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FREE/DONATION

Catalyst

Newspaper of the Solidarity Federation

British section of the International Workers' Association

Summer 2010
 Issue #24

NOT ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

- report shows 'fair' budget hits the poorest the hardest
- wealth of the richest 1,000 UP 30% during recession
- only widespread strike action can beat back cuts



Sweatshop revolts

Page 2: Chinese workers begin to flex their muscles

THE GOVERNMENT'S "tough but fair" budget will hit the poorest the hardest, as well as having a disproportionate impact on women, two reports have found. The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) describes the budget as signalling the "longest, deepest, sustained period of cuts to public services spending at least since WWII". Chancellor George Osborne claims austerity is "unavoidable" in order to reduce Britain's deficit, and business leaders have sounded their approval for the plans. However, trade unions warned of hundreds of thousands of job losses, accusing the government of "declaring war on public services".

Meanwhile, the Sunday Times Richlist reveals that the richest 1,000 people in Britain added 30% to their wealth despite the recession. Now a new report has rubbished the claim that the budget is "fair". 'Don't forget the spending cuts', commissioned by the Trade Union Congress and the public sector union Unison, looked at the impact of the budget on different income groups. Because for example, richer people can afford private alternatives they are less reliant on public services. Likewise, the less well off people are, the more likely they are to be receiving benefits. The report modelled this and found that cuts to public services and welfare are

likely to disproportionately impact the less well off.

The authors write that "The impact of these cuts will be deeply regressive. All households are hit considerably, but the poorest households are hit the hardest."

The masters of the economy find themselves between a rock and a hard place, and as ever their solution is to give us a good squeeze.

Specifically, they found that "the average annual cut in public spending on the poorest tenth of households is £1,344, equivalent to

20.5% of their household income, whereas the average annual cut in public spending on the richest tenth of households is £1,135, equivalent to just 1.6% of their household income."

This finding was echoed by IFS director Robert Chote, who explained the cuts "are likely to hit poorer households significantly harder than richer households". Particularly he cited the decision to link benefits payments to the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) rather than the Retail Prices Index (RPI). CPI is typically lower than RPI (which includes housing costs),

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All academic?

Page 3: What do academy schools mean for children, parents and staff?



Killer cops

Page 7: Another police killing goes unpunished

us

ROLLING IT IN: BP boss Tony Hayward to receive a MASSIVE £12,000 a week pension

DOLING IT OUT: Some of Britain's 2.5 million unemployed queue for PALTRY £64 a week benefits

them

International round-up

China: trouble in the world's sweatshop

CHINA IS experiencing a rising wave of industrial unrest, as workers increasingly turn to collective action to fight against their exploitation. Rapid industrialisation over the past few decades has created massive internal migration from the countryside to the cities on an unprecedented scale, dwarfing Britain's industrial revolution two centuries ago. Now, this new urban working class has begun to flex its muscles, disrupting production in order to assert their demands.

“Angry workers rioted over sweatshop conditions, chanting ‘capitalists kill people’ and brandishing pictures of the CEO.”

The high-profile suicides at Foxconn, who make iPhones for Apple, were merely the tip of the iceberg. There, angry workers rioted over sweatshop conditions, chanting “capitalists kill people” and brandishing pictures of the CEO of Foxconn, Terry Gou.

The company quickly offered improved wages and conditions in an attempt to quell the storm. However these headline-grabbing measures were quickly eaten up by reductions in overtime and speed-ups on production lines.

Elsewhere, 1,000 workers at the Denso car parts plant in the southern province of Guangdong won a two-day strike over poor breakfasts. China's factories are vast – some the size of whole cities. Some employ tens of thousands of workers at a single site. Coupled with long working hours, this means workers often don't leave work to eat meals, and the quality of those meals has proved a flashpoint. Workers ignored the pleas of the official union to return to work, and forced company bosses to improve meal provision.

For nearly three decades, corporations have increasingly relocated manufacturing to China to take advantage of a vast supply of cheap labour and lax regulation. The consequences



of that lax regulation have also provoked social conflicts. 1,000 villagers in Jingxi county, Guangxi province, near the border with Vietnam recently protested against pollution from an aluminium plant owned by one of the country's largest aluminium producers. Villagers blocked the gates to the plant and damaged production facilities, and one local government official was taken to hospital after being hit by stones.

In the past two months workers have walked out at three Honda plants, a Toyota supplier, a Hyundai factory in Beijing, a rubber products manufacturer in Shanghai and a Carlsberg brewery. Recently, workers at Japanese electronics firm Tianjin Mitsumi crippled output with a sit-in, complaining they were being asked to work extra hours for no extra pay.

The rising assertiveness of Chinese workers is causing some corporate investors to look elsewhere. However, industrial unrest is a pattern repeated across the region. In Cambodia, workers staged a three-day strike in July in a dispute over the minimum wage, while in Vietnam thousands of workers at a shoe factory staged a strike demanding higher salaries. While wages in Vietnam and Cambodia are still a fraction of those won by Chinese workers, increasing militancy is rapidly closing the gap.

Beverly Silver is a Professor of Sociology at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, and an expert on workers and globalisation. She is not surprised by the latest developments, stating that “corporations have been chasing the mirage of cheap and disciplined labour around the world, only to find themselves continuously recreating new militant labour movements in the new locations.”

as saying “Things are happening now which should have happened thirty years ago.”

This puts the lie to the idea the austerity measures are simply a necessary response to the crisis and not the long-desired dream of Greek bosses and bankers, eager at the prospect of profitable ‘reforms’. The continuing strike actions by Greek workers are making a clear class confrontation increasingly unavoidable. But while Greek bosses can rely on the support of their international colleagues in the IMF and the European Central Bank, Greek workers have so far fought back on a solely national basis, despite similar cuts being made across Europe. As long as that remains the case, the odds are reform in favour of their bosses’ austerity plans.

