

Catalyst

Industrial Freesheet of the Solidarity Federation · International Workers' Association

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15

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Taking Health Care Back!

The recent months have seen an acceleration of cuts in the NHS which have been covered fairly comprehensively in the capitalist media. They have totalled at least 8,000 so far, with observers estimating far more to come. All over the country people are being informed that their local health services are to be reduced in some way. Workers are being laid off, trainee health workers are being informed that there may be no jobs available for them when they qualify, and the wider public are bracing themselves for ever longer waiting lists. Look a bit closer and you will see a raft of pro-market reforms that amount to privatisation by stealth accompanying the cutbacks, including PFI schemes, outsourcing and switches to foundation status.

It is in the best interests of workers in the health service to be active in struggles against these developments, but we need to be careful that our activity is not hijacked by those with other agendas. The right wing press is happy to publicise the cuts whilst sending out the message that what is needed is more privatisation. The left and the trade unions want to use official anti-cuts and anti-privatisation campaigns as a way of appearing active and bolstering their own power without having to involve the grassroots membership, or indeed do anything remotely effectual. There is nothing sacred about a nationalised NHS, indeed the way it is being run at the moment - layoffs, outsourcing, cuts, mergers - is entirely in keeping with how a private company is run. What we should be interested in defending is not some abstract principle of

nationalisation but working class living standards.

The NHS, to an extent is not run as a normal capitalist concern (a principle that is being rapidly eroded) which was an improvement in living standards won through struggle. It provides jobs, and free healthcare at the point of use. The extent that



health workers are losing their jobs and patients are finding it harder and harder to be treated without having to go private, the British establishment is moving towards the US model in which healthcare is seen purely as an opportunity for profit and where doctors are known to check whether someone can afford treatment before saving their life.

As Anarcho-syndicalists we don't recognise a distinction between economic and political issues and this is a perfect example of how health workers and the wider working class that depends upon them are united in a common interest. We should be pushing for maximum cooperation, solidarity and collective action between health workers whose jobs are under threat and the wider working class whose health is similarly threatened, in order to defend our jobs and living standards. We should also, as always, be seeking to retain control of our own struggles and not allow them to be hijacked by politicians or trade union bureaucrats. At the same time we

should remember that all value in our society, including the resources used in the NHS, is created by the working class, and that our ultimate goal is a society in which we have taken back what is ours and everything, including healthcare, is free.

On the 12th of July the Lebanese militia group Hezbollah executed a raid on an Israeli army patrol in northern Israel, killing a number of Israeli soldiers and capturing two others. The raid occurred whilst other Israeli units continued their attacks on targets in the Gaza Strip following the abduction of an Israeli soldier by Hamas. During Israel's incursions into the Gaza Strip they demolished bridges, Gaza's main power station and killed approximately 50 civilians. The



Israeli tank shelling positions inside of Lebanon attack by Hezbollah was used as a pretext for the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) to unleash an orgy of destruction and death upon the Lebanese people.

Continues inside.....



TYRANNY IN THE MIDDLE EAST - Continued.

Under the pretext of purportedly seeking to destroy Hezbollah guerrillas in South Lebanon, the Israeli army have killed an ever increasing number of people, the vast majority of those being Lebanese civilians, and made another half a million civilians homeless as they flee their homes in panic. While around 60 Israeli civilians have been killed by rockets fired into Haifa and other Israeli cities by Hezbollah.

Hezbollah, meaning Party of God, were established around 1982 as a resistance force against the Israeli army in South Lebanon. They advocate the establishment of an Islamic Republic similar to that established in Iran in 1979 which brutally crushed the revolutionary Iranian workers movement in order to maintain capitalist relations of production. Whilst claiming to want to destroy Hezbollah, Israel's acts of terrorism against the civilian population in Lebanon are unlikely to do little but bolster recruits to the guerrilla group, strengthen nationalist sentiments against Israel and reproduce this most tragic of conflicts.

