer's office because he did not have the fare home. He is embarrassed and humiliated.

Bshart admits stealing £6 worth of condoms. He is addicted to alcohol and heroin. Now he will have £5 a week deducted from his Jobseekers Allowance.

Halima, in and out of foster care, is now 18 and has been addicted to alcohol since she was 13. She is alleged to have bitten a policeman, something she says she has no memory of.

Altaf, "who looks extremely ill," is accused of trying to take a mobile phone. He has lost his benefits and his defence lawyer told the *Guardian's* journalist, "He was just trying to get through the day."

Dealing with such crime by fines and — sometimes — prison is ridiculous. Such a "justice" system is a way of making poor and miserable people more unhappy; it deals with no underlying problems and may well make people who have been through the system more likely to get into trouble again.

Most crime is falling, but shoplifting is rising, up 6% in 2013. The police recorded over 300 000 shoplifting offences last year.

The British Retail Consortium claims that in 2013 shops suffered the highest level of theft for nine years — up 166% from 2007-08, the year before the banking crisis and the start of the current slump.

Bob Jones, the police and crime commissioner for the West Midlands told the *Birmingham Mail* that, "Unemployment, cuts to benefits and difficulties in coping with the rising cost of living [were to blame for increased rates of shoplifting]. We are seeing shoplifting of food in particular. [T]he patterns of criminality are poverty-related — people are stealing food and essential items."

On the same day the *Financial Times* published its regular glossy, *How to spend it*. It is the most disgusting contrast imaginable to the *Guardian's* story. If ever a publication deserved the label, "Decadent Bourgeois Shit," this *FT* magazine is it. *How to spend it* is aimed at people who are so enormously, fabulously rich they don't really know "how to spend it." This magazine aims to help them.

Obviously it would be too vulgar for the kind of products advertised here to have a price attached. Needless to write, however, that all the watches, bags, clothes and jewellery cost thousands — sometimes tens of thousands — of pounds. None of us could afford to spend £2000 on a shopping bag, or £50,000 on a watch — but could you imagine ever wanting to?

What type of a world allows people to buy a suede jacket costing £1306? And especially when many others earn the minimum wage, currently £6.31 an hour.

The richest 10% now have 850 times the wealth of the poorest 10%. The top 1% of earners take 14% of all income. And the consequences are not just seen in the magistrates courts - places intended to deal with the poor. For example, the gap in life expectancy between the very rich and poor in London is now a staggering 25 years.

The contrast between the lives of the very rich and the poor is not only stark, it is also obscenely unnecessary. This irrationality is part of the case for socialism.



***How to Spend It* suggests buying these £1530 earrings because they 10% of the price goes to "help children in Africa". Gorgeous, get two pairs.**

Make 10 July the start, not the end

More than one million public sector workers could strike on Thursday 10 July. Workers across local government, education, the civil service, the fire service, and other public sector workplaces and industries are likely to launch coordinated strikes over pay.

Some unions, like the National Union of Teachers (NUT), the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS), and the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), have live ballots from ongoing sectoral disputes which will allow them to strike on 10 July. The PCS is currently consulting its members over participation in a mass strike. Transport for London workers in the RMT, TSSA, and Unite unions could also join the strike. Other unions, like Unison and GMB, are balloting their membership, with Unison's ballot set to conclude on 23 June.

Local government and NHS employers have offered 1% pay deals. Across the public sector, workers have faced years of pay freezes which, coupled with rising inflation, amount to pay cuts. Low pay is endemic, with the shocking rise in the use of food banks evidence of just how hard working-class people are finding it to get by. The 10 July strike could be a spark that helps ignite a wider fightback.

The strike will be the largest set-piece conflict between the government and the labour movement since the 2011 public sector pensions dispute. That battle ended in defeat, and activists in public sector unions will need to organise to ensure this strike does not meet the same fate.

In 2011, workers were mobilised for one-off strike days, separated by months of inactivity and relatively little communication between unions and members about developments in negotiations. The remedy to that is not merely to strike for more days, converting one-day protest strikes into two-day protest strikes, but to make strikes part of ongoing programmes of action (including selective action as well as all-out strikes), directed by local strike committees. Strike funds should be levied at both local and national level to ensure the lowest-paid workers are supported in taking the sustained and escalating action that will almost certainly be necessary to push the government back. Workers in every sector should formulate clear demands for their disputes.

The overwhelming vote by University and College Union and Unison members in Higher Education to accept a 2% pay offer shows that there are still areas where workers lack confidence. That confidence can be rebuilt if workers across the public sector feel ownership and control over their disputes,



Activists in public sector unions need to organise to ensure the strike does not meet the same fate as the pensions dispute in 2011

and are able to direct it and its demands.

One million workers striking will be, if nothing else, a reminder of the potential power of organised labour. The

labour movement, often so lacking in visibility as a social force, will reassert itself. Whether that reassertion is a brief token, or the beginning of an ongoing industrial and political campaign to rebuild working-class self-confidence and confront the government, depends greatly on what revolutionary socialists and other rank-and-file militants in workplaces do over the next weeks.

Using the prospect of the strike to build workplace meetings and local committees could ensure that 10 July is the start of something, rather than an end in itself.

The president of the Bakers' Union has called for a general strike against austerity, and for a £10 living wage. Ian Hodson used his speech at BFAWU annual conference to attack food industry bosses, and said that attacks on the pay and conditions of the union's members would be met with industrial action. He alluded to the fast food workers' struggles for a living wage that have been taking place internationally, and pledged to organise a similar campaign amongst fast food workers in the UK. The BFAWU won a dispute over zero-hour contracts at the Hovis bakery in Wigan last year.

Their Europe and ours

The political structures of the European Union exemplify how badly the bourgeoisie "does democracy" when they are under no pressure from a confident working-class political organisation.

European political structures — the elected European Parliament, the European Council made up of heads of government and the Commission with member-state appointees — are all bureaucratic and dominated by obscure political horse-trading by member states.

This EU elitism is part of the reason why Euro-sceptic parties (including the British Conservative Party) strike a chord among European workers.

But David Cameron's attempt to veto the appointment of Jean-Claude Juncker to head the European Commission is no stance against elitism, nor an attempt to make EU institutions more democratic. Within the highly-limited standards of EU democracy it is the *exact opposite*.

Juncker is the preferred candidate of the conservative political bloc which won the largest chunk of popular votes in May's European election. But Cameron isn't bothered by the tally of the popular vote. He prefers "back room methods",

arm twisting and nationalistic special pleading. Cameron, with an eye on his UKIP rivals, wants to be seen to be "fighting for Britain". No matter that there is no great difference on economic policies between Juncker and the British Tory party.

It would be a whole lot better if the political semi-union of Europe, which Cameron chases out of political expediency to object to, were more democratic, more transparent and were not tied to a drive to make workers pay for the crisis.

But it is still a big step forward for working-class people around Europe that barriers between nations have been drastically reduced.

At a time when migrants are being scapegoated we need those barriers to stay down.

The semi-dissolution of the barriers has made it easier to fight the class struggle across Europe. If the labour movement leaders of Europe had any imagination they could run powerful Europe-wide campaigns. For instance they could organise a Europe-wide struggle for a decent Living Wage, one which would generalise much needed solidarity to existing struggles of low-paid workers.

Unfortunately there are some on the left in Europe who oppose the existence of the political union of the EU (in the UK it is the No2EU campaign). The logic of their campaign is to advocate the resurrection of national barriers. In this way they add to the increasing toxic nationalism of UKIP and Cameron. The Labour Party has also joined the clamour against Juncker for the sake of the UK's "national interest".

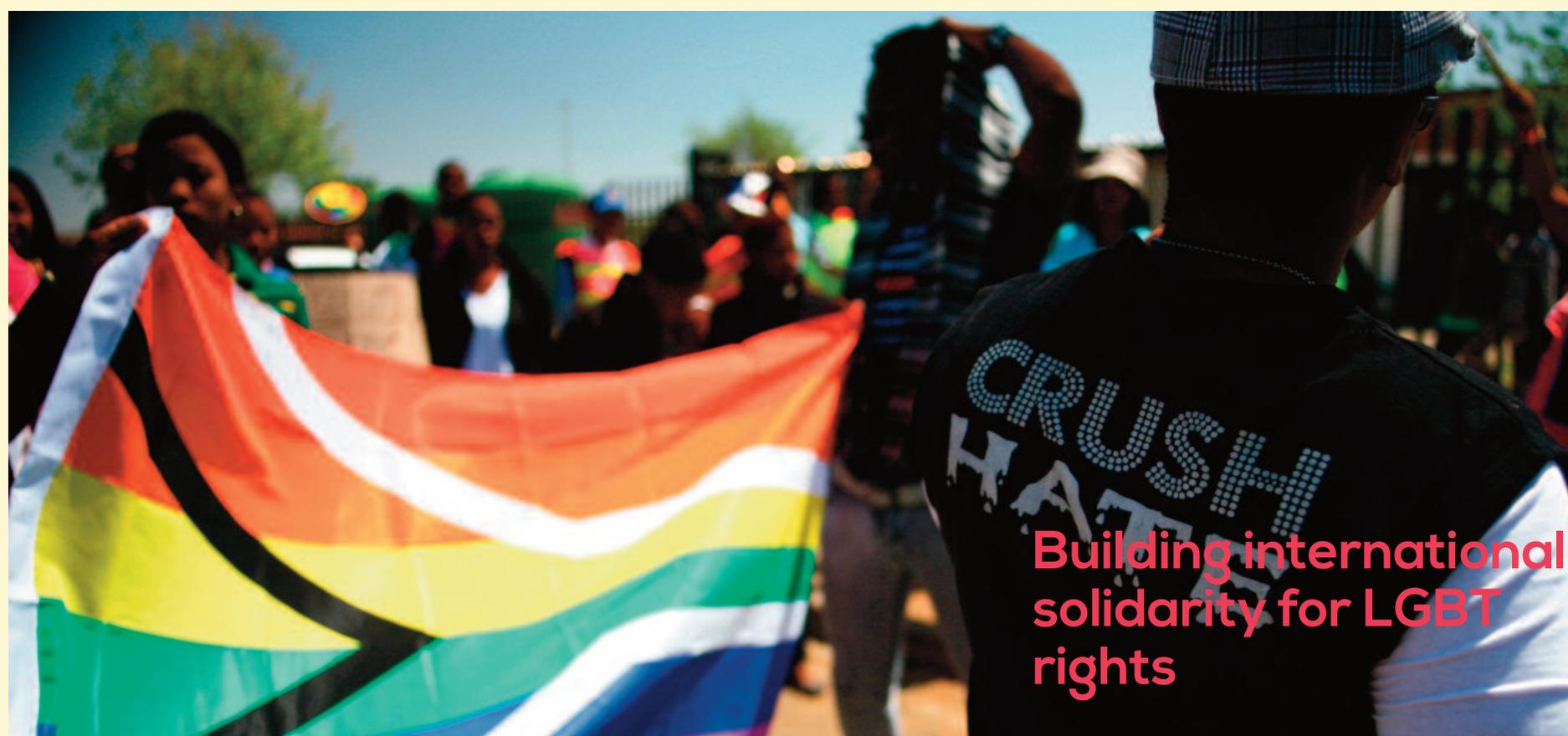
The workers' movements of Europe need to forge working-class unity across borders, based on demands to oppose austerity and an alternative political programme. That could include:

- Europe-wide public ownership of all the big banks, and democratic control of credit and monetary policy.
- For a Republican United States of Europe! Scrap the existing bureaucratic structures and replace them with a sovereign elected European Parliament with full control over all EU affairs.
- **Fight to level up working class living standards and conditions. For a common campaign for a legal 35 hour week and a decent European minimum wage.**

IDEAS FOR FREEDOM 2014

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Other IFF events on Thursday/Friday 4/5 July.
Book at www.workersliberty.org/ideas

IDEAS FOR FREEDOM 2014

SATURDAY 5-SUNDAY 6 JULY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON UNION

Their Class War and Ours

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The 1984-5 Miners' Strike

- Understanding the strike, and socialists' role
- Could the miners have won?
- The Miners' Strike and liberation

The First World War

- Workers' struggles during the war
- The women's movement and the war
- How world war became world revolution

Other IFF events on
Thursday/Friday 4/5 July.
Book at www.workersliberty.org/ideas

AWL at Lutte Ouvrière fete

At the annual fete on 7-9 June, near Paris, of the French organisation Lutte Ouvrière, which is something of a meeting point for the revolutionary socialist left across Europe, probably the most debated question was Ukraine.

LO has organised this fete at the Whit holiday weekend each year since 1971, first at Meriel and then at Presles, and it draws between 20,000 and 30,000 people.

Workers' Liberty had a stall at the fete, and our support for Ukrainian national self-determination has co-thinkers, but only a minority. The balance on the French and European left seems similar to on the British left.

The Mouvement Communiste, a group of "left communist" origins, presented a forum rich in factual information. (They have links with anarcho-syndicalists in Kiev). Although MC do not explicitly advocate self-determination for Ukraine — maybe because their "left communist" origins reject national self-determination in general — their practical conclusions seem close to ours.

Many others, however, argued that Russia cannot be imperialist; or that, if imperialist, it is a more defensive and less rapacious imperialism than the US and the EU. Interpreting the whole movement in west and central Ukraine as a creation of the US and EU, they side with the pro-Russian separatists in Donetsk or preach a plague on all houses.

The debate will continue.



Workers' Liberty ran a stall and a forum this year, as we (or our forerunners) have done almost every year since the early 70s.



As in most years, a highlight of the political schedule was a debate between LO and the NPA, the other major revolutionary socialist group in France, on perspectives and tactics.



Challenging the ANC's neo-liberalism

Mzwamdile Tshofela is a chair of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) branch at the Mercedes Benz plant in East London, Eastern Cape province. He is also a member of the global Works Council [employee-employer consultation body] for Mercedes Benz's parent company Daimler. He spoke to *Solidarity* on 23-25 May during the LabourStart conference in Berlin.

S: We have heard about NUMSA calling on the Confederation of South African Unions (COSATU) to break with the ANC governing party.

MT: This is a hot debate within South African politics. In December 2013 NUMSA had a special congress to discuss six resolutions. One was about the alliance between COSATU and the ANC.

Another was the situation in COSATU, which is paralysed. COSATU has become the "labour desk" of the ANC, rather than a revolutionary trade union federation. It is no longer serving the interests of the workers. After the last congress of COSATU in 2012, none of resolutions that were passed were progressed.

So NUMSA also said that we need to decide what we are doing in COSATU. We resolved not to go outside COSATU, we are one of the founding members, but to fight within COSATU, to get them to follow the mandates they have been given, including trying to get a special congress to discuss the future. Out of COSATU's 19 affiliates, nine feel the same way.

According to COSATU's constitution, one third can call a special congress. A special congress could decide if the leaders are still relevant. The President is obliged to call the congress, but he has been avoiding it. We have now taken the issue to the courts.

[COSATU's next congress is not scheduled until 2106. At the beginning of June the Executive passed a resolution which instructs affiliates to cease divisive programmes for another month, while a peace deal can be drawn up].

NUMSA has also resolved not to support the ANC in the National Assembly elections [held last month with a slight reduction in the ANC majority]. We don't see any benefit from the ANC and its agenda. They are always adopting neo-liberal policies. The Marikana massacre has been one of the really important issues behind our decision but it is not the only issue.

The governing party has just adopted the NDP and there are two main problems with this. First it contains economic reforms. These will not generate employment in any sector, especially the manufacturing sector. The NDP also talks about labour reforms. Two particular issues concern us.

First, labour brokering [where companies contract labour brokers to provide them with and administer casual labour]. Another issue is the E-toll system (road tolls which affect

Establish a United Front

From the NUMSA Congress resolution

NUMSA will lead in the establishment of a new United Front that will coordinate struggles in the workplace and in communities, in a way similar to the United Democratic Front of the 1980s. The task of this front will be to fight for the implementation of the Freedom Charter and to be an organisational weapon against neoliberal policies such as the NDP. For this to happen our members and shop stewards must be active on all fronts and in all struggles against neoliberal policies, whether these policies are being implemented in the workplace or in communities.

Explore establishment of a Movement for Socialism

Side by side with the establishment of the new United Front, NUMSA will explore the establishment of a Movement for Socialism as the working-class needs a political organisation committed in its policies and actions to the establishment of a socialist South Africa. NUMSA will conduct a thoroughgoing discussion on previous attempts to build socialism as well as current experiments to build socialism. We will commission an international study on the historical formation of working-class parties, including exploring different type of parties – from mass workers' parties to vanguard parties. We will look at countries such as Brazil, Venezuela, Bolivia, Greece. We will examine their programmes with the aim of identifying elements of what may constitute a revolutionary programme for the working class. This entire process will lead to the union convening a Conference on Socialism.

<http://www.numsa.org.za>

workers because many have to travel long distances to get to work and already pay fuel tax, VAT and other tolls).

They also want to change the Labour Relations Law. They want to make sacking workers easier.

Such issues, together with that of political corruption and nepotism, mean we have had enough.

What happens if we don't win our position? We believe that COSATU have had a clear instruction by the ANC to get rid of us. But that is easier said than done. NUMSA is the biggest union within COSATU. And there are nine unions who are sure to leave COSATU. They want NUMSA to leave on its own and NUMSA is not going to do that. We cannot make their life easy.

S: If you are expelled you will form a new federation? Or force them to take you back?

MT: We will try by all means to remain within COSATU. But if the environment is intolerable or we are expelled we will definitely be the catalyst in forming another federation.

We have also [passed policy] to form a "movement for socialism". We don't have a manifesto, but our constitution says explicitly what we stand for. NUMSA is a Marxist-Leninist orientated organisation. Originally this would have come from the South African Communist Party. But not now. The SACP has been absorbed by the ANC. We can't be guided by these people now.

NUMSA provides many forums for discussion of politics and all the issues have been discussed for some time and thoroughly. NUMSA is a member-driven organisation. The resolutions to our congress came from below.

S: There has also been talk about the formation of a new political party. Could you say something about that?

MT: The ANC of today is not pushing the workers' agenda but that of the dominant class. The deputy president of South Africa and the ANC [Cyril Ramaphosa] is the one that who had so many negative things to do with Marikana.

We have taken a decision to first form a united front. We cannot just be a union at plant or industry level. Because the very issues that are affecting us there are wider social issues. We need to engage everyone within society. We aim to have a conference to which we will invite all the left organisations, all also groups fighting for social justice, community organisations, everyone, even churches for that matter. The invitation will be open, then there will be discussions about the party that could represent us.

There has been confusion in the media about this initiative. It is not NUMSA forming the political party. NUMSA will play a big part, our organisers will be involved; but we will be only the catalyst.

The "bleeding that means death"

By Dave Hetherington

In January this year around 70,000 members of the South African Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) downed tools at mines run by the world's top three platinum producers — Anglo American Platinum, Impala Platinum and Lonmin — to demand that their basic wages be more than doubled to 12,500 rand a month.

A recent attempt to return to work ended in four deaths as conflict broke out at Lonmin offices in Marikana, the latest in a string of violent incidents surrounding the dispute.

To say (as some commentators have) that their strike has reached a critical point is misleading to say the least. This struggle, under-reported except at its all too frequent moments of horrific violence, is both a case study in the extremes of capitalist, state-sanctioned oppression and also a powerful account of solidarity in the face of opposition beyond anything the labour movement in the UK has faced. However, it's crucial that we don't allow the physical distance to turn this into an abstract source of theoretical analysis alone; a powerful and lethal class war is being fought, with surprising consequences.

The Lonmin mine at Marikana became notorious in August 2012 when police killed a number of workers. Accounts of the deaths and the exact circumstances vary and at the time of writing, an investigation continues into the atrocity, amid allegations that Lonmin were responsible for coordinating the police response (though not the order to fire which resulted in the fatalities). The more recent deaths occurred during clashes between the AMCU (Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union) and strikebreakers bussed in by Lonmin in an attempt to regain control of the situation.

The industrialised world depends on the output of platinum miners, largely for the production of catalytic converters. Miners working for Lonmin currently earn the equivalent of around £718 a month. Those who dig one of the

most precious metals are apparently not seen to be so precious themselves.

And yet, despite all odds, the strike has Lonmin on the run. The company recently announced that the action has damaged their revenue stream so much that the future of the company is in jeopardy. Whether this is an accurate estimation or just an attempt to scare workers back remains to be seen.

The use of social media in this dispute has been instructive. Contrary to the more familiar use of text and Twitter to organise workers, in this instance it was management contacting workers and attempting to circumvent the union's withdrawal from talks by making back-to-work offers directly. This is a timely reminder that we can't be complacent about the uses of media technology; if we aren't making use of it, someone else already will be.

A company spokesperson stated that the company was "bleeding" revenue and that this would eventually "mean death" — he was referring to their strike-inflicted losses of £18 billion. To put that into context, striking workers have lost £8 billion in wages. It's not hard to see who is actually in danger of "bleeding to death" here.

That many workers have lost their lives in this conflict should serve as a tragic reminder of the dangers we face. State (and allegedly corporate) sanctioned oppression at its most savage is appalling enough, especially in a year when so much of the UK left is taking time to remember the violence of 1984.

But we should be aware of the other lesson; of what happens when the working class turns on itself. Workers are fighting and killing workers and this must reinforce our own beliefs that we need education and powerful, effective argument to win our battles, lest we also start fighting ourselves. The need for a "fighting propaganda" party becomes clear when taking a close look at events such as these.

The strike is strong; it needs to have the courage to argue and convince its opponents within its own class, not do the work of police riflemen for them.



Cyril Ramaphosa



Book now for 3-6 July!

Ideas for Freedom is the annual weekend of socialist discussion and debate hosted by Workers' Liberty.

The theme of this year's Ideas for Freedom is "Their class war and ours". We will be looking not just at how the working class can defend and reorganise itself in the face of a determined capitalist assault, but how the left can put the very concepts of class, class struggle and a socialist alternative to capitalism back on the political agenda. That will be the theme of the **opening plenary at 12 noon on Saturday 5 July.**

What other ideas will be discussed at the event?



RENEWING THE LABOUR MOVEMENT AND LEFT

The past four years of class struggle have shown that our trade union movement is not up to the job.

However there have been and continue to be many inspiring workers' struggles. How can we generalise the inspiration and lessons of these battles to prepare for the possibility of more widespread workers' action as the economy revives?

Will the 10 July public sector strikes, by far the biggest working-class action since 2011, be the beginning of a revival? At **4.30pm on Saturday**, activists from two very different union branches both currently involved in pitched struggle will speak on **How can the unions regrow?** Ruth Cashman, branch secretary of Lambeth Unison, and Jason Moyer-Lee of University of London IWGB, speak alongside professor Gregor Gall, a noted writer on the labour movement.

To revive, the labour movement also needs political perspectives. IFF will feature a panel on **Will there be a Labour government? What should the left demand of Labour?**, with speakers including John McDonnell MP and James Elliot of Labour Students for Free Education (**2.50pm, Saturday**).

Later in the day we will debate Simon Hardy, national secretary of the ex-SWP International Socialist Network on the way forward for the revolutionary left (**6.20pm**).



Women Against Pit Closures try to stop a scab coach passing during the miners' strike

RENEWING MARXIST IDEAS

Part of the fight to renew the left is the fight to renew Marxist ideas.

Ideas for Freedom will feature workshops on a variety of issues which much of the left has neglected or simply got wrong. We will be debating the blogger James Bloodworth on **attitudes to Western military intervention (10am, Sunday)**; looking at the rich lessons the *socialist environmentalism* which grew up during the wave of climate change activism in 2006-10 (**1pm, Sunday**); and discussing **socialists' attitude to religion**, with Nigerian activist Yemisi Ilesanmi and NUT executive member Pat Murphy (**2.35, Sunday**).

We will also be holding a stream of Introduction to Marxism workshops: **How could a revolution happen in Britain (2.50pm, Saturday)**; **How can socialism end women's oppression? (4.30pm, Saturday)**; and **Can socialism end all wars? (10am, Sunday)**.

WORKING-CLASS HISTORY

In a period of retreat, it is all too easy for the working class, the labour movement and even individuals to forget the struggles of the past. Spreading the memory of past battles, so that we can learn and take inspiration from them, is an essential part of the work of socialists.

The first event of Ideas for Freedom is a **Radical Walking Tour of East London (meet Thursday 3 July, 6pm, Bow Church DLR station)**, looking at how socialists, feminists and working-class activists organised in the area in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. One aspect of that will be **socialist opposition to and resistance during the First World War**. IFF will include other sessions on the First World War, including **How world war became world revolution** (with Stephen Wood, **2.50pm on Saturday**); **The shop stewards movement and workers' struggles during the war** (with Edd Mustill, **6.20pm on Saturday**).

In the 30th anniversary year, we will also be discussing the **lessons of the great Miners' Strike of 1984-5**. Pete Radcliff will lead a discussion on **How could the miners have won? (4.30pm, Saturday)**. Jean Lane will speak about the **role of women's struggles in the strike**, alongside a film and a speaker from **Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (10am, Sunday)**. Rosie Woods will lead a workshop on **what the miners' strike tells us about the state (2.35pm, Sunday)**.

LIBERATION AND INTERNATIONALISM

Fighting specific oppressions such as those based on gender, ethnicity and sexuality is an essential part of the fight to change the world – and an area that has generated much discussion on the left recently.

It will be a major theme of IFF 2014. On the night of Friday 4 July we will be holding a special meeting on **A century of radical women's struggles**, with speakers including Jill Mountford on **Sylvia Pankhurst and the First World War**, RMT women's committee chair Becky Crocker on **transforming the labour movement so it fights for women's libera-**



tion and SUArts President Shelly Asquith on recent struggles by women workers and students at London universities.

We will be discussing the surge of the nationalist right in Europe and **Is the far right winning over Europe's workers?**, with Matt Cooper, Yves Coleman from the French journal *Ni Patrie Ni Frontières* and Greek socialist Theodora Polenta (**4.30, Saturday**). We will also be discussing **migrants' struggles in Britain, in history and today**, with Vicki Morris and the new NUS International Students' Officer Shreya Paudel (**1pm, Sunday**).

IFF will also include a forum on **The international fight for LGBT rights**, with RMT London Transport LGBT Officer Paul Penny and activists from the African Out and Proud Diamond Group (**1pm, Sunday**).

Internationalism will be a strong theme of the event, with Indian Marxist Jairus Banaji speaking on **the struggle after Narendra Modi's election (10am, Saturday)** and a speaker from Turkish rank-and-file workers' movement UID-DER on **class struggle after the Soma mining disaster**.

For more information, see:
 • www.workersliberty.org/ideas
 • awl@workersliberty.org
 • 07796 690 874



Venue details

IFF takes place mainly at University of London Union (Malet Street, WC1E 7HY – Russell Square, Euston or Goodge Street tube) on Saturday 5 and Sunday 6 July, but there are also events at other locations on the evenings of 3 and 4 July. For more information about the event, including a full timetable, and to book tickets visit www.workersliberty.org/ideas

The ideology of Donetsk leaders

Apologetics, if not outright support, for the forces of political reaction and oppression have become a hallmark of sections of the socialist left in the two and a half decades following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The “rationale” for such an abandonment of basic socialist principles is rooted in a bogus “anti-imperialism”, according to which any force in conflict with “imperialism” (defined solely as the USA and the European Union) is automatically presumed worthy of some degree or other of support.

Now the “anti-imperialist” left is well advanced in repeating the same mistake in relation to the conflict in the south-east of Ukraine.

Obsessed with the role played (or allegedly played) by the US and the European Union, fantasising about the supposed power wielded by fascist organisations in Ukraine, it shuts its eyes to the actual politics of those playing the leading role in the Russian-separatist forces.

On this occasion the result is even more bizarre than usual: the “anti-imperialist” left ends up in a de facto alliance with a political ideology committed to imperialist expansion and containing pronounced elements of fascism.

EURASIANISM

Eurasianism first emerged as a relatively systematised set of ideas amongst White émigrés in the early 1920s. Central to those ideas was the belief that Russia represented a unique civilisation with its own traditions and path of historical development.

Russia’s future, argued the Eurasians, lay not in following in the footsteps of Europe or Asia (although it would incorporate certain elements of both). Instead, they looked forward to the eventual collapse of the west and the emergence of an expanded Russia as a leading imperial power in its own right.

Eurasianism remained the preserve of Russian diaspora intellectuals until the collapse of the Soviet Union, since when it has become a significant political movement in Russia itself.

The main traits of Eurasianism today are: a commitment to restoring the glories of imperial Russia; the expansion of Russia’s borders to incorporate the territories of the ancient kingdom of Rus; hostility to western liberal values, which it holds responsible for what it sees as the decline and degeneration of the west.

The European Union and the USA — and Jews — are regarded as responsible for the post-Soviet economic and social collapse of Russia. Stalin, on the other hand, is admired as someone who established Russia as a world power.

Eurasianism is socially conservative and singles out gay rights for particular condemnation. Although it frequently presents itself as “anti-fascist”, its “anti-fascism” is no more than a Russian-imperialist glorification of Stalin’s defeat of Nazi Germany and the subsequent occupation of Eastern Europe.

At best, Eurasianism is a form of extreme Russian nationalism. At worst, it is a specific form of fascism which has been shaped by political traditions peculiar to Russia.

And it is the politics of Eurasianism which are espoused by leading figures in the Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republics, by the websites which seek to rally support for them, and by those political forces which have taken the lead in Russia in mobilising support for them.

ALEXANDER PROKHANOV

Prokhanov is probably Russia’s best-known fascist. In terms of Russian journalism, his newspaper *Zavtra* (Tomorrow — a replacement for his previous paper (*Djen* — The Day) after it was banned) is certainly the most vile.

Prokhanov is an uncritical admirer of Stalinism. He backed the attempted Stalinist coup of 1991 in Russia. He blames Jews for Russia’s misfortunes. He preaches the (alleged) virtues of the Russian-Orthodox Church. He advocates the recreation of the Soviet Union — by force if need be.

His big political project is the creation of a Red-White alliance (i.e. an alliance of Stalinists and traditional Russian-imperialists) which will restore the glories of ancient Rus’. The “think-tank” of this Red-White alliance is the “Izborsky Club” (named after the city where it first met).

Under the headline “Alexander Prokhanov to Develop the Ideology of Novorossiia”, the website of the Information



Alexander Prokhanov, editor in chief of *Zavtra*, an extreme-right ultranationalist publication in Russia

Agency of Novorossiia reported last weekend on discussions between Prokhanov and Pavel Gubarev, one of the leaders of the “Donetsk People’s Republic”:

“In the course of the discussions it was agreed that participants in the Izborsky Club — the greatest minds and patriots of the Russian World — will develop the economic and ideological conception of the future state of Novorossiia.”

“It was also suggested to Pavel that he become a participant in the Izborsky Club, and that he also open a branch of the organisation in the Donetsk People’s Republic.” (1)

In a Skype interview with Prokhanov posted on the *Russian Spring* (RS) website (which functions as a kind of semi-official mouthpiece for Eurasianism in south-east Ukraine), Prokhanov not only lauded the stand taken by the separatist insurgents but also called for Russian/Chechen support:

“How can we live in Russia if we do not help (the pro-Russian insurgents)? We cannot do so. We will perish spiritually. Where is our Russian patriotic spirit? The Chechen people have undergone a miraculous transformation. And today it is ready to repay in kindness what Russia has done for them.”

“I appeal to the inhabitants of the south-east, I am filled with hatred and with love. Now, there, with you — is my son, my friends. I pray for those close to me, for Donbas, for Russia. We will be victorious! Stand firm! God be with you!” (2)

ALEXANDER DUGIN

Dugin has long played a leading role in fascist and Eurasian organisations: the National Bolshevik Party, the National Bolshevik Front, the Eurasia Party, the Eurasia Movement, and the Eurasian Youth Union.

Dugin’s views epitomise much of what modern Eurasianism stands for. More of an intellectual than Prokhanov and (relatively speaking) less of a mystic, it is Dugin rather than Prokhanov who acts as the ideologist-in-chief of the broader Eurasian movement.

Dugin advocates: hostility to the USA and Europe as a source of decadence and degeneration due to their liberal values; support for the strong corporate state and subordination of the individual to that state, and the creation of a vast inter-continental Eurasian state.

Dugin wrote for *Djen* before it was banned, and then went on to write for *Zavtra*. He is also a member of the Izborsky Club. On the website of the Information Agency of Novorossiia a page is given over to Dugin’s writings (3), and his articles are also published on the RS website:

“Our Russian revolution is clearly antithetical. Not for Europe and the USA but against them, against Atlanticism, Conchita Wurst, and the American network of influence. Not

against Russia and Putin but for Russia and Putin. For a strong, open and free Russian Russian-Orthodox Eurasian State ... not for the domination of Western values and Gay Parades.” (4)

“How heavy are the wheels of History In order to move them an inch what is needed is fountains of bloods, hearts ripped out of their bodies, the crushing of human fates.” (5)

“In the Donetsk People’s Republic my comrades are dying. Those close to me. It is not just the neo-Nazis of the (Kiev) junta who are killing them, but also the prevarication of Putin. More exactly, the prevarications of the sixth column who openly betray the President and sabotage his decisions. ...”

“... What lies ahead is the fateful inevitability of war. When will it begin and how long will it last? But if it does not begin, then not only Novorossiia is finished but also Russia.” (6)

Dugin is also a great admirer of Gubarev, who he sees as turning his ideas into reality, and of the

“Novorossiia” party recently created by Gubarev: “This is our party and we fully recognise the orientation and values which it defends.” (7)

PAVEL GUBAREV

Currently the self-styled “People’s Governor of the Donetsk People’s Republic”, and founder of the new political party “Novorossiia”, Gubarev is a former member of the Russian neo-Nazi paramilitary organisation Russian National Unity (RNU), and also a former member of the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine (PSPU).

Despite its name, the latter is a bizarre ultra-Russian-nationalist organisation. Current articles on its website include PSPU leader Vitrenko’s address to a recent Forum of Russian-Orthodox Women, entitled: “A Russian-Orthodox Mobilisation Will Save Holy Rus — Russia, Ukraine and Belorussia.” (8)

Challenged in a recent interview about his former membership of the RNU, Gubarev replied that he had been a member of the organisation twelve years ago but now:

“I call myself a Russian nationalist, but with the qualification that genuine Russian nationalism is not ethnic but spiritual and humanitarian. Today it would be more correct to describe my views as national-patriotism, with left-of-centre leanings. Russians and Ukrainians are one people, but some Ukrainians have simply forgotten this.” (9)

Under the headline “We Are Building a New Russia”, the RS which posted an interview last week which Gubarev had given to *Zavtra* (notwithstanding his “left-of-centre leanings”). According to Gubarev:

“‘Narodnost’ (i.e. the sense of belonging to a particular nationality or people) — that is the word which inspires the builders of the New Russia. This spirit of narodnost already hovers above our military fraternalism, and it will not die away, I am sure of that. ...”

“... (People I met in Slaviansk) are not fighting for decentralisation, or federalisation, or budgetary autonomy. They are fighting for high ideals, for the true Russian-Orthodox-Slav cause, which finds expression in the idea of Novorossiia. We are being watched not just by the entire Russian world but also by the entire planet earth.” (10)

ALEXANDER BORODAI

Prime Minister of the Donetsk People’s Republic’, Alexander Borodai worked with Prokhanov on the *Zavtra* newspaper in the 1990s and then collaborated with him on the *Djen* television channel (which shares the same

politics as *Zavtra*).

Prokhanov approvingly describes Borodai as: "A Russian nationalist. He is a supporter of a strong Russian state. ... He's always been close to me, and has preached the idea of a Russian national white — not red — imperial consciousness."

In an interview published on the RS website Borodai described himself as "A Russian patriot. I consider that the extent of the Russian world was artificially reduced as a result of certain circumstances, and that the Russian world was divided by artificially created borders." (11)

In the same interview Borodai described the unrest in the south-east of Ukraine as "a Russian uprising. Russian in the broad sense of the word — in terms of culture, mentality and civilisation."

Borodai consciously sees himself as a political disciple of Lev Gumilev, one of the founding fathers of the Eurasian ideology in the early 1920s. For a full analysis of Borodai's politics, see bit.ly/1pZE8TO

ANDREY FURSOV

Fursov is a Russian academic and historian, and also a member of the Izborsky Club initiated by Prokhanov. As with Dugin, a page on the website of the Information Agency of Novorossiia is given over to Fursov's articles (12), which are also regularly published on the RS website.

Fursov is a Russian nationalist who sees the current epoch as one of the collapse of the capitalist west and the resurgence of Russia in the face of American hostility: "The main task of the USA is the destabilisation of Eurasia. And the destabilisation of Eurasia is the destabilisation of Russia." (13)

For Fursov, the great figure in recent Russian history is Stalin. Under the latter's rule "a huge part of Eurasia became united. Stalin is the author of the anti-globalist neo-imperial project in the twentieth century, Stalin showed how one can oppose the Globalists. Stalin delayed globalisation for almost 70 years." (14)

The driving financial force behind the Globalists, according to Fursov, were the Rothschilds. But whereas the Romanovs attempted to compromise with the Rothschilds, Stalin made no concessions and thereby earned the hatred of the Globalists. (15)

The current resurgence of Russia began with the annexation of the Crimea: "The Crimean victory drew a line under the shame which began on 2nd/3rd December 1989 when, after having flown to visit the well-known Russophobe Pope John Paul II, Gorbachev flew to Malta and there surrendered the socialist camp to Bush." (16)

The resurgence of Russia is continuing with the upheavals in the south-east of Ukraine, according to Fursov, despite the role played by the Israel, its secret services and the Rothschilds:

"The Rothschild group is at work in the east of Ukraine. That's the area they want to get their hands on. The interests of the Rothschilds strongly clash with the interests of Russia ..."

"The next player in Ukraine is Israel, which is represented in Ukraine by Mossad and practically all of the Israeli intelligence services. Aman, Shabak, Shin Bet, Nativ — they are all present in Ukraine. Mossad operates in close contact with the CIA and MI6. It's a unified snake of intelligence agencies, which gets the job done." (17)

IVAN OKHLOBYSTIN

Ivan Okhlobystin is a film celebrity whose career includes a spell as a priest and a member of the Kremlin-sponsored pseudo-opposition party Right Cause. He is also pro-monarchy.

According to Okhlobystin, anyone who cannot "choose someone similar from the opposite sex for reproduction" suffers from "a psychic anomaly" and should be banned from voting. "Official sodomite organisations" offend people's religious sensibilities and should be banned.

Being gay is "queer fascism", writes Okhlobystin, it is "Sodom and Gomorrah". His conclusion: "I would put all the gays alive into an oven."

A recent statement by Okhlobystin on the fighting in south-east Ukraine, first issued through Prokhanov's Izborsky Club and then published on the RS website, is steeped in the same fire and brimstone:

"As a pastor, as a Slav, and as a citizen of the Great multinational Russia I welcome the struggle of the courageous defenders of Novorossiia — a bastion of Christian virtue and military valour."

"I give my blessing to the destruction of this satanic fascist plague — without mercy, by all possible means — and to

wiping from the face of the earth everything which is even a reminder of it. All those who give up their life in this war in defence of Divine Glory will end up in Paradise." (18)

MAXIM KALASHNIKOV

Kalashnikov (real name: Vladimir Kucherenko) is simultaneously a Stalinist nostalgic and Russian ultra-nationalist who calls for the creation of a new "federated Russian Empire", consisting of Russia, almost all of Ukraine, parts of Belorussia, plus Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

According to Kalashnikov, "the white (western and Russian) part of humanity is in crisis" as a result of "dysgenics, deindustrialisation and descientisation". In the Russian world "the crisis of man is reflected in its most disgusting and protuberant form". The Russian people is becoming "excess biomass".

The only way to save Russia from "degradation and extinction" is the scientific creation of "super- and post-people, new forms of humans". This will "provide us (Russians) with new strength. This can make Russia a world leader". (20)

In the meantime, and more modestly, in an article on the RS website ("The Future of Russian Civilisation is Being Decided Here") Kalashnikov calls for Ukraine to be reduced to little more than a garden allotment sandwiched between "Carpathian Rus" to the west and "Malorossiia" and Novorossiia to the east.

"These lands were never Ukraine. In these lands there was no Banderist movement during or after the Great Patriotic War. They did not greet Hitler with flowers here. Here they defended Odessa and Sevastopol to the last drop of their blood. ..."

"... What is needed is to spread the powerful flame of the movement for Novorossiia across Ukraine in its agonies, as it descends into poverty and ruin. ... The remainder of Ukraine (i.e. post-dismemberment), mortally struck down by Russophobia, will become a poverty-stricken super-Moldova, cut off from the sea." (21)

ISRAEL SHAMIR

Shamir is an internationally well-known anti-semitic and Holocaust denier who peddles the traditional tropes of anti-semitism. It says much about the politics of the RS website, and of those whom the website wishes to mobilise support for, that the website has published his material.

According to Shamir, Jews control the media ("The rich Jews buy media so it will cover their (and their brethren's) misdeeds. No view can be proposed to the general public unless approved by a Jewish group") and want to control the world ("Palestine is not the ultimate goal of the Jews, the world is.").

Shamir lived in Russia in the late 1980s and early 1990s and wrote for *Zavtra*, as well as maintaining links with other Russian neo-Nazi and anti-semitic organizations.

In late May the RS website published a long rambling article by Shamir, enthusiastically proclaiming the emergence of a new Moscow-Peking-Berlin alliance which would put an end to the current US world hegemony. According to the article:

"For the first time since the 1950s public opinion in the west has turned in favour of Russia. This change of mind began in radical and marginal circles among anti-Zionists, anti-globalists and anti-imperialists, and then spread more widely."

"Look at the comments and articles about Russia in the most anti-Russian newspapers (the *Guardian* and *Der Spiegel*) and you will see how public opinion is favourable to Russia. [This presumably refers to articles by Seamus Milne and John Pilger.] ... Russia is an important regional power, mutters the humiliated Obama. But no! Russia is a world power." (22)

BABAI THE COSSACK

Babai the Cossack (real name: Alexander Mozhaev, from Belorechensk in the south of Russia) has been presented by the RS website, and other websites which share its politics, as the cult-figure and physical embodiment of the values and politics of the People's Republics of Donetsk and Lugansk and of the new Novorossiia.

And not without justification.

Mozhaev arrived in Crimea at the time of Russia's annexation. His explanation of why he then left for Kramatorsk: "We were sitting around wondering what to do next. So we decided to go and conquer some more historically Russian lands. Before the American menace comes to my homeland, I came here to stop it, and to get back some Russian

land in the process."

Mozhaev's video clips, which were posted on the RS website on an almost daily basis throughout May, are peppered with references to the Russian-Orthodox identity.

In calling for a boycott of the Ukrainian presidential elections, Mozhaev directed his appeal at "Russian-Orthodox Slavs". To clarify the military conflict in the south-east he explained: "We are not separatists. We are not terrorists. We are Russian-Orthodox warriors. We are going to return the Holy Rus' to our home."

The enemy for Mozhaev is the west and its "junta" in Kiev, which he describes as consisting solely of "lesbians, paedophiles and gays". (23) Mozhaev has also described himself as participating in "a holy war against fascism" and in defence of "the ordinary Russian-Orthodox people" against "Judeo-Masons":

"I ask (President Putin) to open a corridor for people who want to fight for Holy Rus' and destroy the western evil. ... Not the entire west, no. The Judeo-Masons are the ones who are creating everywhere in the world a chaos that suits them. Because of this we — the ordinary Russian-Orthodox people — suffer." (24)

Unsurprisingly, "the living symbol of Free Slaviansk" is a monarchist: "The President of Russia — that's the Tsar. What you call him, that's not important. ... In Rus there must be a Tsar. And Putin is an autocrat, thank God." (25)

The fact that the likes of Borodai and Gubarev have emerged as key political leaders, that outright fascists such as Prokhanov and Dugin have rallied to their cause, that Babai the Cossack is considered "good publicity", that separatist websites publish material by known fascists — all this shows up the real politics driving forward the separatist movement.

To recognise that as a fact does not entail support for the government in Kiev — a government, not a "fascist junta", as the champions of Novorossiia and their hangers-on describe it — any more than it entails support for the USA and the European Union.

Nor does it mean ignoring the very real social and economic issues in the south-east of Ukraine which the likes of Borodai and Gubarev exploit in pursuit of their own political project: industrial decline, collapsing social services, the corruption and the huge wealth accumulated by local elites, and issues of political and national identity.

Each escalation of the level of military conflict — as the Kiev government pursues its so-called "Anti-Terrorist Operation" and more fighters cross the border into Ukraine from Russia — increases the level of polarisation around national rather than class identities.

Insofar as socialists can gain a hearing for their ideas against such a background, they need to expose and challenge not just the politics of the Ukrainian government but also the reactionary Eurasianism of the latter-day White Russian imperialists.

And to do that, they first need to be able to recognise and to understand the politics of the latter for what they are — not socialist, not anti-imperialist, not some confused forerunner of socialism, but simply Russian-imperialist and reactionary.

Notes

- 1) Information Agency of Novorossiia, 05/06/14
- 2) RS, 28/05/14
- 3) <http://novorossia.su/persons/dugin>
- 4) RS, 26/05/14
- 5) RS, 30/05/14
- 6) RS, 28/05/14
- 7) *ibid.*
- 8) PSPU 02/06/14
- 9) Information Agency of Novorossiia, 07/06/14
- 10) RS, 04/06/14
- 11) RS, 24/05/14
- 12) <http://novorossia.su/persons/fursov>
- 13) RV, 29/05/14
- 14) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGSvUxPa1fk>
- 15) *ibid.*
- 16) RS, 29/05/14
- 17) RS, 30/05/14
- 18) RS, 06/06/14
- 19) *ibid.*
- 20) <http://2045.com/expert/28.html>
- 21) RS, 31/05/14
- 22) RS 27/05/14
- 23) RS, 18/05/14
- 24) RS 20/05/14
- 25) *ibid.*

NUT election: vote Martin Powell-Davies!

By Charlotte Zeleus

Voting in the National Union of Teachers (NUT) General Secretary election is taking place between 4 and 25 June.

There are two candidates — the incumbent, Christine Blower, and Martin Powell-Davies, a member of the Socialist Party and the candidate of the Local Associations National Action Campaign (LANAC), a rank-and-file network within the NUT.

Workers' Liberty is supporting Martin Powell-Davies. When the Deputy General Secretary election takes place later this year LANAC will be standing Patrick Murphy, a Workers' Liberty member.

The GS election is a straight choice between the current NUT leadership, which has led the union through a campaign of isolated, one-day strikes, con-

stantly prevaricating and delaying while teachers in schools are driven further into the ground by excessive workload and the drive for exam and league table performance, and one of the activists who has consistently argued for a strategy to win.

Martin Powell-Davies stands for an effective industrial dispute that sets out to defeat the education secretary, and intends to win. He argues that this can only be achieved by reinvigorating the union from the base up.

Until ballot papers arrived this week, NUT members would be forgiven for not knowing there was an election happening. There was no hustings at NUT's Easter conference, there has been no coverage in *The Teacher*, the union's magazine, and no local hustings have happened with both candidates. This is shameful behaviour on the part of the

current leadership of the NUT.

Teachers have an opportunity to elect an activist leader, on a classroom teachers' salary who has consistently argued for a serious strategy to win our dispute. Vote Martin Powell-Davies number 1 for General Secretary.

- Abridged from bit.ly/vote-mpd
- Consider getting your association to nominate Patrick Murphy for Deputy General Secretary.

More details: electpatmurphy.blogspot.co.uk



Unison to discuss pay fight

By a conference delegate

The Local Government sector conference of public sector Unison takes place on 15-16 June in Brighton, with the union's National Delegate Conference immediately following from Tuesday 17 June to Friday 20 June.

Workers' Liberty members and supporters will be in attendance as delegates and observers, distributing our bulletins and fighting for greater democracy and more focused industrial militancy across the union.

The conference gives delegates an opportunity to discuss strategy for the ongoing pay fights in Local

Government and Health. In Local Government, Workers' Liberty members will argue for the likely 10 July strike to be part of an ongoing and escalating campaign of industrial and political action, and supporting an amendment from the Islington Local Government branch that sets out this kind of radical, creative strategy.

In health, whilst Unison Health Conference (14-16 April) agreed a campaign on pay that could include a strike ballot, it has not been launched to coincide with 10 July strike date. A day of action on 7 June is a start, but delegates and Unison members should discuss urgently launching a proper strike ballot of NHS

members.

Unison's bureaucracy has ruled that a motion from the union's Women's Conference to develop a campaign about violence against women will not be discussed. The decision of the leadership not to hear the motion at all is disgraceful, and shows contempt for a serious issue that cannot be ignored by the left and labour movement. Delegates will be challenging the right to overrule this motion on "legal" grounds. A fringe meeting on the issue, organised by Unison Women's Committee, will argue why the motion should be discussed, and discuss how to develop the campaign. It will take place in Syndicate 1 at The Brighton Centre, at 12.45pm on Wednesday 18 June.

Workers' Liberty members will be also arguing for an independent working-class perspective in the conference debates on wider political questions, including when this cuts against the "common sense" of much of the left, on issues such as Palestine and Cuba.

- Abridged from bit.ly/unison-conf-preview

Dockers strike for 11 days

By Ollie Moore

A small group of workers at Tilbury docks, Essex, launched an 11-day strike on Thursday 5 June, against management plans to introduce zero-hours contracts.

The workers, who are employed by Swedish-owned SCA Logistics, also struck for 48 hours in May but say bosses haven't budged.

Unite officer Jane Jeffery said: "If management is allowed to have its way, we will be turning the clock back 50 years to the bad old days when you had to rely on the tap on the shoulder to see if you had work for the day in the docks."

Tube day of action 13 June

The Hands Off London Transport (HOLT) campaign, a coalition involving the RMT union, Disabled People Against Cuts activists, student unionists, pensioner activists, and others, plans a Day of Action against Tube cuts on Friday 13 June.

Activists will be organising leafleting, demonstrations, and other actions outside local Tube stations including King's Cross, Walthamstow Central, Leytonstone, Elephant & Castle, and Brixton, to highlight the damaging impact Boris Johnson and

London Underground bosses' cuts plans will have on passengers as well as Tube staff.

Two weeks later, HOLT will join the RMT in demonstrating and lobbying at Boris Johnson's "State of London" event at the O2 Arena in Greenwich.

For more

information, see handsofflondontransport.wordpress.com



FBU plans more strikes

By Darren Bedford

Firefighters in England and Wales will strike again on Thursday 12 June over attacks on their pensions, after the government said it would implement a new pension scheme without further negotiations with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU).

The strike begins at 9am and lasts for 24 hours, and will be followed by a further day's strike from 10am on Saturday 21 June. In between the two strikes, firefighters will not carry out any voluntary overtime or conduct training for scabs. The FBU has also said that

in cases where fire authorities lock out or dock additional pay from firefighters, members in other brigades will refuse to provide cross-border fire cover.

The FBU's executive council decided to organise further strikes last week after further meetings with fire minister Brandon Lewis. On 23 May, the minister opened a "consultation" on their proposals, trying to end discussions with the FBU over the scheme. The government has refused to publish alternative proposals drawn up in March, which may have provided a way forward.

Under the government's proposals, firefighters who

are forced to retire before the age of 60 as a result of ageing will have half of their pension deducted. The government's own "Williams Report" found that more than half of firefighters would be unable to maintain operational fitness until 60.

The two strikes will be the thirteenth and fourteenth over pensions, in a dispute which began in September last year. They represent a further escalation of strike action in an increasing bitter dispute. This anger should feed and fortify other workers taking action in the next month.



Fight to save jobs at Garden Halls continues

By Ira Berkovic

Outsourced workers at the University of London are continuing their strike against job losses at a halls of residence due for closure.

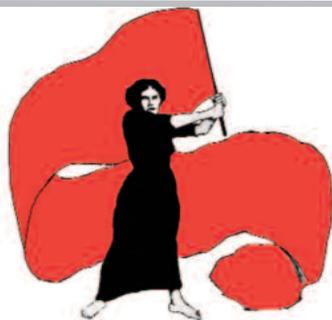
More than 80 jobs are threatened as a result of the university's planned closure of the Garden Halls,

near King's Cross. The workers' union, the IWGB, is demanding a guarantee of no compulsory redundancies and redeployment on equivalent terms and conditions for any workers displaced. The union also wants meaningful negotiations with the university and contractors.

The strike began on Friday 6 June, and continues

until Thursday 12 June. The workers picket lines have received solidarity delegations from activists from Unison, the University and College Union, and Tube union RMT.

For more information on the strike, including how to donate to the strike fund: iwgb.wordpress.com



World Cup begins with strike and demonstrations

By Phil Grim

In the run up to the World Cup, the Brazilian city of São Paulo was rocked by demonstrations, riots and a subway strike.

Striking workers successfully closed over half the subway stations in the city, and are threatening to strike again on the day São Paulo hosts the first match of the tournament.

Angry that their wages have stagnated whilst the government spends billions on the World Cup, the strikers are demanding a 12% pay increase.

With large parts of the subway closed down, congestion in the city has skyrocketed. At its peak, it is estimated that up to 125 miles worth of traffic jams clogged the roads, a problem that will be exacerbated as hundreds of thousands of football fans begin to arrive.

The government, keen to

break the strike before the tournament takes off, has responded brutally — riot police have stormed the subway to evict picketing workers, even using tear gas in the underground stations.

The strike has received support from other labour movement bodies such as the Landless Workers' Movement, and the union says that if police repression worsens, it will appeal to other workers to strike in solidarity.

The prospect of a widespread strike across different sectors, slap bang in the middle of the World Cup, would put enormous pressure on the Brazilian government.

It's not only striking workers who have been faced with heavy-handed police repression. In a bid to assert control over the slums or favelas of the big cities, riot police have launched a series of violent raids. For

some years, Rio de Janeiro police have been implementing a semi-military policy of "pacification" to wrestle control of the neighbourhoods from armed gangsters.

However, the brutality of the operations, as well as the corruption of the police force, have led the inhabitants of the favelas to protest against the raids.

With the World Cup about to begin, the police have become more aggressive in a bid to stamp out unrest, in turn further inflaming the anger of those who live in the affected communities.

Brazilians have seen their government splash out enormous sums of money on a lavish sporting event, while millions struggle in poverty. With the eyes of the world focussed on their country, they are making their grievances heard.

Solidarity with Lambeth college strikers!

By Katy Dollar

Picket lines in Brixton and Clapham remain strong, as teaching staff at Lambeth College continue their strike.

Wednesday 11 June and Thursday 12 June will see Unison members strike alongside their brothers and sisters in the University and College Union (UCU).

College workers are striking against a contract brought in by the college from April for new staff only, which will mean they work longer hours, will work during the traditional college holidays, and will have less sick pay. UCU members began an indefinite strike on 3 June. Students have received text messages telling them to stay away from College as their classes have been cancelled.

The College has used

agency staff to try and reduce the impact of the strike. College management are attempting to divide the college unions. A spokesperson for the College said: "The impact of the new contract on Unison members is minimal." Despite such attempts to pit worker against worker and union against union, workers at the college continue to stand together. Unison Branch Secretaries Ruth Cashman and Jon Rogers responded to statements by the College: "The College bosses are showing their complete lack of interest in the future of Lambeth College by their constant attacks on the workers' representatives and attempts to divide their workforce against itself. We reiterate: we stand with our sister union the UCU in opposing detrimental terms and conditions for workers

and the imposition of a two-tier workforce. Unison is asking members to take this action because the senior management at Lambeth College are refusing to negotiate on the terms of new contracts which they have imposed upon new starters since 1 April, and which threaten the interests of existing staff."

A solidarity rally will take place on Thursday 12 June at 6pm. Strikers are asking supporters to show solidarity by visiting picket lines, and passing a motion of support in their student union or trade union branch.

They are also asking for donations. Cheques payable to Lambeth UNISON, 6a Acre Lane SW2 5SG.

• lambethcollegestrike.wordpress.com



Police have responded to protests in the run up to the World Cup with brutality and repression