While the measures are being billed as a response to the economic crisis, investors are rubbing their hands at the opportunity to implement long-sought attacks on workers’ wages, pensions and terms and conditions. The Financial Times reports that “there is a growing perception that the crisis has created a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reform the economy”, and quotes Greek banker Nikos Karamouzis

Iraqi ‘freedom’

THE IRAQI Ministry of Electricity has issued an edict that bans “all trade union activities at the ministry and its departments and sites” and authorizes the police “to close all trade union offices and bases and to take control of unions’ assets properties and documents, furniture and computers.” Police raided and shut down electricity unions across Iraq in mid-July, carrying out an order from the Minister of Electricity that could have been lifted from Saddam Hussein's rule book.

Belgrade anarchists free

ALL CHARGES against six Serbian anarchist union activists falsely accused of “international terrorism” following some minor property damage have finally been dropped following an international solidarity campaign. One of the six, Ratibor, stated upon his release that “The presiding judge shortly explained that the ruling is ‘based on law, and not politics’ (which is indirectly admitting that the whole process from the start was politically motivated).” The ‘Belgrade 6’ had spent the five-and-a-half months in terrible conditions of isolation and torture in the Central Prison in Belgrade before the charges were eventually dropped.

Sweden cleaners’ plea

HOTEL CLEANERS in Sweden are calling for international solidarity in response to attacks on workers who demanded an end to illegally low wages and long working hours. A large night club/restaurant/hotel owned by Berns Salonger, itself owned by British firm London Regional, has been employing cleaners through outsourced agencies. Newly arrived migrants have been given illegal wages far below standard for a 7-day working week and often 22-hour shifts. In response, the SAC union has been blockading the firm with hundreds joining picket lines, demanding legal wages, that workers get all their due wages, and that the working hours should be humane.

Civil disobedience USA

SERVICE INDUSTRY workers across the USA have coordinated civil disobedience in response to the Hyatt Corporation seeking wage freezes, increases in health care premiums and “substandard” pensions. Fifteen cities saw action, and hundreds of protesters were arrested. As food server Andy Lopez said, “management needs to see we aren't going away.” The workload at industry pace-setter Hyatt is intense as well. A study published by the *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* in February found that housekeepers working at the Hyatt hotels “have a risk of injury twice that of the company with lowest rates.”

Academy schools programme expanded

Teachers fear two-tier education system

A NEW Education Bill is set to massively extend Labour's controversial Academies programme. The Education Secretary Michael Gove has now added Ofsted-graded “outstanding” schools to the hit-list. His plans promise even more Academies; over 150 schools have already applied for Academy status, with hundreds more enquiring for further information or registering an interest. The Academies scheme allows non-state bodies, including religious groups, businesses and voluntary groups to take control of schools in exchange for a nominal amount of funding for new facilities.

“These ‘freedoms’ are a mask for a structural shift in who controls schools. Billions of pounds of assets in the form of school land and buildings will be transferred to Academy proprietors.”

Academies were the previous government's answer to perceived “low standards” in too many secondary schools, even though the whole idea of standards did not take into account the social backgrounds of the students going to the schools – problems created not by schools themselves but government policies and wider social problems. Under the scheme a private sponsor can take over a state school and be given control of the entire budget direct from the government. They are able to influence admissions criteria – taking the brightest students from other local schools – and appoint the governing body – which is meant to be a voice for local stakeholders.

The measures are being billed as giving more ‘freedom’ to schools. But the National Union of Teachers (NUT) comments that “these ‘freedoms’ are however a mask for a structural shift in who controls schools (...) Billions of pounds of assets in the form of school land and buildings will be transferred to Academy proprietors.” Wealthy individuals and partisan groups taking over schools have also had a notorious effect on prejudicing teaching. For example a whistle-blowing teacher was awarded £70,000 for unfair dismissal against the King Fahad Academy

in Acton. He had refused to use books likening Jews and Christians to “monkeys” and “pigs”. While the school is fee-paying, the Academies system stresses such groups are allowed autonomy for their religious projects.

The scheme is also ripe for cronyism. For example Brighton & Hove's Falmer School is to be reopened in September as the Aldridge Community Academy after local “entrepreneur” Rod Aldridge. Aldridge's background has been in making millions out of government IT contracts as the head of Capita Business Services. Naturally, getting rich from successful bids for funding – after secretly lending the Labour Party £1m – is not the same as running a complex institution like a school.

Despite there being no requirement for private sponsors to have any expertise, let alone experience, in education they will have the power to decide on the curriculum in most subjects. Academies can also set their own terms and conditions for staff new to the school. Although they often promise to keep to national pay scales, once the budget crisis hits them, this will be a likely area to cut. The NUT has warned that “there could be a free for all in terms of pay and conditions and a greater role for bullying head teachers.”

As of August 2010, 34 schools had already begun TUPE consultations – the legal process for transferring terms and conditions of staff over to a new employer, in this case the Academy. While TUPE legislation protects the terms and conditions of existing staff, it offers no such protection to new employees. This often results in the creation of a two-tier workforce, with new staff on inferior conditions gradually replacing the previous workforce.

Catalyst spoke to a high school English teacher who said such measures will “create division in the workforce, lower morale and raise staff turnover – all things that harm the continuity of young people's educational experience. All this haste to increase the number of Academies begins to feel like a bad idea, when you consider that there has been little or no research into the impact of this programme on the effectiveness of schools. Academies put resources into private hands and create a two-tier ‘public’ education system.”



Merseyside wildcats

WORKERS IN parts of Merseyside recently defied anti-strike laws by staging unofficial industrial action. Almost 100 postal workers walked out at the Brunswick Dock delivery office in a row over what a shop steward called “teething problems” following the depot's move from Copperas Hill in the city centre.

Meanwhile, dozens of ship repairers at Cammell Laird in Birkenhead took wildcat strike action in protest at redundancy plans and changes to employment conditions. The yard is rumoured to want to make up to 180 redundancies. It is also understood workers are frustrated at the ongoing official consultation over employment changes. One worker at the yard, who asked not to be named for fear of reprisals said “The consultation is not a consultation.”

Iraq war “absurd”

WEAPONS INSPECTOR Hans Blix has slammed the reasons given for the 2003 invasion of Iraq as “absurd”. Blix was giving evidence before the Chilcot Inquiry into the Iraq War. Britain and the US claimed Iraq was stockpiling secret weapons of mass destruction (WMD), in breach of United Nations (UN) resolutions.