While publicly deploring the attacks within its territories the IDF and Israeli ruling class welcomes such attacks. Not only do these attacks give them a justification to continue their rabid assaults on the civilian populations of Lebanon and Palestine but more importantly they enable the Israeli ruling class to consolidate their position of power over the Israeli people. As always war between states and proto-states only ever undermines and disrupts the progress of the class struggle. It veils and distracts the real conflict between employer and worker

leaders and led and oppressors and the oppressed and attempts to strengthen the artificial and destructive division between people of different races, nationalities and religions. The winner on every occasion is the capitalist state of Israel and the reactionary Islamic nationalism of Hamas and Hezbollah, beneath these twin evils it is always the workers or all creeds that suffer and perish.

The only way to find a lasting and meaningful peace in the region is for the workers of Israel, Lebanon, Palestine, Iran and all countries in the region to unite in struggle against their own leaders. Only in confronting the hierarchical economic and political systems that are buttressed by this nationalist war can the people ever hope to find a solution. The actions of terrorists and guerrillas can never bring down the Israeli state, that is the task of the Israeli and Palestinian workers

whose labour the Israeli war machine is built upon. Despite the seeming hopelessness of the situation there are glimmers of light within the conflict zone, numerous Israeli soldiers have deserted in recent years, refusing to involve themselves in the bloodbath, whilst groups of Israeli's and Palestinians have organised cross border mutual aid and support. However in the absence of a united proletariat in the region, an event which becomes more and more unlikely as people are forced to look to troops and militias for their supposed defence, it seems that the area will continue to slide into a quagmire of hostile fanaticism and bloody nationalism. Such an arrangement has only ever and will only ever benefit the forces of reaction and the existing class hierarchy in the region. Even with the ceasefire in effect and both sides claiming victory, the workers are left with rubble for homes and family to bury.

Solidarity Federation Membership Application

I wish to join the Solidarity Federation. I have enclosed a cheque for £5.00 (made out to 'Solidarity Federation') to cover my initial 3 months of membership. I understand my details will be passed on to the nearest SolFed local who will contact me shortly.

www.solfed.org.uk

Name:

Address:

Post code:

Tel:

E-mail:

Occupation/Union (if any):

Education Workers' Network (EWN), c/o Preston SF ewn@ewn.org.uk
lists.riseup.net/www/info/ewn www.ewn.org.uk · **Public Service Workers' Network (PSWN)**
c/o Solidarity Bristol · **Birmingham & Northampton SF**, c/o The Blackcurrent Centre, 24 St. Michael's Ave., Northampton NN1 4JQ brumsf@solfed.org.uk northamptonsf@solfed.org.uk · **W Yorks SF**, PO Box 75, Hebden Bridge, West Yorks HX7 8WB · **Manchester SF**, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW 07984675281 manchestersf@solfed.org.uk
www.manchestersf.org.uk · **Preston SF**, PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8XF 07707256682
prestonsf@solfed.org.uk · **Edinburgh SF**, 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh EH7 5HA
07896621313 edinburghsf@solfed.org.uk · **N&E London SF**, PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE
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Class Struggle Not Social Partnership!

The collective nature of the British trade union movement is gradually disappearing. Where as in the past unions saw strength through unity as the means to confront the boss class, increasingly unions are now turning to the idea of union rights enshrined in law as the way to protect workers. These changes date back to the 1980's when union leaders, faced with rapid economic change, collapsing membership and a hostile Thatcher government, decided to abandon "outdated" notions such as class struggle and replacing capitalism with some form of socialism, in favour of social partnership.

The union's social partnership dream, under which union leaders would sit down with management and help run the economy, was treated with contempt by Thatcher. The unions however clung to the idea until it became clear that the Blair government had the same disdain for the unions as their Tory predecessors. This left an increasingly irrelevant union leadership with the stark choice of either attempting the difficult task of trying to adapt to economic change and rebuild workplace organisation or meekly accepting what was on offer under Labour, which amounted to not much more than representing workers under the Labour Governments workplace rights policies.

With hopes of running the economy long gone, the last 10 years has saw unions increasingly warm to the Labour Government rights agenda. The idea of the unions as independent workers organisations that should resist any attempt at government interference has long gone and union leaders now beg for greater state regulation not less. The idea being that with government backed workplace rights in place to protect workers collective strength and strike action is no longer needed.