Blix, who was the UN's chief weapons inspector said “we carried out about 700 inspections at 500 different sites and, in no case, did we find any weapons of mass destruction.” Nonetheless, Britain and the US invaded Iraq anyway, after the Attorney General Lord Goldsmith controversially changed his legal opinion to say invasion was legal despite no WMD being found – a view rejected by most international lawyers.

Bosses’ seaside scam

BOSSSES AT restaurants and cafés in Brighton & Hove have been illegally withholding wages from staff, blaming a downturn in business during the recession. So far, a handful of cases have come to light, mostly involving European staff for whom English is not a first language.

However, there are fears this may be the tip of the iceberg, as unscrupulous bosses in the town's large tourism sector use the economic climate and workers' lack of knowledge of their rights to withhold wages for several months, a pattern which can be repeated when the employees quit.

ToIpuddle strikes again

176 YEARS after the Tolpuddle Martyrs were sentenced to deportation for union organising, tour guides at the courtroom where the judgement was made have gone on strike. One of the guides refusing to work, Alistair Chisholm, said: “We are not a radical bunch. We are loth to take direct action, but what they are offering is well below the value for that which we offer.” Currently paid £30 per day, the guides are striking for £50 (still £25 below the industry rate). As they say “The story of the Tolpuddle Martyrs is all about solidarity and sticking together”.

Another guide, Derek Pride, a 69-year-old retired civil servant, said he was disappointed not to be showing people around the courtroom this summer. “I enjoy doing it,” he said. “But it is a point of principle over the money.”

The Tolpuddle Martyrs were sentenced to 7 years transportation to Australia in 1834 for founding an early trade union to protest about cuts to their already meagre pay. Following the sentence, the working class rose up in support of the Martyrs. A massive demonstration marched through London and an 800,000-strong petition was delivered to Parliament protesting about their sentence. After three years, during which the trade union movement sustained the Martyrs' families by collecting voluntary donations, the government relented and the men returned home with free pardons and as heroes.

Now, 176 years on, the Martyrs' official tour guides are themselves striking over pay. However, while 11 of the 12 guides are refusing to show tourists around the Old Crown Court where the Martyrs were tried until West Dorset District Council opens wage negotiations, one guide has been scabbing on the rest, undermining the strike.



ANGER: Foxconn workers clash with riot police after a spate of suicides at the city-sized plant in Guangdong province

Greek bankers plot - and workers fight - austerity measures

STRIKES BY air traffic control officers and petrol-carrying truck drivers have been causing long delays and serious fuel shortages across Greece. Workers are protesting at severe austerity measures demanded in return for a £92bn bailout package from the Eurozone countries and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

After their announced strike was ruled illegal by the high court, air traffic control officers shifted their industrial action to a ‘white strike’, which meant only allowing airspace traffic strictly according to the book. This has in turn led to long delays across Greek airports with thousands of tourists stranded. At the same time petrol-carrying truck drivers declared an indefinite strike against the austerity measures leading to long lines of cars

at gas stations with provisions already starting to be exhausted before the 24-hour strike expired. Petrol station owners have also been threatening to shut up shop in response to the austerity measures. Air traffic control officers have announced further industrial action, a move which the government has responded to by recalling officers from their summer vacation leave.

Both strikes are considered as particularly harmful to the ailing tourist industry of the country at the very peak of the summer season which is seeing considerably lower numbers of tourists and significant economic losses across what in reality accounts for almost 25% of the national economy. At the same time, the IMF-EU Committee formed as part of the

After 8 years, Potters Bar verdict ducks big questions



AN INQUEST jury has ruled that a points failure was responsible for the 2002 Potters Bar rail disaster which killed 6 passengers and a bystander. However, relatives of

the victims have expressed anger that the jury were not allowed to consider “systematic failures”. The daughter of one of the victims, Pat Smith said “We've waited eight

long years for this. We all wanted a public inquiry we didn't get.”

Despite the limited scope of the inquest, evidence that came to light cast a damning light on rail privatisation. Union leaders have drawn attention to this, with the General Secretary of the RMT Bob Crow saying “It at least confirms what we already knew - that this tragic loss of life at Potters Bar could have been avoided if safety rather than profits had been the priority. Basic failures of inspection and of maintenance, driven by the greed and fragmentation of rail privatisation, led us to Potters Bar.”

The leader of the TSSA rail union drew a similar conclusion, saying that “this proves once again the folly of rail privatisation whereby the pursuit of profit was placed as a higher

goal than passenger safety.” The coroner, Judge Michael Findlay Baker QC offered an apology for 8-year wait for the verdict, saying “Whatever the causes, the passage of over eight years from the derailment to the conclusion of the hearing of the inquest is indefensible. The families are due a public apology, and as the current representative of the system whose abuse has led to this delay, I offer that apology.”

He also warned that a risk of further deaths could still exist and that “action should be taken” to avoid another tragedy. Network Rail claims to have already made changes to mitigate such risks, but the failures of privatisation coupled with the current climate of cutbacks makes the coroner's warning a stark one.

ANALYSIS: Is this...

Farewell, welfare?

THE GOVERNMENT'S answer to the problem of unemployment during the biggest economic crisis since the 1930s is not to create any new jobs, but to launch a massive attack on our living standards. In the emergency budget, one group of people who will be hit the hardest is welfare claimants.

Benefits are not just for the unemployed. They supplement low pay and give those with disabilities or caring responsibilities a means by which to survive, as well as providing income to those who cannot find unemployment. With around 2.5 million people claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), 2.9 million receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA), around 5 million receiving working tax credits and further claimants on other tax credit schemes and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), more than one-in-three of Britain's 30 million strong workforce are receiving some form of state welfare.

But welfare also traps people in poverty. Both housing benefit and tax credits, for example, are a massive subsidy to employers and landlords. On the surface they help people on low incomes to afford housing and to keep their household running, but they also allow landlords to charge higher rents and the employers to pay lower wages, both making more profit in the process.

Meanwhile, those claiming the benefits remain on the breadline, and working more in fact leaves them with less money. For example, working more than 16 hours counts as being 'in work' for JSA, but you need to work 30 hours to claim

Working Tax Credits. Working more can mean earning less as your benefits are reduced faster than your income rises.

Benefits are not just for the unemployed... more than one-in-three of Britain's 30 million strong workforce are receiving some form of state welfare.

In order to get around this, people often turn to the black economy. You don't pay tax on cash-in-hand jobs and it doesn't affect your benefits. Hence, there are more people working in domestic service than in Edwardian times, and single parents in particular are amongst those often forced to work "illegally."

For its part, the state is happy with this situation as it drives down wages overall, keeping the labour market 'competitive' and 'flexible'. It also gives them a stick to beat the poor with; the fact that their policies have forced so many people onto the black economy making their propaganda about benefit "cheats" a much easier sell to those workers who don't claim welfare.

Indeed, benefits 'fraud' accounts for around £3 billion a year, while estimates put the amount of benefits left unclaimed at between £4bn and £8bn. In other words, if all 'fraud' stopped, but everyone eligible for benefits received them, the government would be worse off. Dwarving these figures, the total gap of uncollected taxes, mostly from

the wealthy employing methods of tax avoidance and evasion is £120 billion. However, pound-for-pound the government spends 624 times more on adverts demonising 'benefits cheats' than rich tax dodgers – a sure sign that their priority is propaganda and not a genuine desire to balance the books.

The fact that so many people are forced to work "illegally" in order to survive is not an indictment of them, or of the idea of social welfare. It is an indictment of the capitalist system in which the state engineers just this situation in order to inflate private profit.

This is the context of the so-called 'welfare reforms', which are aimed at making the unemployed, single parents, the sick and the disabled compete for scarce and badly paid jobs on the labour market, in order to push a 'flexible', insecure, low-wage economy. This regime is not in the interest of those who are in work. At a time when employers, under the pressure of the crisis are attempting to make us work harder for less money, these 'welfare reforms' aim to force those who don't have a job to accept even worse wages and conditions.

The emergency budget outlines plans to cut £11 billion from the welfare budget. One big cut comes from linking all benefits apart from the state pension to the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) measure of inflation rather than the Retail Prices Index (RPI) one. CPI is typically lower as it excludes housing costs. Over the past 20 years it has been higher than the RPI on just three occasions. The August CPI is 3.4% while the RPI is 5.1%.

Since inflation is the measure of rising prices, by pegging benefits to the lower measure the government is ensuring benefits will fail to keep up with the cost of living – effectively cutting benefits year-on-year. And this doesn't capture the whole picture. According to the BBC Economics Editor Stephanie Flanders, "Research has tended to show that the cost of the basket of goods bought by poorer households often rises faster than the basket of goods included in the CPI." That means that the year-on-year cut to benefits is even greater than the headline figures suggest.

Pound-for-pound the gov't spends 624 times more on adverts demonising 'benefits cheats' than rich tax dodgers – a sure sign that their priority is propaganda and not a genuine desire to balance the books.

There is also an increasing drive to turn welfare into workfare (see 'hello workfare' box bottom right), where private companies pocket public cash to link benefits to compulsory work placements. For a standard 40-hour week this can mean working for just £1.60/hour less than a third of the minimum wage. This doesn't create jobs, it just undermines the wages of those still in work.

The criteria for 'the sick', Employment and Support Allowance or ESA, are also being tightened up (see below). This has

already led to tragedy, with one person in Scotland suffering from severe depression committing suicide after being forced back to work. Tax Credits for middle-income families will also be cut back, deepening the poverty trap as low income workers who do manage to earn more will simply have it taken away again through reduced tax credits.

The upshot is that the situation for claimants looks bleak. However, they are not all taking it lying down. The 'no to welfare abolition' network (defendwelfare.org) is "a grassroots network to extend and defend welfare rights", incorporating local claimants groups who have been picketing agencies involved in the Flexible New Deal as well as offering support to striking job centre workers. Claimants, like the wider working class certainly have a fight on their hands to defend their living standards.

£11bn Planned cuts to the welfare budget

624 x Pound-for-pound government spending on advertising benefits 'fraud' versus the £120bn 'tax gap' owed mostly by the rich

1 in 3 Approximate proportion of the workforce receiving welfare in some form (JSA, ESA, DLA, tax credits...)

Hello workfare

ONE OF the latest reforms is the introduction of the 'Flexible New Deal', which began in October 2009. The year-long scheme is not run directly by the government, but is contracted out to a number of private companies who stand to receive millions in public money to bully the unemployed into accepting any job at rock bottom wages. This won't create any new jobs – it will just force the unemployed to compete

desperately with each other for the few jobs that are available. The effect of this on the labour market will be to push down wages and reduce job security even further.

After six months on the FND claimants are forced to work for their benefits (workfare) for one month: 40 hours work a week for 4 weeks in order to receive a meagre £64.30 a week (or even less for couples or the under 25s). Even for those on the 'higher' rate,

this is just £1.60 an hour! The scheme benefits employers and nobody else. Why take on workers at minimum wage or higher when you can get them at £1.60 an hour? Those who lose their jobs due to the recession may one day find themselves forced to work their old job for benefit levels. This will only exacerbate the 'race to the bottom' in wages and conditions which is fast becoming the norm in the 'modern economy'.

'The computer says no' - fixing the sick, welfare reform style



EMPLOYMENT AND Support Allowance (ESA) is the sickness benefit introduced in October 2008, which will eventually replace Incapacity Benefit. Its new test is extremely difficult to pass and almost nobody is exempted from the test.

A serious problem for sickness claimants today is that their medical assessment is made through the use of a computer program, the 'Logic Integrated Medical Assessment' (LiMA). This programme was

introduced by DWP's contractor Atos Origin in 2005 to assess claimants for the old sickness benefit (Incapacity Benefit). Already in December 2005, advice charity Child Poverty Action Group complained of serious problems with Atos's computer-aided medical assessments in an article entitled 'The computer says no'.

During the examination, the doctor asks the claimant a list of questions, which the computer shows on the screen. While the claimant speaks,

the doctor builds, through the use of a windows system and drop-down menus, a combination of words and numbers which resembles what the claimant says.

The result is an often surreal computer-generated 'Medical Report', based on a collection of mechanically-constructed brief sentences. More than one Social Security judge has noticed with alarm that automated reports did not reflect what the claimants had actually said and

contained 'nonsensical statements'.

After aiding the doctor to construct brief phrases, the computer automatically derives implications from these phrases. These implications are often overstretched, or even totally wrong, and options for investigation of these implications are blocked by the computer system. For example, if a claimant cannot cook but tells the doctor that he makes himself snacks or tea, this 'ability' is used by the computer as 'evidence' of a very large range of physical and mental capacities.

Furthermore, the handbook for Atos's doctors tells them to apply the harshest possible interpretation to the test. For example, the handbook says that if a claimant's memory is not so bad that he forgets to get dressed in the morning, he cannot really score anything at all for memory problems.

Many sick people, although unable to work, do wish to attend courses, and they don't because they are afraid of losing their benefit. Any mention of having done any activity whatsoever will be used to disqualify a claimant from his sickness benefit. An extreme example from the Citizens Advice Bureau: a claimant was found 'fit to work' because he attended a compulsory 'Work Focused Interview'. The automated

medical report said: 'the client is actively seeking work through Jobcentre Plus'.

The 'Brighton Benefits Campaign' has been fighting for claimants and low waged workers since the recession began. They say that "a fight for a more humane medical assessment is also a fight for the abolition of Atos' mechanised methods – for the dismissal of Atos and the return to a professional medical service, publicly run, and run not for profits." The antagonism between private profit and claimants' needs only looks set to deepen as the welfare cuts begin to bite.

From front page

which means the cuts will become cumulatively worse in real terms for benefits recipients, as prices rise faster than their benefits payments.

Separately, the Fawcett Society has launched a legal challenge to the budget, describing it as "blatantly unfair". They claim that of £8bn cuts, £5.8bn will affect women, and are seeking a judicial review in the High Court, claiming the government failed to carry out an equality assessment when deciding the austerity measures. Fawcett Society solicitor Samantha Mangwana stated that "George Osborne expects women to pay three times more than men to accelerate deficit cuts, even though women still earn and own far less."

The headline measures in the budget is an unprecedented £113bn cut budget squeeze by 2014-15. This will involve 25% cuts to virtually all government departments (with some protection for the NHS and International Development), £8bn from net tax rises (mostly from VAT increasing to 20%) and £11bn in welfare cuts (see our special feature on the left of this page). On a closer look, it becomes clear just how regressive these measures are. While corporate taxes have been reduced, VAT – a regressive tax – has been increased. As already noted, benefits and public service cuts also disproportionately impact the less well off. Effectively this is a budget to punish ordinary workers for an economic crisis we were not responsible for.

Major banks have already returned to profit. Northern Rock, RBS and Lloyds banking group, all saved by state bailouts, announced they had returned to profit in July 2010. HSBC also recently announced its profits had doubled to £7bn for the first 6 months of 2010. The return of 6-figure bankers bonuses has also been widely reported. Elsewhere in the corporate world, the recession is also already a thing of the past. BP Chief Executive Tony Haywood will collect a massive £600,000-a-year pension when he retires in October, despite taking much criticism for his role in the Gulf of Mexico oil spill.

So are the austerity measures really "unavoidable"? That depends on your point of view. For the politicians, bankers and business leaders, absolutely. The £850bn bank bailout that prevented the financial crisis turning into an all-out capitalist collapse dwarfs the savings from austerity. But having staved off collapse, the masters of the economy find themselves between a rock and a hard place, and as ever their solution is to give us a good squeeze in their place.

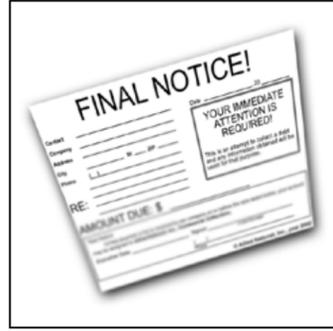
Their dilemma is this: cut too much, and consumer spending will inevitably fall, raising fears of a 'double-dip' recession. A double-dip recession would be bad for the economy and bad for corporate profits, and would probably lead to yet more cuts to public services, jobs, wages and benefits. But cut too little, and the cost of the recession will be borne by businesses and the rich. That too is bad news for them, for obvious reasons. Essentially they are gambling that they can cut our incomes without much knock-on effect on our spending.

If that doesn't make much sense, that's because it really is a gamble. The 'boom' was sustained by cheap credit. Wages failed to keep up with rising prices, but the combination of rising house prices and easy credit meant consumer spending could grow and grow. But it was always a bubble, one that burst spectacularly when the sub-prime mortgage crisis in the US sent shockwaves around the world's financial system. Collapse was only averted by massive bailouts. So a repeat of that strategy so soon after its disastrous effects is unlikely. What options that leaves is unclear.

What is clear is that capitalism has always been a crisis-prone system since its very beginnings - runs on the bank are not a new thing - and that the solution to every crisis has been to squeeze the working class until profits can be restored at an acceptable rate. In response, we can only say that we're not all in this together. During the 'boom', there were no politicians, bankers and business leaders lining up to insist we all share the wealth, and in the bust we should reciprocate. Their system, their problem.

The only way to impose our needs is to stand up for ourselves – widespread strike action will make them think twice about the cuts, and in the face of industrial action they may well decide to shoulder more of the costs of the crisis. Certainly if we let them get their way, we will be paying for it for years to come, while their profits, bonuses and pensions have already returned to multi-million pound levels.

Know your rights Beating the bailiffs



What is a bailiff?

Some debt collection agencies will threaten to send somebody to your home unless you pay. These are not bailiffs and they have no legal power so you can ignore them. If they threaten you call the police. If you are in arrears, creditors will sometimes send representatives to your home to try and negotiate repayments with you. These people might be called 'counsellors', 'collectors' or 'advisers'. They do not have powers to enter your home and seize your goods.

Bailiffs are legally sanctioned thugs who are employed to recover debts. Bailiffs can only be used if the case has been taken to court and an order granted. The costs of doing this will be added to your outstanding debt. This will also affect your credit rating - you will be blacklisted for three years for debts under £5000.

Only bailiffs collecting rent are obliged to call between sunrise and sunset, all other bailiffs can call at any time of day or night. However most bailiffs will usually call at a 'reasonable' time, either during normal office hours or between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.

Where can bailiffs seize goods?

Bailiffs may 'levy distress' (collect debts, seize goods) anywhere in England and Wales, ie. they can go anywhere they believe there may be goods belonging to the debtor; a workplace, a friend's house, etc. However if a bailiff enters a property belonging to a third party (not the debtor's) and there are no goods of the debtor's there, they are trespassing, even if they had reason to believe such goods would be there - bailiffs can be sued for trespass.



DON'T OPEN IT! Most bailiffs are NOT allowed to force entry to your home

Bailiffs may only take goods that belong to the debtor. They cannot take property belonging to someone else including goods on loan, on hire or lease. They cannot take goods of one partner of a couple to cover the others debt, unless a liability order was issued against the couple jointly (the court summons named both of them).

Can a bailiff force their way into my home?

Most bailiffs do not have the right to force their way into your home to seize your goods. The only exception is that bailiffs from the Collector of Taxes (Inland Revenue) who can get a warrant to force entry, but this is very rare.

All other bailiffs have a right of peaceful entry only. This means that they cannot use force to enter your home, for example, by breaking a window or a door. However, they can enter your property through an open door or window (front and back) and can climb over fences and gates, but cannot break them down.

Bailiffs are well aware of their limitations on their powers and so will attempt to walk straight into a house as soon as the door is open. Once a bailiff goes through the first or main door to the property, they are considered to have lawfully entered and can break through any inner door. If a bailiff has gained entry once, they can use force to enter on subsequent visits.

They may try to gain entry by trickery, for example, they may say they're from the council, post office, etc. - so use your door chain if you have one, and demand to see ID cards through the letterbox. If a bailiff gains entry by force, they have committed a criminal offence under Section 6 of the Criminal Law Act 1977. If bailiffs try to force entry it is perfectly legal for a person to use physical force to prevent the bailiff gaining entry.

As you can see from above it is perfectly legal to refuse entry to bailiffs, just don't give them the opportunity. Bailiffs can seize cars, so keep them parked around the corner - however it is fairly rare, and is more likely to happen if bailiffs gain access to documentation.

Some special cases and exceptions:

1. Warrants of possession are issued to bailiffs used by the county court and are to enable a mortgagee or landlord to evict an occupier by

force (and change the locks), if they haven't vacated the property by the date set by the court. They will also seize any property remaining.

2. Magistrate court fines - once a debtor has defaulted on an order of payment they will be sent a reminder, giving them 21 days to pay. If no payment is made the court will either issue a 'distress' warrant to the bailiffs or an arrest warrant to the police.

3. If a 'maintenance order' is made by the magistrates court then the debt is treated the same as a fine.

4. Council Tax debt- if bailiffs fail to recover sufficient 'distress' (ie. goods) to cover the debt the local authority can make an attachment of earnings (see above) or a deduction of income support (those on low wages or benefits will probably pay less per week than the actual council tax). If this fails the case will be returned to court for a means enquiry and a possible committal to prison.

From advice to action

The above debts can ultimately lead to imprisonment so it essential you get both debt advice from the Citizens' Advice Bureau or the Child Poverty Action Group and legal advice.

The Solidarity Federation can give basic advice to anyone, but to be really effective we need people not to see us as an advice service but as something they can get involved with and help out. The more of us (that's you) that work together, the more we can achieve, you would be surprised what we can do with even small numbers. We need to build up a network of support, physically preventing evictions, visiting bailiffs at their homes and workplaces to stop their intimidation and theft from our neighbours.

During the anti-Poll Tax movement in the early 1990s over 17 million people refused to pay the tax and clogged up the courts with cases. When the bailiffs arrived, they found tens or hundreds of local people waiting for them, and when they retreated they found their car tyres slashed. Collective organisation has the potential to turn the tables on the bailiffs and the courts, and ultimately offers us far more protection than the limited legal rights we do have but bailiffs often ignore.

Police get away with murder - again

PC SIMON Harwood, the officer who killed newspaper seller Ian Tomlinson at the G20 protests last summer, will not face any charges the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) says. Harwood removed his identification number and wore a balaclava while committing the assault in a bid to avoid identification, and the CPS refers to him only as 'PC A'. Harwood serves with the Territorial Support Group (TSG) riot squad.

The CPS decision is based on a discrepancy between post-mortem examinations. The first coroner, Dr Freddy Patel concluded that Mr Tomlinson died from natural causes. However, the Metropolitan Police themselves had previously written to the Home Office in 2005 raising concerns about his work and at the time of the incident he had no contract with the police for cases of suspicious death. It is not known why he was asked to carry out the post-mortem; Dr Patel is currently suspended pending 26 charges of misconduct relating to four separate cases.

Subsequently, the Independent Police Complaints Commission and Mr Tomlinson's family commissioned a second post-mortem. This was conducted by Dr Nathaniel Cary, who is often described as the UK's leading pathologist after his work on high profile cases such as the 2002 Soham murders. He concluded that Tomlinson had fallen on his elbow, which he said "impacted in the area of his liver causing an internal bleed which led to his death a few minutes later."

Due to the conflicting conclusions, a third post-mortem was ordered, which agreed with the second. However, the CPS used the discrepancy between the suspended Dr Patel's report and the subsequent two post-mortem findings to drop all charges, citing "sharp disagreement between the medical experts". Because the CPS had taken so long to come to this conclusion, it was also too late to charge PC Harwood with common assault. Mr Tomlinson's son Paul King described the decision as "outrageous", continuing that "It's been a big cover-up and they're incompetent".

The Tomlinson killing is the latest in a long line of cases where police involvement in deaths have been whitewashed. In April 2010 the Metropolitan Police finally admitted that it killed protestor Blair Peach in 1979, something they had covered up for 30 years. This came after the 1999 Macpherson Inquiry concluded the Met were "institutionally racist" over their handling of the Stephen Lawrence murder investigation, and also the controversial 2005 shooting of innocent electrician Jean Charles de Menezes when he was 'mistaken' for a suicide bomber. The charity INQUEST states that "In the period between 1990 and early 2010 there have been over 900 deaths in police custody in England & Wales [but] no police officer has been prosecuted successfully for manslaughter or murder after a death in police custody or following police contact in this period."