The only problem with the union's new workplace strategy is that it based on the idea that the state will intercede to protect workers rights. This is nonsense, the reality is that the state always has and always will act in the interest of capitalism. And nothing has change under Labour. Behind all the gloss, all our much

heralded new rights at work amount to little more than a fig leave of respectability to hide the continued rise in capitalist exploitation that has taken place under Labour. The last 10 years have saw growing inequality and job security, worsening terms and conditions, and ever longer working hours, all during a period of relatively economic prosperity when workers have traditional made gains.

The unions increasing dependence on so-called rights has only further undermined was little is left collective organisation. The unions are now beginning to resemble advisory bodies whose main role is to advise members about their rights. This is a form of trade unionism that sees members as individual clients, whose role in the union does not go much beyond stumping up their subs in return for union help in times of trouble. This form of client trade unionism reduces members to passive individual consumers of union rights. With the idea of workers coming together and collectively solving their own problems a thing of the past and the unions being reduced to little more than an advisor at the end of the phone, the union's workplace presence is withering away.

As a result in the public sector, where management pay lip service to workers rights, the unions have been able to maintain membership but have been proved virtually useless in stopping privatisation. In the private sector the unions are increasingly irrelevant and all our newfound rights have done nothing to stop the appalling exploitation of the weakest sections of society.

The answer to the decline of trade union power does not lie in pleading for more minor concessions from government in the form of rights but rather through workplace unity that will harnesses the economic power of workers in order to bring about a more just society. As such the long-term aim should be to bring workers together in order to forge a new alliance aimed at rebuilding an independent workers organisation that is capable of challenging both the power of the state the TUC and capitalist exploitation.

The **STUFF YOUR BOSS** does not want you to know



A quick guide to your rights at work
-by workers - for workers -

The Stuff Your Boss Anti-casualisation campaign

Initially in NW England, centered around workplace conditions, casual and temp work, homeworking, health and safety at work, workplace bullying, as well as issues around Job Seekers Allowance and Incapacity Benefit.

contact: <stuffyourboss@lists.riseup.net>
or <http://lists.riseup.net/www/subscribe/stuffyourboss>
or write to: SYB, c/o PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester, M15 5HW to be put in touch with activists in your area

Name:

Address:

Post code:

Tel:

E-mail:

MERCADONA STRIKE



Barcelona members of the Spanish CNT who were fired by Mercadona a supermarket chain in Spain continue their fight for the readmission of three fired CNT workers, improvements in conditions and for the CNT to be recognised by the company. The strikers have been out for more than 200 days after three workers were fired for being CNT militants. The bosses of the supermarket chain began the attack on CNT members after the CNT had been pushing for better conditions. The situation was unacceptable for the workers, Mercadona has hired scabs to try and break the strike, but the CNT workers have held firm with an indefinite strike. The management of Mercadona have also tried to pay off the CNT and its militants by offering the CNT three hundred thousand euros to end the strike and accept the dismissal of the workers. The workers on strike refused the offer

How You Can Help!

Solidarity donations are urgently needed. Please send

The Bank: La Caixa

Solidarity account: 2100 -
1183 - 35 -
0100505773

Europe: IBAN: ES08 2100
1183 3501 0050
5773

Rest of the world: BIC
(Swift):
CAIXESBBXXX 2100 1183
3501 0050 5773

The CNT is the Spanish
Section of the International
Workers Association.

Anarcho-syndicalism

The Solidarity Federation seeks to create a militant opposition to the bosses and the state, controlled by the workers themselves. Its strategy can apply equally to those in the official trade unions who wish to organise independently of the union bureaucracy and those who wish to set up other types of self-organisation.

Rank and File Control. Decisions should be made collectively. This means they are made by mass meetings, not by officials in union offices. These mass meetings include all those in the workplace, regardless of union membership. It will not, however, include scabs or managers. Anyone we elect to negotiate with management should have a mandate from the workforce that gives them clear guidance on what is and is not acceptable. Mass meetings of workers need to be able to recall all delegates.

Direct Action at work means strikes, go-slows, working-to-rule, occupations and boycotts. We are opposed to the alternative which is 'partnership' with bosses. Workers can only win serious concessions from management when industrial action is used or when bosses fear it might be.