1. Newspaper seller Ian Tomlinson is seen walking away from police lines. According to an eyewitness he was saying "I want to go home. I live down there. I'm trying to get home." PC Simon Harwood is visible over his left shoulder, wearing a balaclava.



2. PC Harwood attacks Mr Tomlinson unprovoked and from behind, striking his legs with an expandable baton.



3. PC Harwood continues his attack, violently bundling Mr Tomlinson to the floor.



4. A protestor helps Mr Tomlinson to his feet as police look on. He collapsed and died 5 minutes later, less than 60 metres up the road. Witnesses say he had been stumbling, appeared dazed, his eyes were rolling, and his skin was grey.

Strikes off, cuts on at universities



THE ACADEMICS' union UCU at the University of Sussex cancelled industrial action planned for late June after university bosses declared they were "hopeful" they could avoid any compulsory redundancies. It soon emerged however that compulsory redundancies had been transformed into 'voluntary' ones and the number of job losses remained at over 100, with a similarly severe impact on many courses and workloads expected.

One student mocked the management statement: "We are pleased to announce that the 100 have jumped, and were not

pushed. The knives to their backs were unrelated." A lecturer also commented that "I, among many, have been made 'voluntarily' redundant, after being selected for compulsory redundancy. The University seems to have got rid of everyone it wanted by forcing us to accept a 'voluntary' settlement."

The other unions at Sussex, Unite and Unison, representing support staff such as porters, cleaners, IT and workshop technicians, did not even enter in dispute with the University. But like UCU, both Unite and Unison aimed at reducing compulsory redundancies and improving

voluntary redundancy packages. Whilst committee members continued the consultation process, some of the rank and file members argued that the starting point of the unions was wrong, and they should be opposing cuts altogether. None of the three campus unions had rejected university bosses' line that savings needed to come from staff costs - despite ongoing multi-million pound building projects, and the Vice-Chancellor behind the cuts granting himself a 43% pay increase to £227,000 a year.

"Our area rep came to a special Unite meeting, arguing to give them two more weeks consultation with management," said Tony, a Unite member and IT worker. "If there was no significant movement during this time, the area rep said she would bring the ballot papers to the next meeting. It shouldn't be too much of a surprise that she didn't even turn up to the next meeting, let alone bring ballot papers!"

Frustrated with their union's unwillingness to fight, a group of workers set up the Support Staff Forum (SSF), involving workers from all three campus unions, non-unionised workers as well as several students. Paul, a worker involved in the group, said "one of the good things we have been doing is making both us in the SSF and the wider campus community aware of the cuts and changes in working conditions in the different sectors, as although we all work on the same campus each department can be quite insular." The SSF also had some success in building solidarity among education workers, such as by encouraging non-UCU members to honour UCU picket lines.

Despite several strike days, widespread support and solidarity, and a vibrant student campaign

leading to a week-long occupation in which many hundreds of students and education workers took part, the UCU's suspension of industrial action marks the

The University seems to have got rid of everyone it wanted by forcing us to accept a 'voluntary' settlement.

end of the dispute. As one would-be striker commented, "Though UCU exec worked tirelessly to achieve the best outcome possible, I feel that once they accepted the need for cuts, they could only negotiate a defeat. Higher Education bosses are using the budget crisis to push through long-term restructuring that will destroy education as we know it. So instead of focusing only on compulsory redundancies, we should have stopped them

Pay 'gags' to be a thing of the past?

THE NEW coalition government is considering outlawing clauses in contracts that ban workers from discussing their pay and conditions with their colleagues. This could happen in October when the Equality Act becomes law. Many private sector workers and an increasing number in the public sector do not have collective pay agreements, which means that pay bargaining is done on an individual level.

Employers frequently use 'gagging' clauses in contracts to prevent workers talking to their colleagues about their pay, this makes it harder for us to organise and fight for pay increases. As with many clauses in contracts workers will frequently break them and many private sector workers who have these clauses already have a

wrecking our university by opposing all staff reduction. However it looks like UCU nationally are more interested in being involved in restructuring than in stopping it."

UCU held a ballot for an academic boycott against Sussex, demanding an Avoidance of Redundancy committee which Sussex bosses had rejected out of hand. Earlier in the year at Leeds University UCU had called off industrial action against 700 redundancies after reaching a "groundbreaking" settlement that included setting up an all-union redundancy avoidance committee and postponing any compulsory redundancies until completion of a review in January 2011. However, it later emerged that 400 staff had volunteered for redundancy. With large cuts to higher education budgets, UCU estimates that 22,500 redundancies are in the pipeline in higher education, on top of 34,000 job losses in further education.

clear idea of what their colleagues earn, but are unable to use these figures when negotiating their own pay.

The reason for this change in the law is to try and make it easier for women to find out if they are being paid less than their male colleagues. According to figures from the Office of National Statistics the gender pay gap was 22% in 2009, a slight decrease on the previous years figures. Whether this change in the law will make any difference remains to be seen, but it could provide an opportunity for workers to collectivise pay struggles where collective pay agreements do not exist, such as non-unionised workplaces throughout the private sector.

Your rights at work

Regardless of work status (temporary or permanent, agency, full or part-time) or our contracts of employment, most of us have certain basic rights. These include:

1. The right to be told in writing how much and when we are to be paid.

The Minimum Wage for those over 22 years of age is set at £5.80. For 18-21 year olds it is £4.83 and for 16-17 year olds it is £3.57. For agency workers, wages must be paid on the agreed day, even if the hiring company has not paid the agency.

2. The right to at least 28 days paid leave per year.

Any employment contract should set out leave entitlements. If it doesn't, then 28 days must be given (which can include public holidays). All workers, agency workers, homeworkers, trainees, so-called casuals and most freelancers are included in this. Holiday entitlement starts immediately, e.g. on day 1, we get 2 days leave, and, after 6 months, we get 14 days (for part time workers it is less, and it applies to jobs started since October 2001).

3. The right to breaks of at least 20 minutes after each 6 hours of work.

We are entitled to at least 11 hours rest in each 24 hours and a minimum of a day a week off. Rest breaks for under 18s are minimum 30 minutes every 4 1/2 hours.

4. The right to refuse to work any more than 48 hours each week.

We cannot be forced to work over 48 hours per week unless we have agreed to it in writing (note that this is averaged over any 17 week period, so we can be forced to do more in any one week).

5. The right to sick pay when we are ill.

We are entitled to statutory sick pay if we

normally earn over £77 per week and we have been working for over 3 months (or are deemed to have been in continuous employment for 13 weeks).

6. The right to maternity/paternity leave when we have children.

From April 2003, most mothers are entitled to 26 weeks' paid maternity leave and an additional 26 weeks' unpaid leave. To get maternity pay, we must earn over £77 per week and have been working for over 6 months by the time the baby is 15 weeks from being due. For the first 6 weeks, this should be 90% of average earnings, then a flat rate of £100 for 20 weeks. If pay can't be claimed, Maternity Allowance may be claimed from the DSS. Fathers/male partners get 2 weeks' paid paternity leave (subject to the same qualifying conditions as for maternity).

7. The right to be free from harassment.

We are all entitled to a workplace where there is no racial or sexual harassment, bullying, prejudice or discrimination. Agency and part-time workers have the same rights as full-time workers.

8. The right to defend ourselves.

We all have the right to protection from dismissal for asserting our statutory employment rights. We also have the right to join with our fellow workers and organise ourselves collectively, and to join a trade union.

9. The right to refuse work that is unsafe or where training is not provided.

We all have the right to refuse to work if we find ourselves in imminent danger. Also, laws governing agencies mean they should not send us to jobs for which we are not qualified, and they must ensure that proper training is provided.

After the world cup

Not all fun and games in poverty-stricken South Africa

WHILE MILLIONS around the world were celebrating the month-long FIFA World Cup in South Africa, stewards at Durban's Moses Mabhida stadium car park were attacked by police whilst holding a demonstration. The workers employed by Stallion Security Consortium for 12-hour shifts explained they had been promised 1,500 Rand (£134) per day - when in reality they were to be given as little as 205 Rand (£18) each. One of the stewards, who often had to work 15-hour shifts, said "We are very angry. How can they expect us to survive on the money they want to pay us?"

As the strikes spread to Cape Town and Johannesburg, police were brought in to scab, taking on the work of the striking stewards. Other police officers were already cashing in on overtime in escorting convoys and route protection. After finishing a long shift, a steward joined other guards in a protest outside Ellis Park, Johannesburg: "I am tired and the last thing I need is to be sitting here. But what choice do I have? These people are

robbing us, we have to fight them" she said.

For the ANC government, the World Cup was an opportunity to celebrate post-apartheid South Africa on the global stage, but the increasing inequality caused by its pro-business policies proved to be hard to hide. In the run-up to the World Cup the authorities' attempts to 'beautify the city' by evicting shack-dwellers were met with strong resistance. In May, the police attacked the Landless People's Movement (LPM) in Johannesburg with live ammunition, killing at least one woman. The incident followed an attack on shackdwellers by the wealthy residents of the Homeowner's Association who killed one shackdweller and burnt the house of an LPM member, and also followed a protest demanding the resignation of a local ANC councillor over plans to evict shackdwellers. LPM commented that "billions are wasted on the World Cup, billions that should have gone to meet the most urgent need of the poor. The government tells us that we must 'feel it' but in



Protea South we don't even have electricity. Some of us are in hiding from the police."

In KwaZulu-Natal, the shackdwellers organisation Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM) initially succeeded in getting

legislation empowering the state to clear slums declared unconstitutional. But while AbM has grown into a grassroots organisation of over 10,000 paid up members in more than thirty informal settlements, it has faced

increasingly violent repression. In September, an AbM meeting in Durban's Kennedy Road settlement was attacked to allow ANC officials to take over the local governing body. It left over a dozen people injured and two people dead.

Berlin union ban overturned after worldwide protests



AN INDEPENDENT union in Berlin has won in its legal struggle to be recognised as a union.

In December 2009, the Berlin local of the FAU (Free Workers Union), was effectively banned by the German courts. Germany's restrictive rules mean that any organisation not recognised as a union by the state cannot legally act as such. In effect, this gives a monopoly to the DGB (Confederation of German Trade Unions) over industrial disputes. However, after months

of campaigning, and solidarity actions across the globe, the FAU-B has won the right to call itself and organise as a union.

This means that it can get back to organising workers at the Babylon cinema, where it had taken the lead in a heated and high-profile dispute with the bosses. Babylon is run by a left-winger close to the Die Linke (Left) party, and has a reputation for showing radical and leftist films. However, working conditions at the cinema were far from satisfactory, and workers

approached the FAU when both management and the DGB union Ver.di ignored their concerns over poor pay and contracts.

FAU sat down with the workers to draw up a new contract to present to management, then helped organise a boycott of the cinema when management refused to acknowledge the workers demands. The boycott struck a chord with cinema patrons paying money to see radical and left-wing films, which began to put pressure on the Cinema management.

This prompted cinema bosses to call in the much weaker DGB union to help them use the courts to prohibit the FAU from operating. Together, the mainstream union Ver.di, the left-wing political party Die Linke and the cinema bosses all argued that the FAU could not be a union because they had not yet won the contract - but they should be banned from trying to win the contract because they were not yet a union! Lars Röhm, General Secretary of the FAU Berlin, said "We are happy that they have failed to banish the strongest and most active union in the movies. The ruling allows militant unions to be active."

Sudoku

Fill the grid so that every column, row and 3x3 square includes all the numbers from 1 to 9.

		6		5	3			
2		3			9			1
9		7		2				
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	1		5			8		9
			6	3		4		

Catalyst

Catalyst is the free newspaper of the Solidarity Federation (SolFed). SolFed is an organisation of workers who believe in taking control of our lives where we live or work, rather than leaving things to the dictates of politicians, managers and so called 'experts'.

Our members are workers across all industries, students, pensioners and unemployed. Through solidarity and acting together, we can deal both with our local problems and at the same time work to change the bigger picture, and change

the system that means power and profit for the few.

We believe we should apply the same principles to actions we take around local issues to those we take at work. Across industries, we organise in Networks; geographically we organise in Locals, to support each other in our struggles and to fight for our interests, both in and out of the workplace. We are part of the International Workers Association, organising with like minded people across the world.

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