Solidarity with other workers is the key to victory. Workers should support each others' disputes despite the anti-trade union laws. We need to approach other workers directly for their support. 'Don't Cross Picket Lines!'

Control of Funds. Strike funds need to be controlled by the workers themselves. Officials will refuse to fund unlawful solidarity action. Union bureaucrats use official backing and strike pay to turn action on and off like a tap. Unions use a large proportion of their political funds on sponsoring parliamentary candidates. Backing the Labour Party is not in the interests of workers. We should also not fall into the trap of backing so-called 'socialist' candidates. The Parliamentary system is about working class people giving up power and control, not exercising it.

Social Change. The interests of the working class lie in the destruction of capitalist society. The whole of the wealth of society is produced by the workers. However, a portion of this is converted into profits for those who own the means of production. When workers make wage demands, they are simply trying to win a bigger share of what is rightfully their own.

Our ultimate aim is a self-managed, stateless society based on the principle of from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs. It is a society where we are no longer just used as a means to an end by bosses wanting to make money from our labour.

We welcome comments and contributions, contact us at:

**Catalyst, c/o The Blackcurrent Centre,
24 St. Michael's Ave., Northampton
NN1 4JQ e-mail; catalyst@solved.org.uk**

Remembering the Spanish Revolution

The Spanish Revolution (1936-1939) broke out on the 18th July, 1936 in response to a fascist coup attempt under General Franco. The war lasted for three years and ended with Franco's victory, aided by fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. The revolution saw huge swathes of Spanish industry and agriculture socialised and run collectively by the workers and peasants

The coup was only smashed by the activity of the working class. The fascists made some headway in parts of the country but in Catalonia CNT (Anarcho-Syndicalist union) showed how to fight. They declared a general strike and took to the streets looking for arms which the government refused to give them. In the end they stormed the barracks, and took what

they needed.

Militias were formed and these became units of a revolutionary army. This was no ordinary army. This was a revolutionary army with revolutionary principles. The militias liberated towns and villages which became under the control of those who worked the land and toiled in the factories.

After three long years of fighting fascists and dealing with the betrayals of the Stalinists the war ended leaving the fascists victorious and the working class defeated and the CNT smashed.

Spain showed us that freedom from capitalist exploitation is possible and the working class needs no state or bosses to free itself from slavery.

End The Slaughter - Troops Out Now!!

They keep coming, an ever increasing number of casualties from the war of terror in Iraq, Afghanistan, London, Madrid, New York and across the world. This has to end, the working class of the world is paying in blood for the

imperialist ambitions of the bosses and the ruling elite.

The war of terror unleashed by the US/UK governments cannot be won. It must end now. It is upto us the working class to end this war.

Lose the Labour levy

Many on the Left, including those who constantly advised us all to "vote Labour without Illusions", are now convinced that there is no difference between the Tories and the Labour Party, in this, they are wrong. One difference is that the unions still fund New Labour to the tune of millions of pounds.

There are, however, growing signs that trade unionists are growing increasingly angry at handing over their money to such an openly anti-working class party as Labour. In a number of unions, campaigns have been launched aimed at breaking the link with Labour.

If these campaigns prove successful, no doubt the various left wing parties will argue that union political funds should go to them. Such arguments should be ignored. Workers and their unions are quite capable of campaigning for their own political aims. The idea that economic and political struggle can somehow be artificially split is rooted in Intellectual snobbery and patronage. Workers are not stupid and should not be reliant on politicians to do their thinking and act on their behalf.

The working class has only ever made real gains through self-organisation and direct action. That is where our money should be directed, rather than handed over to political parties. The aim of all political parties is to obtain and then keep power. All else is secondary, including the interests of the workers they claim to represent.

Cut out and send to your union HQ

POLITICAL FUND EXEMPTION NOTICE

I hereby give notice that I object to contributing to the Political Fund of the union and am in consequence exempt, in the manner provided by Chapter 6 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (consolidation) Act 1992, from contributing to that fund.

Name:

Address:

Union:

Branch:

Membership No:

Payroll No:

Signature:

Date: