



Socialist Fight

No. 12 Winter 2012/13

Price: Waged £2 (€3) Concessions: 50p

Unite Election for General Secretary



Rank-and-file fighter Jerry Hicks who calls for:

- All officials to be elected by members, not appointed by an individual or a panel.
- A fight to repeal the anti union laws in the UK & EU and when necessary to confront these laws.
- The General Secretary to live the life of the members they represent on an average member's wage not a six figure salary.
- Funding only those MPs and Councillors that support Unite's policies.

Left bureaucrat Len McCluskey who:

- Uses the union funds to sue a left wing paper and a bus driver who criticised his official to silence opposition and help his re-election.
- Plays at revolution whilst endorsing the austerity programme of the bankers' friends Balls and Miliband.
- 'Earned' £122,435 last year.
- Knows that between 2001 and 2012 Unite and its predecessors gave £41,426, 890.79 to Labour with no appreciable effect on its policies.

Unity is strength, L'union fait la force, Es la unidad fuerza, Η συνότητα είναι δύναμη, اتحاد قدرت است، đoàn kết là sức mạnh, Jedność jest siła, ykseys on kesto, ມົນລະພູມ, Midnimo iyo waa awood, hundeb ydy chryfder, Einheit ist Stärke, एकता शक्ति है, единство наша сила, vienybės jėga, bashkimi ben fuqine, אחדות היא כח, unità è la resistenza, 団結は力だ, A união faz a força, eining er styrkur, De eenheid is de sterkte, والوحدة هو القوة, Ní neart go chur le céile, pagkakaisa ay kalakasan, jednota is síla, 일성은 이다 힘 힘, Workers of the World Unite!

Socialist Fight Where We Stand

Socialist Fight is a member of the Liaison Committee for the Fourth International with the Liga Comunista of Brazil and the Tendencia Militante Bolchevique of Argentina.

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Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the SF EB

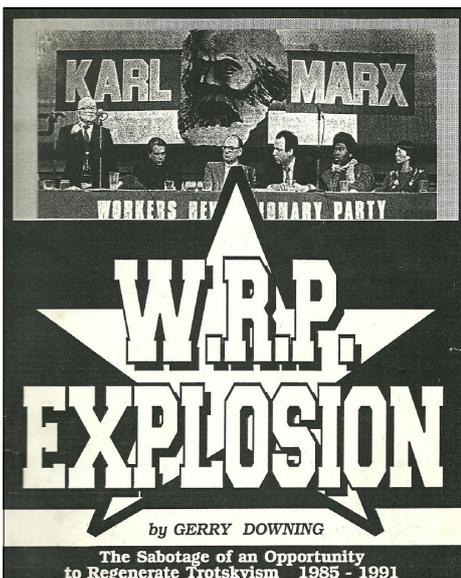
These are just 8 of the 26 points of the political programme of the Socialist Fight Group which can be found here:

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/120298542/Socialist-Fight-Where-We-Stand>

1. WE STAND WITH KARL MARX: 'The emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves. The struggle for the emancipation of the working class means not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies but for equal rights and duties and the abolition of all class rule' (The International Workingmen's Association 1864, General Rules).
2. The capitalist state consists, in the last analysis of ruling-class laws within a judicial system and detention centres overseen by the armed bodies of police/army who are under the direction and are controlled in acts of defence of capitalist property rights against the interests of the majority of civil society. The working class must overthrow the capitalist state and replace it with a workers' state based on democratic soviets/workers' councils to suppress the inevitable counter-revolution of private capitalist profit against planned production for the satisfaction of socialised human need.
3. We recognise the necessity for revolutionaries to carry out serious ideological and political struggle as direct participants in the trade unions (always) and in the mass reformist social democratic bourgeois workers' parties despite their pro-capitalist leaderships when conditions are favourable. Because we see the trade union bureaucracy and their allies in the Labour party leadership as the most fundamental obstacle to the struggle for power of the working class, outside of the state forces and their direct agencies themselves, we must fight and defeat and replace them with a revolutionary leadership by mobilising the base against the pro-capitalist bureaucratic misleaders to open the way forward for the struggle for workers' power.
4. We are full in support of all mass mobilisations against the onslaught of this reactionary Con-Lib Dem coalition. However, whilst participating in this struggle we will oppose all policies which subordinate the working class to the political agenda of the petty-bourgeois reformist leaders of the Labour party and trade unions
5. We support the fight of all the specially oppressed; Black and Asians, women, lesbians and gay men, bisexuals and transgender people against discrimination in all its forms and their right to organise separately in that fight in society as a whole. In particular we defend their right to caucus inside trade unions and in working class political parties.
6. We recognise that class society, and capitalism as the last form of class society, is by its nature patriarchal. In that sense the oppression of women is different from all other forms of oppression and discrimination. Because this social oppression is inextricably tied to private property and its inheritance to achieve full sexual, social and economic freedom and equality for all we need to overthrow class society itself.
7. We fight racism and fascism. We support the right of people to fight back against racist and fascist attacks by any means necessary. Self-defence is no offence! We support 'No Platform' for all fascists but never call on the capitalist state to ban fascist marches or parties; these laws would inevitably primarily be used against workers' organisations, as history has shown.
8. We oppose all immigration controls. International finance capital roams the planet in search of profit and Imperialist governments disrupts the lives of workers and cause the collapse of whole nations with their direct intervention in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan and their proxy wars in Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, etc. Workers have the right to sell their labour internationally wherever they get the best price. Only union membership and pay rates can counter employers who seek to exploit immigrant workers as cheap labour to undermine the gains of past struggles.

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This is the only comprehensive political assessment of the WRP/Workers Press section of the 1985 WRP split. It may be of use to those in the SWP contemplating a similar Explosion. If there is one lesson I learned from all that it is that most existing leaders will have long since lost the spark of revolution from their political souls and almost none will be serious about regenerating the group politically. You must learn to do that yourself.

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/88358031/WRP-Explosion>
[-By-Gerry-Downing](#)

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Editorial: Rally the working class against austerity and the trade union bureaucracy to defeat the ConDem attacks!

On 4 December Unite the union's Executive Council decided to hold an election for General Secretary just two years into the five year term of the incumbent, Len McCluskey. It produced a new line-up of the left in Britain: on the right declaring for McCluskey are the Socialist party (CWI), Socialist Appeal (IMT), the Alliance for Workers Liberty, Counterfire/Coalition of Resistance and the ISG (Scotland, Chris Banbury's group). This latter right wing split from the SWP gives the following typical rational by Bryan Simpson,

In the two years since the protests in 2010, McCluskey has proven himself as the most progressive General Secretary in the country and one of the most left wing trade union leaders of the last decade. Under his leadership, Unite the union has become the most progressive union in Britain. It is one of only a handful of unions, and the only one affiliated to the Labour party, to oppose all cuts. As an ardent supporter of the Coalition of Resistance he stood squarely behind groups such as UK Uncut, calling for "mass direct action and civil disobedience" against the cuts.

As Laurence Humphrey's reply to the United Left on page 11, the SF flyer to the NSSN lobby on the TUC on page 13 and the GRL Open Letter to the SWP on page 15 show this is complete baloney.

On the left supporting Jerry Hicks as the rank and file candidate are the SWP, Workers Power, the Anti Capitalist Initiative, Socialist Resistance, Socialist Fight and the Grass Roots Left (the GRL containing all but the SWP). If some might want to point out the contradictions between supporting the Imperialist proxy wars in Libya and Syria and fighting the TU bureaucracy by some on the left and indeed the consistence of backing the bureaucrat and the foreign wars of plunder for the booty of empire to buy off the labour aristocracy by the right we would readily agree. Nonetheless contradictions are the stuff of movement and qualitative change according to the Marxist dialectic so this editorial is dedicated to assisting that revolutionary development.

On the 5th December Thompsons the Solicitors issued a Pre-Action Protocol for Defamation Letters of Claim on behalf of UNITE the Union Regional Officer Wayne King against longstanding Unite member Gerry Downing, in his capacity as Secretary of Grass Roots Left and against the publishers and editor of the Weekly Worker

newspaper for an article published on 12 January 2012 entitled "Sovereign Busworkers fight back".

More than any other action this demonstrates the true class character and allegiances of this Unite bureaucracy. Thompsons Solicitors told the CPGB that Unite were "backing the Libel Action". Shame on McCluskey to target a left wing newspaper and a bus driver via the bosses' courts to silence his critics during the election.

But we will not be silenced even when an organisation misuses the multimillion assets it has built up from

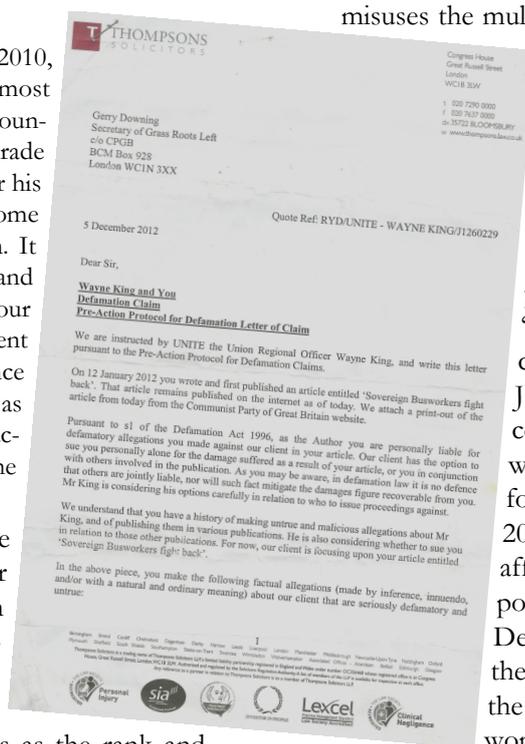
the dues of its members to pursue the class struggle to stymie that same class struggle and silence its critics.

But the good news is the there is every indication that the class is stirring itself to fight back and we present as evidence the "overwhelming vote" at the SWP conference in the first week in January to back Jerry Hicks. At that conference the biggest crisis in the whole history of the SWP burst forth in the very close vote (231 for, 209 against with 18 abstentions) to affirm the Disputes Committee report on the charges against Comrade Delta. Ret Marut comments on this in the facing page. Whilst acknowledging the centrally important question of women's liberation for the revolution

(we had not seen Andy Newman's transcript of that terrible DC debate then) the SF flyer reproduced on page 19, *Where are the SWP opposition factions going*, finishes with the very important question,

But the big political questions of the hour are the ones that really matter and both the DO and the Democratic Centralist faction are silent on these. Can Imperialism really sponsor revolutions in Libya and Syria for the greater good of the semi-colonial masses, let alone the world revolution? With Hicks or McCluskey – with the Rank-and-File candidate or the left bureaucrat? In what ways are the wars on Libya and Syria and the R+F tactic connected? Marx's aristocracy of labour and the booty of Empire? These are crucial questions for all revolutionaries.

Only by waging war against the trade union bureaucracy, right and left, can we really begin the fightback against the austerity programme of this hated ConDem government. We must break the "backbone of British Imperialism", as Trotsky called the TU bureaucracy, to unleash the pent up power of the organised working class.



SWP Crisis: Sexism, Democratic Centralism, the USSR and the Transitional Programme

By Ret Marut

The blogosphere is full of controversy on the crisis in the SWP which has obvious international significance if some of these forces now can be won to genuine Trotskyism.

Andy Newman's posting of the transcript of the SWP's Disputes Committee (DC) revealed an organisation in deep crisis.¹ The rape and sexual harassment allegation against Comrade Delta was dealt with by a DC comprising two CC members and three former CC members who knew the 'defendant' intimately.

One comrade who knew the accuser stood down because that might cloud his/her judgement. It certainly did not work the other way around; here it was indeed a 'trial by his mates', not by his peers. The SWP is shown to have no essential understanding of women's oppression and its internal regime is

revealed to all as grossly bureaucratic centralist, lacking entirely the "seething internal democracy" Trotsky says characterised the democratic centralist regime of the Bolsheviks. Two comrades, Ray Morell and Hannah Dee were removed from the CC for "the vehemence of their opposition" to the DC report and they obviously linked lack of the democracy to sexism in the version of democratic centralism being operated.

In 1989 Helen Ward, then a leader of Workers Power, analysed a mid 1980s SWP controversy on women's oppression from a sophisticated Marxist position which throws much light on the social attitudes of the current SWP.

In the mid 1980s SWP theoreticians debated whether working class men benefit from women's oppression. The answer seems fairly straight forward. Yes. They have higher wages than women, are more unionised, have more valued skills, they don't have to do much housework, and don't face problems of sexual harassment and assault. Lindsey German... along with Chris Harman, Sheila McGregor and in the background Tony Cliff, argue that to hold to such a view is 'non-Marxist', automatically leading to theories of patriarchy and separatism. Waging a battle on this powerful group is John Molyneux, arguing that it would be absurd to deny the benefits male workers receive.

Ward makes the following correct Marxist observation on the debate:

The fault with Molyneux's position (despite it being much more sophisticated than that of his opponents) is that he does embrace tenets of (separatist RM) feminist theory. He bases his argument exclusively on the relationship between men and women in the family. He fails to take the relationship of social forces as his first premise. Materialists must start from an understanding of oppression within the context of the dominant determining features of society, namely class antagonisms. All oppression is subordinate to, though stemming from this fundamental contradiction in class society. The family is an integral part of capitalist society, but it is impossible to understand its role and the relationship of individuals within it if you do not start from its function for capitalism. Molyneux starts, not from the role of the family, but from the unequal division of labour within it.²

On 19 January Socialist Resistance (SR, British USFI section) makes many cogent and correct points against the SWP's inter-

nal regime and cultural backwardness on women's oppression. They quote a 1989 document from the PRT, Mexican section of the USFI, which says:

We do not assume the cynical attitude that says "we can't change this today; it will change under socialism." Our revolutionary commitment is to fight for change starting today, however painful this process might be, and with all of its contradictions. After all, the lives of revolutionary men and women are not characterized by their comfort.

We concur but while the SR statement misses entirely the social forces argued for above by Ward, the Mexican document at least alludes to them. The SR statement is one of feminist separatism and the reference to the Tommy Sheridan case shows this very clearly:

The entire radical left now has to reassess its understanding of feminism... It was about a

majority of the SSP's leadership unwillingness to lie to cover the then convenor Tommy Sheridan's misogynist behaviour, both inside and outside the party. The SWP, a platform in the SSP at the time, backed Sheridan for tactical reasons. It now appears there may have been some solidarity from sections of the SWP leadership. Sheridan's misogyny was well known by some of the SSP's inner circle, who thought they could control it. It shows the fallacy of building a party on anything other than democracy and feminist principles.³

The SR supported Sheridan's opponents; the SWP supported Sheridan and at least rejected out and out class traitors who spived for the capitalist state and Rupert Murdoch to jail a workers' leaders, with as all his flaws and backwardness. As Charlie Cook writes on page 23 of this magazine:

Over twenty SSP members testified for Digger and Crown alike. In short, though many sought the conviction, SSP members secured it. They didn't have to, they chose to.

However the group who has really pushed the boat out in intervening in this dispute is the CPGB, who are the potential co-defendants with Gerry Downing in the Wayne King libel case. Like the majority of the left they have failed so far to even report on the highly significant vote at the fateful conference to back Jerry Hicks or even to report on the Wayne King libel case.

But the CPGB/Weekly Worker intervention is centrally concerned to prevent the development of a genuine Trotskyist Tendency amongst the oppositionists. Jack Conrad's two supplements on 10 and 17 January are misleading the comrades in the following three crucial interrelated areas.⁴

1. Democratic centralism, 2. the USSR and 3. The Transitional Programme.

1. On Democratic Centralism and Leninism

Democratic centralism and Leninism are central principles of the revolutionary party. This is the only form of workers organisation that can overthrow capitalism. Conrad elaborates an extended series of historical distortions of the nature of the Bolsheviks party, Lenin's relationship with Kautskyism, and the class character of the Russian Revolution and therefore our



Martin Smith, "Comrade Delta", former SWP National Secretary

SWP Crisis

orientation to modern day revolutionary tasks. The CPGB has long used Lars T Lih and others to make the false equation between Bolshevism and the German Social Democratic Party (SPD).

The difference is that the 'party of the whole class' of the SPD assumed that the whole class would be recruited into the party, the contradictions would be solved internally and the dialectical relationship between party and class did not need to be worked out.

The working class goes on strike and mounts a picket. Scabs try to cross and they stop them. The police rush to help the scabs in the name of 'democracy and freedom'. If the struggle develops the pickets lines become a workers' militia – as Connolly's Citizen's Army became in 1913.

If it develops further the revolutionary party denies 'democracy and freedom' not only to scabs and bosses but to the capitalists state itself by overthrowing it in revolution and replacing it with a workers' state. Thence the nature of the Bolshevik party, not a parliamentary party but one that knew how to use parliament to win support, not winning power through parliament but through workers' councils, the soviet type bodies that are the highest form of workers' democracy and facilitate the discussions necessary to enable the revolutionary party to win its arguments and take power at the head of the class.

Tony Cliff's followers were correctly expelled from the Trotskyist movement in 1958 because they voted for a neutral, third campist, position on the Korean War in Birmingham Trades Council and adopted Shachtman's 'neither Washington nor Moscow' because of McCartite anti-communism. By the time of the Vietnam War they took the opposite position because this was now popular with sections of the middle classes, displaying their typical tailendist approach of chasing popular opinion. ⁵

The CPGB are likewise 'third campists', as are the AWL. The CPGB talk of 'extreme democracy', they dismiss the qualitative difference between soviet and bourgeois parliamentary democracy. They do not understand why the Bolsheviks were entirely correct in suppressing the Constituent Assembly on 6 January 1918; the soviets were workers' democracy, the Assemblée was bourgeois democracy. It was a question of which class ruled. Dual power was finally resolved in favour of workers' power.

Conrad dismisses the April Theses and the opposition of the top leader of the Bolsheviks to it as of small significance, exaggerated by Trotsky. This is a real piece of historical revisionism because if Lenin had lost that argument the revolution was lost. Lenin just did not know what was going down in Russia apparently and "Kamenev was not urging support for the provisional government". However in the end there was enough compromise to enabled the unbalanced Lenin to reorient himself and make the revolution on a more even keel thanks to Kamenev, Stalin, Zinoviev et al whilst ignoring the idiot Trotsky.

2. The class character of the former Soviet Union.

This understanding is central to the relationship of the revolutionary party to its 'own' ruling class; Trotsky's Transitional Programme makes defence of the USSR and defence of semi-colonial countries from Imperialist attack twin obligations for revolutionaries.

The SWP is a 'state capitalist' group. They hold as a condition of membership, in the past at any rate, that capitalism was re-



Zinoviev and Kamenev voted on the CC against the 1917 seizure of power and published an open letter betraying the plans. "I will fight with all my might, both in the Central Committee and at the Congress, to secure the expulsion of both of them from the Party" pledged Lenin. On October 29, 1917, immediately after the Bolshevik seizure of power the executive committee of the national railroad labor union, Vikzhel, threatened a national strike unless the Bolsheviks shared power with other socialist parties and dropped Lenin and Leon Trotsky from the government. Zinoviev, Kamenev, and their allies in the Bolshevik Central Committee argued that the Bolsheviks had no choice but to start negotiations since a railroad strike would cripple their government's ability to fight the forces that were still loyal to the overthrown Provisional Government. Although Zinoviev and Kamenev briefly had the support of a Central Committee majority and negotiations were started, a quick collapse of the anti-Bolshevik forces outside Petrograd allowed Lenin and Trotsky to convince the Central Committee to abandon the negotiating process. In response, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Alexei Rykov, Vladimir Milyutin, and Victor Nogin resigned from the Central Committee on November 4, 1917. The following day, Lenin wrote a proclamation calling Zinoviev and Kamenev "deserters". He never forgot their behaviour, eventually making an ambiguous reference to their "October episode" in his Testament. (Wiki) But Conrad thinks, "Kamenev was not urging support for the provisional government".

stored in the USSR in 1928 and Jack Conrad agrees. But he attack Tony Cliff from the right here because Cliff defends the orthodoxy Trotskyist line that Lenin's democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry was wrong and corrected by the April Theses, which was in effect the same as Trotsky's Permanent Revolution as outlined In Results and Prospects. Conrad just does not understand what a workers' state is neither does Cliff despite his acceptance of certain elements of Marxism on the question. Conrad concludes that the USSR was "neither capitalist nor socialist but bureaucratic collectivist points in the right direction" and that "The Soviet Union was not capitalist. It was something else." Apparently he and Hillel Ticktin, who also has a "something else" position, will in the fullness time come to some definite conclusion. Over twenty years since its demise and approaching ninety since its founding they should have reached some conclusion by now.

It was a degenerated workers state, as Trotsky explains in detail in *The Revolution Betrayed*. Conrad dismisses Trotsky thus: "Trotsky's notion of 'socialist property forms' was flawed, because it effectively equated nationalisation with socialism. That would make Inca Peru, Bismarck's Germany and Nasser's Egypt examples of socialism." What an idiotic summary of Trotsky's position on the workers' state. Here Trotsky dismisses the state capitalist position in *The Revolution Betrayed*:

Theoretically, to be sure, it is possible to conceive a situation in which the bourgeoisie as a whole constitutes itself a stock company which, by means of its state, administers the whole national economy. The

Continued on page 18

Counihan Sanchez Housing Campaign

The Counihan-Sanchez Housing Campaign (CSHC) plans to broaden our campaign for housing for the Counihan family and against cuts and evictions in Brent in 2013. In November 2012 we won our first victory in our battle with Brent Labour council, who have been forced to reinstate the Housing Benefit which Brent withdrew from the family when they declared them 'intentionally homeless' in April 2012.

At our last meeting the CSHC agreed the following objectives :

- To secure social housing for the Counihans in Brent
- To support and defend all Brent residents made homeless or facing eviction by Brent Council
- To link up with other anti-cuts groups in Brent and NW London and coordinate activity
- We demand that Brent Council must:
- Oppose all cuts AND set a needs budget based on engaging Brent public, community groups, trade unions
- Cap rents in Brent at an affordable rate and prevent profiteering by rogue landlords
- Build genuinely affordable housing for working class people in our area.
- Take into public ownership all properties in Brent that have been vacant for over a year, with compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need
- Campaign for a genuine living wage in Brent

UPDATES

1. No evictions pledge launched

The CSHC has launched a pledge for all Brent councillors to sign stating that they won't enforce evictions in Brent. The pledge reads:

'I pledge not to support any eviction proceedings against Brent residents who haven't fallen into arrears due to recent changes in benefit rules.

I fully support the anti cuts campaigns in Brent and I will actively support a campaign of mass resistance to this government's cuts programme.'

2. Taking it to the streets

The CSHC started the new year in fine style when 20 people supported the street stall at Kilburn Square on Saturday 5 January. Banners were displayed by CSHC, Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!, the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition, the campaign to Free Mumia abu Jamal and Boycott Workfare, showing the breadth of involvement in the campaign.

Every week at Kilburn Square we meet people who have been evicted in Brent and our presence every Saturday gives local people confidence that there is an organisation in Kilburn that is serious about fighting cuts and evictions.

The CSHC has also supported events for Justice for the 33 RMT agency workers sacked by London Underground and in solidarity with disabled prisoner Daniel Roque Hall.

3. Brent Councillors challenged by CSHC at meetings

At the Brent Labour Representation Committee meeting on 7 January Isabel and Sarah Counihan challenged the Labour leader of Brent Council, Muhammed Butt on his record of making people homeless. Disgracefully, Butt shouted at 15-year-old Sarah and has yet to apologise. On Tuesday 8 January at the Brent Forum 'Are we pricing the poor out of Brent?' Isabel Counihan and Robin Sivapalan challenged Brent councillors and officials. The meeting was shocked when Isabel spoke about the advice she received from Brent Housing that her family should go and live in a field in Ireland.

On Wednesday 9 January the campaign asked Councillor Claudia Hec-



tor to sign our no evictions pledge. She refused and made a lot of false claims about the Counihans in an effort to justify her refusal. Later on, Councillor Hector claimed in an email that she had been bullied and harassed.

None of these unpleasant tactics from Brent Labour will deter the family and the campaign from fighting for justice.

4. Public Meeting - No evictions! No cuts in Brent! Thursday January 31st 7pm.

Have you had an eviction notice or had your benefits cut?

Have Brent told you that you will be housed outside the borough?

Are you opposed to council cuts and the way Brent is attacking services for working class people?

Come to our meeting to join the resistance to evictions and cuts in Brent.

If you are opposed to council cuts and the way Brent is attacking services for working class people come to our meeting to discuss how we can step up the campaign to defend working class people in Brent.

Venue: Salvation Army Hall, 55 Chichester Road, Kilburn NW6 5QW (near Kilburn Park Tube)

You can support the Counihan Family Campaign by making a Paypal donation at

<http://tinyurl.com/counihan-donate>

Find out more on facebook – look for **Counihan Battlebus** and **Counihan Sanchez Housing Campaign**

Jimmy Mac, Counihan-Sanchez, using Campaign, 07958 157 392

Protesters call for Stephen Murney's release

Tuesday, 15 January 2013

AROUND 150 people participated in a white line picket in Newry on Saturday in support of Stephen Murney. The Newry man and local spokesperson for the socialist republican party éirígi has been held in Maghaberry prison since December following the discovery of two BB guns, three military style jumpers, two black berets and three pairs of combat style trousers in his house during a PSNI search. Police also seized a laptop computer that contained hundreds of photos of police officers.

However, Mr Murney's solicitor has claimed the photos were several years old, did not contain any images of serving PSNI officers and were for the purpose of documenting alleged police harassment.

He also claimed the clothes seized were old band uniforms. Mr Murney was offered bail before Christmas but refused it on the grounds that the restrictions were too stringent. Among the conditions of his bail were that he could not live in, or enter Newry at any time, had to report daily to a PSNI barracks in Newtownhamilton, adhere to a strict curfew and wear an electronic tagging device.

Members of Mr Murney's family were among those who lined Monaghan Street with placards and banners calling for his release.

Eirigi general secretary Breandán Mac Cionnaith addressed the crowd and branded Mr Murney's arrest and detainment as "internment by remand... Internment by remand was wrong in the 1980s and 1990s and it is equally wrong today," he said.



The issue of Mr Murney's arrest arose in last week's Newry and Mourne Council meeting where a number of councillors described their unease at the way in which the case had been handled.

Independent councillor Davy Hyland branded the treatment of Mr Murney as "deplorable." "Stephen has been held in Maghaberry since December on the most spurious charges," he said.

"Since the last time this issue was raised in the council he has tried to get bail but was given the most atrocious conditions that he couldn't possibly meet.

"They know he can't drive yet they expected him to appear at Newtownhamilton police station every day. "They wanted him tagged and kept separate from his wife and children.

"Stephen's treatment has been absolutely deplorable." Sinn Féin councillor Pat McGinn said he was "very uncomfortable with the whole thing... I would wonder what exactly is going on here," he said.

Belfast Flag Riots: Good Friday or no Good Friday

Agreement croppy won't lie down anymore By Charlie Walsh

They allege that the reduction in the number of days that the Union Jack hangs over Belfast City hall to a total of 17 in all is a concession to Sinn Féin and to the Catholics. Reading David McKitterick in the English Independent on 10 January on the ongoing Loyalist protest in the north of Ireland over the flag issue drove me to the conclusion that the Loyalist youth and workers have lost 'their empire' and their jobs in shipbuilding and engineering but what they haven't lost is their anti-Catholic, anti-Irish bigotry and their anti-immigrant racism and their thuggery against Polish, Indian and Pilipino workers.

Their days of supremacy over their Catholic neighbours and their so-called 'right' to march wherever and whenever they like throughout the six counties while hurling racist and sectarian abuse at Catholic, while attacking their homes, shops, churches and schools those days are gone forever. Good Friday or no Good Friday Agreement croppy won't lie down anymore.

Perhaps it's time the Loyalists woke up and smelled the coffee. Because after all it was British Imperialism and British capitalism that destroyed their jobs and put them on the dole and it was not the Catholic working class or immigrant

workers. The only hope for the Loyalist working class if they are to escape from economic and political going nowhere is to break from their reactionary racist and bigoted ideology and get rid of their illusions in the Union Jack and monarchy and join in with the Catholic working class and all workers in Ireland (their only real allies) in bringing about a new Socialist Ireland where all their needs are met and their problems solved because the bourgeois politicians north and south have no answer to the huge problems being faced by the Irish working class including the Loyalist workers.

The working class has to fight for its own class interests independent of all other classes and groups in society. Only the working class organised in its own party can free itself from poverty, immigration, unemployment and injustice. Only socialism in an international basis can bring about a new world society free from poverty, disease, exploitation, oppression, wars of conquest and famine. In such a society need and not greed will be the driving force and a society where co-operation and solidarity between nations will replace the anarchy and madness of the market and competition. "from each according to their talents, to each according to their needs" will be the motto of such a society.

Belfast Flag Riots

And talking of flying the Union Jack, the butcher's apron. The Union Jack is the flag of British Imperialism and was the flag of British colonialism and the British empire. It is the flag of the British ruling class, the capitalist class. The flag of the British working class is the *Red Flag* and our anthem is *The International*.

The many war crimes and acts of terrorism committed by British Imperialism in the heyday of British colonialism and the British empire, the slave trade which took 28 million Africans to work in slave plantations in the West Indies and America, north and south, the "famines" in Ireland in the 1740s and in 1845-47, the "famine" in India in the 1870s



PUP leader Billy Hutchinson and the butcher's aprons; "Similarly the wars of conquest by British Imperialism in Ireland, India, Aden, Cyprus, Malaya, North Yemen, Oman, Kenya, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya to name but a few where wars were all fought under the Union Jack in the name of civilisation and British democracy, names that hid theft and plunder."



perpetrated done under the Union Jack. Similarly the wars of conquest by British Imperialism in Ireland, India, Aden, Cyprus, Malaya, North Yemen, Oman, Kenya, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya to name but a few where wars were all fought under the Union Jack in the name of civilisation and British democracy, names that hid theft and plunder.

The Socialist party pander to Strasserite Loyalism

By Gerry Downing

In a article on 16 January 2013, *Northern Ireland: Flag issue turmoil illustrates failure of the 'peace process'* Ciaran Mulholland, CWI Northern Ireland, (the Socialist Party) gives us this on the riots:

Whilst the total numbers involved are relatively small there is no doubt that the issue has acted as a lightning rod for widespread dissatisfaction with the peace process which has built up over time in the Protestant community. There is real and genuine anger among large layers of Protestants. There is a sense that "everything is going in one direction", that is, Protestants are losing out to Catholics. In the view of many Sinn Fein are pushing too hard for concessions-as Progressive Unionist Party (the PUP is linked to the UVF) leader Billy Hutchinson has argued "Sinn Fein are acting outside the spirit of the Good Friday Agreement". This is the reason that the PUP have given for reversing their previous conciliatory approach on the flags issue. A banner displayed in the Mount Vernon, where Hutchison works as a community worker, proclaims "North Belfast Against Cultural Apartheid".

The stuff that "the Protestants" believe is completely false however as the article goes on to explain. They are blaming "the Catholics" who are sufferings a great deal more than themselves.

At the same time many Catholics continue to believe that they are subject to sectarian discrimination. They hold that they are dealt with more harshly by the police. they believe that they are more likely to be poor and unemployed than protestants. for historic reasons, reasons of geography and because of the residues of sectarian discrimination, there are still differences between the two communities in economic terms. the poverty rate among protestants at 19 per cent is lower than the 26 per cent rate for Catholics. in the three years to 2010 on average, 28 per cent of working-age protestants were not in paid work compared with 35 per cent of Catholics.

So the stuff that "the Catholics believe" is in fact true.

But nonetheless we must be careful to avoid drawing any conclusion about whose beliefs are right and whose are far-right reaction;

The views expressed in each community are sometimes true, or partially true. Sometimes however genuinely held beliefs are simply not true. The reason that such a complex situation can arise is that there are genuine interwoven grievances on both sides. The real problem is that the peace process has failed to deliver for working class or young people whatever their background. The peace process has failed because under capitalism genuine peace, and real economic advancement for working people, is not possible. Under the structures established by the Good Friday Agreement it is assumed that everyone belongs to one or other of two mutually exclusive communities. Under capitalism all that is possible is a sharing out of political power, and a sharing out of poverty and unemployment... Whilst all sections of the protestant community have been affected by the flag issue it finds its sharpest expression in the most deprived working class areas. The rioting and the road blocks are in part a distorted form of class anger directed at the unionist political establishment represented in the assembly and on the executive.

But the problems predate the GFA and indeed the Orange state itself from 1921, although both made a bad situation much worse. It is a complete lie that the 'two communities' are equally to blame. In the medieval church that type of argument as it is made above was known as equivocation.* And "class anger" my arse. Was it class anger that drove some backward German workers to don Brownshirts and attack Jews? Leon Trotsky said they were the "storm troopers of finance capital" and that is what we are seeing emerging in Belfast.

Of course it is a lie that Loyalist anger is directed primarily at the UUP/DUP and the police. However some rioters justified attacking the police because it had too many Catholics (by February 2011, 29.7% of the 7, 200 officers were from the Catholic community). But anger is only directed against all these because they seen as slacking somewhat in their traditional job of discriminating against 'the Catholics'.

In a 1999 review of *Loyalists*, by Peter Taylor *Socialism Today* told us that the PUP "initially moved in a socialist direction". The Socialist party described the neo-fascist uprising

that was the Ulster Workers' Council strike of May 1974 was displaying "the latent power of the working class" in the "interests of the majority of the Protestant population" as they saw it; right or wrong we must respect this prejudice!

In October 1974 current PUP leader Billy Hutchinson, murdered Catholics Michael Loughran and Edward Morgan in Northumberland Street, Belfast (which links the Protestant Shankill to the neighbouring Falls Road, a Catholic area). Hutchinson has often stressed the importance of the working class nature of Loyalism and has argued in favour of socialism, he is an atheist and has never been a member of the Orange Order. The SP have always pandered to this neo-Strasserite** Loyalist 'socialism' – which opposes the rights of the nationalist community – a "socialism of idiots", as SPD leader August Bebel famously described it c. 1890.

*equivocations and amphibologies in the mediaeval church imply an untruth that is not actually stated. In equivocation with strict mental reservation the speaker mentally adds some qualification to the words which he utters, and the words together with the mental qualification make it a true assertion in accordance with fact. (Wiki) We are unaware of what mental reservations comrade Mulholland might have made when implying these untruths.

**Strasserism refers to the strand of Nazism that called for mass-action and worker-based forms of National Socialism, hostile to Jews from an anti-capitalist basis, to achieve a national rebirth. It derives its name from Gregor and Otto Strasser, the two Nazi brothers initially associated with this position. Otto Strasser was expelled from the NSDAP in 1930, while Gregor Strasser was killed by Hitler's secret police, either the Schutzstaffel (SS) or the Gestapo (Geheime Staatspolizei), during the Night of the Long Knives in June 1934 - watch your back, Billy!

Brian Shivers has his convictions for murdering two soldiers at Massereene Army base in Antrim in March 2009 quashed.

On Tuesday 15 January the Court of Appeal also ruled against additional convictions on six counts of attempted murder and one of possession of firearms and ammunition with intent to endanger life. He remains in custody pending a retrial. The court said that no finding was made about when Shivers allegedly became aware of the murder plot. They are determined to get this very ill man for something and conspiracy charges are notoriously difficult to disprove!

Belfast Court refuses to order Liam Campbell extradition to Lithuania —16 January 2013.

Mr Justice Burgess has refused to order Liam Campbell's extradition to Lithuania. After referring to an earlier judgment which detailed severely overcrowded and unsanitary conditions at Lukiskes Prison, the judge said he was satisfied that extraditing Campbell to Lithuania would expose him to a real risk of inhuman and degrading treatment by reason of the jail conditions. Meantime his younger brother Michael has been moved out of Lukiskes Prison to a more humane jail but the fight to bring him back to Ireland goes on as does the fight for political status for all the POWs in Magherry and elsewhere and freedom for Brian Liam, Michael McKevitt, Delores Price, Martin Corey and Gerry McGeough.

Please make time to write to these prisoners below. And please assist us in updating the prisoners' list.



PORTLAOISE Barry Petticre 5 Years
PRISON Portlaoise, Belfast
County Laois, Ireland Declan John Rafferty 30 Years Co. Louth
E-3
 John Brock 6 Years Dublin
 Anthony Crowley 10 Years Cork
 Bernard Dempsey LIFE Dublin
 Aidan Hulme 20 Years Co. Louth
 Robert Hulme 20 Years Co. Louth
 Jim McCormick 22 Years Co. Louth
 Thomas Morris 6 Years Dublin
 Fintan Paul O'Farrell 30 Years Co. Louth
 Matthew Perry n/a n/a

Tarlach MacD-hómhnaill n/a Co. Louth
 Michael McDonald 30 Years Fermanagh
 Dermott McFadden n/a Derry
 Michael McKevitt 20 Years Dundalk
 Phillip McKevitt n/a Louth
 Darren Mooney n/a Dublin
 Conan Murphy n/a Louth
 Liam Rainey n/a Antrim
Magherry Gaol, Roe 3, Old Road, Ballinderry Upper Lisburn, Ireland BT28 2PT
 1. Brian Shivers - Magherafelt
 2. Harry Fitzsimons - Belfast
 3. Sean McConville - Lurgan
 4. Damien McKenna -

Lurgan - Co Tyrone
 5. Gary Toman - Lurgan
 6. Brendan McConville - Lurgan
 7. John Paul Wootton - Craigavon
 8. Kevin Barry Nolan - Co Cavan
 9. Gerard McManus - Letterkenny
 10. Willie Wong - Armagh
 11. Tony Rooney - Belfast
 12. Martin Corey - Lurgan
 13. Joe Barr - Strabane
 14. Jordan Whitehouse - Derry
 15. Sean O'Reilly - Belfast
 16. Robert O'Neill - Belfast
 17. Martin McCloone - Derry
 18. Mark McGuigan - Omagh
 19. Phil O'Donnell - Derry
 20. Gerry McGeough

- Co Tyrone
 21. Francis Carleton - Belfast
 22. Packy Carter - Co Tyrone
 23. Michael Johnston - North Belfast
 24. Dominic Dynes - Castleblaney,
 25. Brian Cavlan - Dungannon
 26. Brian Sheridan - Blackwater Town
 27. Raymond Whitehouse - Derry
 28. Raymond Wootton - Belfast
 29. Thomas Maguire - Belfast
 30. Mark Kerr - Derry
 31. Tony Taylor - Derry
 32. Kevin Murphy - Coalisland
 33. Kevin Vernon - Belfast

Hydebank Wood Hospital Road BELFAST BT8 8NA
 Marian Price-McGlinchey
MAGILLIGAN PRISON
 Point Road Limvady Co. Derry BT 49 OLR
 Noel Maguire
 Liam Hannaway
The Grove Castlereagh Gaol Castlereagh, Co Roscommon, Ireland (IRSP) Eddie McGarrigle
 Johnny McCrossan
Pravieniskiy Pataisos Namai-stviro'j Kolantja, 2-O'jl Valdyba, Pravieniskiy # K, Kaisadoriu r, LT-56552, Lithuania
 Michael Campbell
Special Supervision Unit - Isolation
 Liam Campbell
 Gavin Coyle

A response to United Left on the Unite General Secretary election

By Laurence Humphries, Grass Roots Left.

The United Left talks of leadership and a real campaign that Len McCluskey has led in the fight against austerity. What campaign? There has been no campaign for “a general strike”, McCluskey’s words are a lot of hot air. The issue remains dormant with the TUC leadership incapable of leading any sort of fight.

United Left maintains that there is rapid progress in the merger between Amicus and the TGWU to form Unite. The merger is a disaster. Amicus was a union with some democratic history, the TGWU has always been a bureaucratic union, it has a history of eradicating democracy vis-à-vis the dockers and the Blue Union in the 40s and 50s the NASD. Bill Hunter’s book details it all. All officials are appointed with the exception of the General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary.

United Left asserts that there is progress with Branch reorganisation. Nothing could be further from the truth. Branch reorganisation has resulted in branches being closed down, moving members from geographical branches into workplace branches without the members knowledge. The EM/283 branch still remains suspended with no funds available.

Fighting back strategy, that is untrue, the Unite leadership has capitulated on pensions, the tankers drivers’ dispute, BA cabin crew, Bombardier and the Tesco driver’s dispute. I marched with hundreds of other workers in Derby to save the Bombardier train making operation being transferred to Siemens in Germany and protect those members’ jobs. Nothing has been heard since, officials have been responsible for deals, and calling off strikes where it interferes with their cosy relationship with management.

Community membership is a sham, a creation of a second tier of membership without any real authority in the rule book and an excuse to create another tier of officials.

The so called fight back in the Labour Party is nothing of the sort. McCluskey and Miliband are together in the Labour leadership and are allowing Labour Councils to institute cuts and dismiss workers. Labour Councillors who oppose the cuts are either removed from the Labour group or threatened with expulsion. What is McCluskey position on setting and advising Labour Councillors to set an illegal budget to protect tenants like the Counihan-Sanchez’s and conduct some sort of a fight.

Unite has the same bureaucratic apparatus as the old TGWU, there is no openness but an apparatus with appointed officials with no responsibility or accountability to the membership. Any Unite member who has just joined and not served the 13 week probation period will find no help from an official. Unite members are being disciplined all the time by management as capitalism uses speed up etc. to get faster production ignoring health and safety



Unite national officer Bernard MacAuley referred to the rank-and-file campaign as “a cancer”.

procedures. The Executive Council has no policy to train or retrain accredited reps therefore making it difficult for disciplined members to be represented and get a fair hearing at a disciplinary.

Membership systems have not been overhauled, I can only speak of my own experience in the East Midlands, lethargy and opposition and resistance to change, a culture of Branches not meeting and a refusal to make Branch secretaries accountable to their members and to call Branch meetings on a regular basis.

In the East Midlands McCluskey has delayed the appointment of a Regional secretary for at least 6 months. He piloted in the West Midlands Regional Secretary to combine both positions. Only recently have workplace branches been reorganised. Geographical branches like the EM/283 remain suspended without funds.

Rank and file activity in the construction industry which involved many Unite Members was led by rank and file Workers like Steve Kelly and Jerry Hicks. This was a campaign to defeat BESNA an attempt by big construction companies to reduce the pay and conditions of construction workers. Rank and file workers through occupations, strikes, demonstrations and picketing defeated BESNA and the employers. It also exposed the use of blacklisting and victimisation of workers on the construction sites. McCluskey and the officials only got involved when they feared they would lose control of the strike movement.

There is a glaring omission in the UL document to opposition to the Anti-Union laws instituted by Thatcher and supported by the Blair and Brown Labour governments. United left is the left cover for a rapidly moving right wing bureaucracy in Unite. McCluskey also represents the policies of the right wing. The SWP has now been expelled from United Left because it is supporting Jerry Hicks.

I urge all Unite branches to support and nominate Jerry Hicks in the election for General Secretary of Unite. Here are some of his policies.

- The election of all officials, elected by members not appointed by an individual or a panel
- Lead a fight to repeal the anti-union laws and when necessary to confront them.
- For a General Secretary to live the life of the members they represent, on an average members wage not a six figure salary.

Labour Representation Committee Annual Conference 2012 report and assessment

By Laurence Humphries

The LRC Conference took place in Conway Hall on the 10th November. Socialist Fight comrades attended as delegates and put forward a number of motions to the Conference. The first discussion was around how to fight the cuts locally with a panel discussion of labour councillors. The first motion by Islington LRC sought to defend a position that it may not be possible to defeat the government over the anti-cuts position and it may be necessary for Councils to make cuts but explain that the cuts they are making is because of the Governments position. Many trade union leaders defend this position and very few Labour councils are prepared to set an illegal budget by refusing to make the cuts. Councillors in Islington showed how spineless they were in implementing part of the cuts and accepting the cuts programme. Some principled LRC Members like Graham Durham opposed this mealy mouthed attitude in not taking a principled position to defend tenants and workers employed by the Council. There is no halfway house, you either oppose the cuts or you do not. The motion was carried although Socialist Fight Comrades opposed the motion.

The conference then moved onto fighting back industrially – this was introduced by Matt Wrack a left bureaucrat in the FBU. I moved a motion on Rank and File organisation on behalf of Grass Roots Left. My motion sought to make

All elected full time officials to be on a workers wage

Election of all Full Time officials with the right of recall. The situation at the moment is that all Union officials in all Trade Unions are appointed except for General Secretary Elections which are carried out by secret ballot.

I also argued for support for Justice for Shrewsbury Campaign and an end to the blacklisting amongst construction Rank and File workers. Other issues raised were the two tier workforce globally and the role of self-perpetuating bureaucracies in there for the interest of class collaboration. The AWL and the other lefts decided to oppose my motion on the spurious ground that the LRC cannot involve itself in internal union matter. This above all shows the rightward trend of the LRC. My motion was lost.

Socialist Fight comrades introduced other motions which were more successful.

Release all International POW's this was introduced by the IRPSG explaining the role of political prisoners in India, Ireland Palestine.

The demands were the release of all Anti-Imperialist political prisoners.

Restoration of political status to all Irish Republican political prisoners in the north of Ireland including the release of Marian Price, Gerry McGeough and Martin Corey

Other Motions that Socialist Fight were successful with were motions on the Marikana Massacre in South Africa which called for,

An International fund to support all striking miners

For the nationalisation of the mines under the control of workers and working class communities

Break the Triple Alliance and call on COSATU, the SACP, the YCL and SASCO (Student Congress) to break from the ANC and fight for the political Independence of the working class.

A further emergency motion on the DSM Movement in South Africa (the section of the CWI) was moved by Socialist Fight comrades calling to defend the DSM against the provocations of the SACP controlled Communist University internet forum (CU).

The Counihan homeless motion was also supported by The Conference and particularly the comrades in the Brent LRC.

There were other motions carried on the next Labour government, against Landlordism, the Labour trade union link and Labour Briefing a rule change was introduced to allow Amendments to motions and for motions to be taken in parts which is far more democratic way.

The real question for the LRC is that John McDonnell and Jeremy Corbin the left Labour parliamentarians are trying to steer a middle path of left Reformism when there is no room for Reformism. It is noticeable that the Alliance for Workers Liberty, a pseudo left group has a programme of support for the Labour and trade union bureaucracy and support for Imperialist and Zionist policies internationally. They continually during the Conference lined up to support the right wing drift of the LRC; there is no room for manoeuvre in this rapidly objective crisis of capitalism. Many in the LRC are right wing reformists who have illusions on what a prospective Labour Government will do and are hoping that there can be an Alternative economic strategy under capitalism. The task is to recognise the inherent crisis of capitalism and fight to overthrow it under a trained Marxist leadership. I am not convinced that the LRC will provide that leadership as it develops into a reformist group embedded inside the Labour party. The policies that Socialist Fight was successful in winning at the conference, will they be carried out. We await the LRC decisions with bated breath.

A controversial incident came during the Marikana debate. Someone opposed it because “the ANC are a member of the Socialist International with the Labour party”. Gerry Downing shouted that this was supporting the massacre of striking miners. Jackie Walker, standing behind him, said “shut up or I will make you shut up”. “How will you do that?” he asked. “I will vomit on you” she said. Socialist Fight comrade Carl told her to “F*** off”.

SF flyer to the National Shop Stewards lobby of the TUC in Brighton on 11 November 2012:

Build GRL rank-and-file in Unite! No support for sell-out McCluskey! No cuts, fight for ‘needs budgets’!

In the good old tradition of Ken Jackson, Roger Lyons and Derek Simpson Len McCluskey has sought to extend his term of office in a snap election, three years early and with the shortest possible timetable; nominations from 1st January 2013 to 15th February 2013, Ballot period – 18th March 2013 till 12th April 2013, Declaration – 15th April 2013.

This is obviously an appalling undemocratic manoeuvre to use the apparatus to ensure the re-election with all opponents at the obvious disadvantage of not possessing the resources of the incumbent. As ever the stooge United Left front provide a cover – they met on the 8th following McCluskey’s declaration on the 7th with no other possible candidate given the chance to address the meeting – no need for the second placed candidate in the last Gen Sec election Jerry Hicks to walk out this time – he was not even invited. The Socialist Party and the NSSN has decided to support Len McCluskey without giving any other candidate a hearing.

Apparently McCluskey does not want his re-election campaign to coincide with the General Election in 2015 to avoid embarrassment to the Labour party. But it is here that Unite would have the opportunity to put the maximum pressure on Labour, surely now the next government. But as Jerry Hicks said:

I guess this all goes hand in hand/glove with Unites’ political ‘strategy’ of reclaiming Labour, or the ‘one way relationship’ as would be a better description. Unite in the last 2 years alone has handed over £6 million of its members money to Labour, as well as the £10s of millions over the years.

According to Jerry Hicks it is about time that stopped. He argues that a novel method of ‘payment by results’ would offer much better value for money for Unite members. He added that in his view Unite should only fund those MP’s that support Unite’s policies.

Why has the SP, a self-declared Trotskyist party, decided to support the bureaucrat McCluskey without giving the rank-and-file second-placed candidate in the last election a hearing? Is it, in the words of the AWL’s apologist for the bureaucracy Jim Denham:

ensuring the continuity of left progressive leadership in the labour movement’s leading organisation” and to “reaffirm its present dynamic, progressive course

Remember what Trotsky had to say about the British TU bureaucracy,

In the capitalist states, the most monstrous forms of bureaucracy are to be observed precisely in the trade unions...It is thanks to it that the whole structure of capitalism

“If Purcell and Hicks break with us, not because we demand of them that they transform themselves immediately into Communists — nobody demands that! — but because we ourselves want to remain Communists, this means that Purcell and company are not friends but masked enemies. The quicker they show their nature, the better for the masses. We do not at all want to break with the Minority Movement. On the contrary, we must give the greatest attention to this movement. The smallest step forward with the masses or with a part of the masses is worth more than a dozen abstract programmes of circles of intellectuals, but the attention devoted to the masses has nothing in common with capitulation before their temporary leaders and semi-leaders. The masses need a correct orientation and correct slogans. This excludes all theoretical conciliation and the patronage of confusionists who exploit the backwardness of the masses.”

Leon Trotsky’s Writings on Britain, Volume 2, The Anglo-Russian Committee (October 1927).

now stands upright, above all in Europe and especially in Britain. If there were not a bureaucracy of the trade unions, then the police, the army, the courts, the lords, the monarchy would appear before the proletarian masses as nothing but pitiful ridiculous playthings. The bureaucracy of the trade unions is the backbone of British imperialism...

The Marxist will say to the British workers: “The trade union bureaucracy is the chief instrument for your oppression by the bourgeois state. Power must be wrested from the hands of the bourgeoisie and for that its principal agent, the trade union bureaucracy, must be overthrown”. Parenthetically, it is especially for this reason that the bloc of Stalin with the strike-breaker Purcell was so criminal.

Note: Purcell, Hicks and Cook were the ‘Lefts’ at the time of the 1926 General Strike, in fact a lot more ‘left’ than the present squad of Crow, Serwotka and McCluskey. Trotsky did not make any qualitative differentiation between them and the Rights, in fact it was the ‘Lefts’ who dealt the fatal body blow to the General Strike in the end.

It is no secret that the main aim of the SP/NSSN is to recruit Unite to its pantheon of Left unions/Gen Secs to complete its line up of RMT, PCS, CWU, NUM, POA, NUJ, BFAWU. Unite sponsored its Jarrow Crusade and relations seem to be developing. Unlike Trotsky the SP/NSSN makes a qualitative differences between the ‘Lefts’ and the ‘Rights’ in the TU, see NSSN statement of 30 November 2012 anniversary of 2011:

But some of the union leaders settled and killed the momentum (in 2011), despite the best efforts of those like PCS, POA, RMT, Unite, ISU, NIPSA and UCU who tried to salvage the dispute this May.



Peter Taaffe, “But we don’t believe that Jerry has proved capable of building the broad left alliance that would be essential to drive the union to the left, combat the bureaucracy and build across the wider trade union movement.” Backing the bureaucrat to defeat the bureaucracy on the principle that “it takes a thief to catch a thief”?

But there is a seeming insurmountable problem for the SP/NSSN. As Jerry Hicks has pointed out above McCluskey is the main supporter of the Labour party leadership. The SP/NSSN are for standing as TUSC against Labour, making relationships very difficult, no matter how opportunist they have become on other matters like supporting undemocratic manoeuvres like snap re-elections. Like Trotsky we are opposed to breaking the TU/Labour party link, we are for democratising it and fighting for a genuine rank-and-file movement in the TU to do that. Jerry Hicks stood on this platform in 2010, the SWP supported him following a revolt in their membership against the leadership. And there is no qualitative difference between the TU bureaucrat McCluskey and Ed Miliband. See the photo of McCluskey endorsing “cuts too far too fast” above. This is what Trotsky has to say about that relationship:

Up to now, we have not mentioned the Labour Party which, in Britain, the classic country of trade unions, is only a political transposition of the same trade union bureaucracy. The same leaders guide the trade unions, betray the General Strike, lead the electoral campaign and later on sit in the ministries. The Labour Party and the trade unions – these are not two principles, they are only a technical division of labour. Together they are the fundamental support of the domination of the British bourgeoisie. The latter cannot be overthrown without overthrowing the Labourite bureaucracy.

And that cannot be attained by opposing the trade union as such to the state as such, but by the active opposition of

SF flyer to NSSN lobby of the TUC

the Communist Party to the Labourite bureaucracy in all fields of social life. In the trade unions, in strikes, in the electoral campaign, in parliament and in power. The principal task of a real party of the proletariat consists of putting itself at the head of the working masses, organized in trade unions and unorganized, to wrest power from the bourgeoisie and to strike a death-blow to the “dangers of statism.”

Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls told *The Guardian*:

The public want to know that we are going to be ruthless and disciplined in how we go about public spending”. And at the Labour Conference, “we cannot make any commitments now that the next Labour government will be able to reverse particular tax rises or spending cuts.

We have seen only a fraction of the cuts to come first planned by Chancellor George Osborne in 2010—the total is almost £600 billion, and that is without the readjustments necessitated by the shrinkage of the economy and tax take due to these deflationary policies. So far less than 15% has been implemented.

What are the prospects of the official Labour movement leading a fightback against these vicious cuts? Even if Labour wins in 2015 it will continue these cuts without let-up. And what are the intentions of the trade union and Labour council leaders, surely they will lead a fightback? They have no intention of doing so.

At a meeting with about fifty of its Councillors, including Council and Labour group leaders, on 12 November 2010 in Leeds, Unite newly elected General Secretary Len McCluskey got his deputy Gail Cartmell to instruct them to carry out all the cuts by setting legal budgets whilst hypocritically protesting. Not one balked at this disgraceful instruction.

Not a single Labour councillor voted against the cuts imposed in April 2011, despite panic and soul-searching in Lambeth and Hackney. There was no question of setting ‘needs budgets’ to protect the vulnerable against the cuts. Len McCluskey made his usual anti-cuts speech at this year’s TUC but meekly acquiesced to the cuts agenda at the Labour party conference.

We must prepare for this by renewing the Labour movement, linking up with those within and outside the Labour party who want to fight. We begin with the core organised working class movement, the trade unions, and from there we must take the struggle into the Labour party. To do this we promote the principles and practices of the R+F in all our areas of work.

Socialist Fight 11 December 2012

Open Letter From Grass Roots Left to the Socialist Workers Party on the Snap Unite Election to re-elect Len McCluskey

Dear Comrades of the SWP,

At your Conference this weekend on the question of the Unite General Secretary election will have three options before you.

1. To back Jerry Hicks, the second placed rank-and-file candidate last time around in 2010, whom you supported at the time.
2. To stand your own Candidate or
3. Back Len McCluskey, the incumbent and the inevitable choice of the United Left caucus, of which you are members.

Like the Grass Roots Left and the majority of activists in Unite we are sure you do not buy the reasons Len McCluskey gives for seeking re-election almost three years early. Surprise, surprise he has declared his candidature in an election he has initiated himself to suit himself. He hopes all the direct contacts the union FTOs have with the branches and workplaces combined with the tightest possible timetable will give him all the nominations he wants and make it very difficult for any other candidate to secure enough to stand. It is obviously in the good old undemocratic bureaucratic tradition of Ken Jackson, Roger Lyons and Derek Simpson; an incumbent General Secretary seeking to use his control of the apparatus to extend his term of office.

The main reason he gives “Freed of the distractions of an internal election in 2015, we can focus on the general election and the defeat of a Tory-led government that has done so much to undermine the living standards of the ordinary, decent people of this country” in fact denies the membership the greatest possible impact on that general election. What better time to seek concessions from a Labour party leadership than in an election year with Unite agitating all its members during their own election to make demands like, “forget bankrolling bankers, what about us and our problems? Without a clear commitment to stop and reverse the cuts you will get no more money from us to fight this election?”.

But McCluskey makes the bureaucrat’s choice, he knows Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls is another bankers’ friend and he wants to slip him the Unite millions quietly and not embarrass him and Miliband by asking for anything in return. How can we forget that “cuts too far, too fast” slogan on the Unite steward’s hi viz vests on March 23rd 2011 half a million demo?

He says, “Bit by bigger bit, the social fabric of our nation is being ripped apart by millionaire ministers with no compassion for or understanding of the lives of ordinary people” as if he was leading the fight against the cuts. The direct opposite is the case, look at our report below on the 12th November 2010 meeting in Leeds.

We urge you to take the same courageous position you took in 2010 and back Jerry Hicks.



The disgraceful Miliband slogan which Len McCluskey had Unite’s stewards sporting on their hi viz vests on the first 500, 000 ‘Grand Old Duke of York’ demo on 26 March 2011.

- a) He is the only credible candidate with any chance of getting over the first hurdle of fifty nominations to allow him to stand. This will be far more difficult than in 2010 as the bureaucracy has used the excuse of branch re-organisation either to eliminate or merge branches and workplaces that gave Jerry his nominations in 2010 but still achievable.
- b) He is a rank-and file candidate openly fighting for those policies you yourselves support, including, amongst others; 1) Democratise the Union, 2) Election of all Union Officials, 3) Officials to be paid no more than the average workers wage.
- c) Openly fighting for the policies you believe in yourselves can only strengthen the ranks of the union against the bureaucracy, a central aim of all progressive militants in the trade unions. We must set the base against the bureaucratic leadership to advance the class struggle.

Standing your own candidate is a far worse choice. He/she will be very unlikely to obtain sufficient nominations.

If you decide to back McCluskey you will deal a major blow to the prospects of sparking a fightback against the austerity programme of the ConDem Coalition from the ranks of all trade unions. You will deal a blow to all militant trade unionists who are engaged in the day to day struggles against the bosses and their apologists and defenders in the TU bureaucracies. You will in addition strike a blow against your own militants and paper sellers and the prospects for building your own intervention in Unite and other unions, of which more later. And lastly you will strengthen the dominance of the right within groups like the Socialist Party and

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the Alliance for Workers Liberty – you must be aware from conversations with the ranks of these organisations that there is tremendous unease to say the least at what amounts to undemocratic imposition of support for McCluskey within these groups. This snap election has forced a crucial decision on you; it is another fork in the road - further right behind McCluskey or left in defence of the working class and union membership and your own organisation in Unite.

Or course you cannot take this decision lightly. You will be conscious that if you take either of the first two options expulsion from the United Left is inevitable. The nature of the expulsion threat over Sadie Robinson's entirely reasonable Socialist Worker article on the British Airways dispute, 'BA workers should reject shoddy deal', in May 2011 should leave no doubt about that. Serious criticism of 'our left-wing General Secretary' is not tolerated within the UL.

But if you are expelled from the UL what then? The GRL is an open and democratic organisation with a genuine commitment to R+F organisation. You are welcome to join without any other preconditions.

We are aware of counter arguments.

1. Expulsion from the UL will result in loss of NC positions and SWP influence in Unite. But,

- We would point out that Jerry Hicks got 52,527 votes on a clear rank and file platform. Holding no official position within the union he beat both Les Bayliss and Gail Cartmel, two full time senior officers with all the advantages of access to branches and assistances from officials this gave them. Jerry had only his R+F platform and record, and the commitment this radical programme drew from Unite activists and many from other unions.
- Leslie Mansell only just failed to get elected to the EC on the same platform – a more determined campaign by our forces alone would have secured those 1,000 odd extra votes; we underestimate the radicalisation of the membership.
- Getting elected on a clear R+F platform is a thousand time more politically significant than getting elected as part of McCluskey's slate, which is all the United Left is in reality.

2. We should ignore this election because McCluskey will face court action when he reaches 65 anyway and that will then result in the real election. Avoiding the class struggle like this by putting faith in the bosses' courts is inexcusable.

We know this is a minority argument but it should be rejected with contempt. It is necessary to use the courts sometimes to defend democratic rights, even within unions; it is never correct to counterpose it to the class struggle at it is emerging right now. Remember the pathetic line of Ken Livingstone in relying on the House of Lords to save the GLC?

3. Apparently McCluskey does not want his re-election campaign to coincide with the General Election in 2015 to avoid embarrassment to the Labour party. But it is here that Unite would have the opportunity to put the maximum pressure on Labour, surely now the next government. But as Jerry Hicks said "I guess this all goes hand in hand/glove with Unites' political 'strategy' of reclaiming Labour, or the 'one way relationship' as would be a better description. Unite in the last 2 years alone has handed over £6 million of its members money to Labour, as well as the £10s of millions over the years".

According to Jerry Hicks it is about time that stopped. He argues that a novel method of 'payment by results' would offer much better value for money for Unite members. He added that in his view Unite should only fund those MP's that support Unite's policies.

4. Then there is the argument that McCluskey has done well and we need more of the same. This is the line of right wingers like the AWL's Jim Denham who sees it all,

"Ensuring the continuity of left progressive leadership in the labour movement's leading organisation" and to "reaffirm its present dynamic, progressive course".



Balls and Miliband: But McCluskey makes the bureaucrat's choice, he knows Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls is another bankers' friend and he wants to slip him the Unite millions quietly and not embarrass him and Miliband by asking for anything in return.

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Abdul Omer Mohsin: Unite never sought to win his case by industrial action, the only way he could have won.

We would focus on **six issues** in particular to point out what is so wrong with McCluskey's leadership. Note the two-tier workforce thread runs through the three industrial examples and Abdul Omer's case too. No doubt the SWP membership could supply many more such examples.

1. This appalling undemocratic manoeuvre:

The Unite bureaucracy is using its apparatus to ensure the re-election with all opponents at the obvious disadvantage of not possessing the resources of the incumbent. As ever the stooge United Left front provide a cover – they met on the 8th following McCluskey's declaration on the 7th with no other possible candidate given the chance to address the meeting – no need for the second placed candidate in the last Gen Sec election Jerry Hicks to walk out this time – he was not even invited. The Socialist Party and the NSSN has decided to support Len McCluskey without giving any other candidate a hearing.

2. The British Airways dispute:

The assessment of the character of the settlement here and what McCluskey had done over the course of the dispute almost led to the SWP getting expelled from the UL. You must be free to restate the correct class struggle position and denounce this rotten sell-out openly.

According to the Socialist Worker May 21 2011 this settlement included, "employing workers on lower pay and worse conditions", the job cuts imposed in November 2009 remaining in place, no guarantee that sacked workers will be reinstated, the promise by Unite not to support any member bringing legal action against BA, the below-inflation pay offer for 2011-12 and 2012-13 too... Allowing scab labour makes the current deal worse than previous ones."

We do not have to go into further details; you know what happened better than we do.

3. The London buses:

For more than two years now the Unite have allowed the London bus companies to impose temporary contracts on all new starters which abandon all the gains won back since the last disaster, the wage cutting and privatisation of 1993-4. They have made no peep of opposition whilst this two tier workforce is imposed and the "race to the bottom" has accelerated, they have organised no meetings to oppose this and pathetically they have tried to keep the drivers from finding out about what is going on.

To avoid a fightback on these vitally important issues Unite organised strike action over a far less important issue; a £500 Olympics payment for all drivers in London which was conceded in the end, though not to all bus workers. The attitude was "f*** the new drivers, look after yourself". We must fight against bureaucracy and for rank and file control of the union. We say to all drivers "don't leave Unite – only by staying in the union can we win it back. If you have left in disgust and joined the IWW or any other union we will form a united front with you to fight against the bosses and Unite's sell-outs".

4. McCluskey championing two-tier workforce in Ellesmere Port:

Duncan Aldred, chairman, Vauxhall Motors welcomed the deal that instituted a two-tier workforce at Ellesmere Port. He hailed the "groundbreaking" levels of flexibility and could require workers to work round the clock to meet production targets if necessary. Wages have been cut by almost half for new starters. Pension and health plans have been abolished. Unite's Len McCluskey was unrepentant:

From a position of uncertainty earlier this year, there is now a potential for a future at the plant until 2020 and beyond. Importantly this move will also bring component supplier plants back into the UK, a development that strengthens our manufacturing base generally.

However, he said he recognised that Ellesmere Port's good news could spell bad news for other GM operations in Europe. But still British jobs for British workers at any cost is his chauvinist anti-internationalist class-collaborationist outlook!

5. McCluskey instructs Labour councillor to set legal budgets:

At a meeting with about fifty of its Councillors, including Council and Labour group leaders, on 12 November 2010 in Leeds, Unite newly elected General Secretary Len McCluskey got his deputy Gail Cartmell to instruct them to carry out all the cuts by setting legal budgets whilst hypocritically protesting. Not one balked at this disgraceful instruction. Not a single Labour councillor voted against the

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cuts imposed in April 2011, despite panic and soul-searching in Lambeth and Hackney. There was no question of setting 'needs budgets' to protect the vulnerable against the cuts. Len McCluskey made his usual anti-cuts speech at this year's TUC but meekly acquiesced to the cuts agenda at the Labour party conference.

6. The appalling treatment meted out to your own member, Abdul Omer Mohsin

The reporting of this by the Weekly Worker in an article written by Gerry Downing, then Secretary of the Grass Roots Left following an interview with Omer, is now the subject of libel litigation by Thompsons Solicitors on behalf of King, undoubtedly sanctioned by McCluskey and perhaps funded by Unite also. We will make no further comment on this until proper legal advice is obtained but you can draw your own conclusions as to why this action should begin now in an article which appeared on 12 Jan 2011.

SWP Crisis from page 6

economic laws of such a regime would present no mysteries. A single capitalist, as is well known, receives in the form of profit, not that part of the surplus value which is directly created by the workers of his own enterprise, but a share of the combined surplus value created throughout the country proportionate to the amount of his own capital. Under an integral "state capitalism", this law of the equal rate of profit would be realized, not by devious routes – that is, competition among different capitals – but immediately and directly through state bookkeeping. Such a regime never existed, however, and, because of profound contradictions among the proprietors themselves, never will exist – the more so since, in its quality of universal repository of capitalist property, the state would be too tempting an object for social revolution... The words of Mussolini: "Three-fourths of Italian economy, industrial and agricultural, is in the hands of the state" (May 26, 1934), are not to be taken literally. The fascist state is not an owner of enterprises, but only an intermediary between their owners. These two things are not identical.

3. On the Party Programme

The Transitional Programme of 1938 was entirely correct for the crisis facing the working class of the world when it was written and the method underlying it is still correct today. Humanity did endure the calamity Trotsky predicted. The TP was not a passive prognosis for the future so some business man would know where and in what commodities to invest his capital. He was writing a revolutionary guide to action for his followers to enable them to recognise the revolutionary potential lodged in the severe economic and political crises and to intervene and lead revolution like the Bolsheviks did in 1917.

Revolutionary situations came aplenty directly after WWII. Had there been enough mature Trotskyist parties and leaders strategically placed in Northern Italy, in Greece, in France or in Vietnam the world revolution would have begun to unfold internationally. But the CIA, other secret police, the Nazis and Stalinist murder machines collaborated in slaughtering them.

Your own correct estimate of the outcome of the BA dispute: "Employing workers on lower pay and worse conditions", the job cuts imposed in November 2009 remaining in place, no guarantee that sacked workers will be reinstated, the promise by Unite not to support any member bringing legal action against BA, the below-inflation pay offer for 2011-12 and 2012-13 too... Allowing scab labour makes the current deal worse than previous ones." And your own comrade described the outcome of the Doncaster Tesco Driver's dispute as 'grabbing defeat from the jaws' of victory' when Unite imposed a settlement on derisory terms when the full claim could have been won in the weeks before the busy Christmas rush.

This is our case for supporting Jerry Hicks on Sunday 16th. We hope you will take these arguments seriously and respond favourable.

Comradely Grass Roots Left National Committee, Dec 2012

It was, of course, wrong of post WWII Trotskyist leaders Cannon/Healy/Mandel et al not to recognise the post-war stabilisation. They failed to reorient with a revised programme based on the same method as the 1938 TP; the Workers United Front and Anti-Imperialist United Front.

These were codified by the early Comintern and further clarified by Trotsky in 1938. This was the un-codified practice of the Bolsheviks from 1905 to 1917; they progressively broke with the min-max orientation of the SPD and continually developing the practice of the united front. Look at how brilliantly the Bolsheviks dealt with Kerensky and Kornilov in 1917 contrasted with the failure of even the best German revolutionary leaders, Luxemburg, Liebknecht and Levi, to deal thus with the counter-revolution led by their former comrades Noske, Scheidemann, Ebert and Kautsky from 1918-23.

Conrad attempts to re-introduce the old discredited maximum/minimum separation of the pre-1914 German SPD and pretends that this was the method used by the Bolsheviks after 1905. There were many post-WWII attempts to fight for this method by the Trotskyist movement. We challenge the best of the SWP fighters to take up this struggle for the Trotskyist Transitional Programme anew and reject the CPGB advice to retain the max-min tailendist reformist approach of the old German SPD. ⁶

Notes

1. The Disputes Committee transcript is here: <http://www.socialistunity.com/swp-conference-transcript-disputes-committee-report/#.UP0fuvKH8fw>
2. Divided class, divided party: the SWP debates women's oppression, by Helen Ward, <http://www.permanentrevolution.net/entry/1435>
3. On the situation in the SWP: No Marxism without feminism, January 19, 2013, <http://socialistresistance.org/4556/on-the-situation-in-the-swp-no-marxism-without-feminism>
4. The two supplements on 10 and 17 January 2013 (issues 944 and 945) are here: <http://www.cpgb.org.uk/home/weekly-worker>
5. History of the SWP here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Socialist_Workers_Party_%28Britain%29
6. Socialist Fight No 9 has a fuller analysis of this aspect of the SWP's politics. It can be found here:

Where are the SWP opposition factions going? Back R+F Jerry Hicks for Gen Sec of Unite!

David Ellis wrote on Dave Osler's blog on Dec 31st, repudiating another post,

"The problem with the organization of a Leninist movement is that it empowers the leadership over the membership. This is where democratic centralism takes you."

Rubbish. Rubbish with nobs on in fact. The scenario you paint is where the abandonment of democratic centralism gets you. Which bit exactly of the democratic centrist formula do you think should be abandoned? If workers democratically vote for a strike should they then be casual about those who go against the vote to break the strike? What use the democratic decision in the first place? You are just some anarchist raving against communism not an opponent of tyranny and bureaucracy at all.

There is no democracy in the sects which means it is not democratic centrism but without the centrism we'd just be a gaggle of liberal anarchists subverting democracy at every stage.

Comrade Dave is absolutely correct. This Democratic Opposition is progressive in one way in that it is opposed to bureaucratic expulsions and demands the right to debate and disagree. But it goes back to the roots of the pre-'Leninist' IS before the 1974–77 turn. At that time the IS was rank-and-file-ist but of the anarchist dual/base union variety. It said, in effect; 'we organise the workers and the TU leaders will organise the running of the union and we won't challenge for leadership positions because all leaders become corrupt as George Orwell's Animal Farm and 1984 explained so well'. The IS was then also anarchist influenced in their organisational methods and politics and anti-Leninist.

The 1977 Leninist turn to the party and DC seemed good but it was not real DC at all but bureaucratic centralism, the same as the versions operated in the SLL/WRP of Gerry Healy and in Ted Grant's Militant. As with these all serious criticism of leadership leads to rapid expulsions. But by relying on above class 'democracy' there is a big danger the DO will go the way of the two previous splits to the right led by John Rees and Chris Banbury. These are now anti-Leninist, anti-democratic centralists discussion groups who give left cover to left bureaucrats who make vacuous speeches from their platform while in practice doing nothing about the cuts and shafting their own membership. The Weekly Worker give the DO uncritical support in the name of anti-Leninist 'extreme democracy'.

Despite the problems of the 1970s some very good work was done on the question of Rank-and-File-ism in the IS, by Pete Glatter and Duncan Hallas in particular, even if it was abandoned after 1977 by Hallas. It build on the excellent, now republished, work done by SLLer Brian Pearce in *Some Past Rank-and-File Movements*, (1959) in the brief period of SLL Rank and File-ism under Gerry Healy after he had won many working class militants from the CPGB in the aftermath of Khrushchev's Secret Speech and the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956.

The article from 1975 *London Busmen: Rise and Fall of a Rank & File Movement*, IS, Jan 1975 by Pete is a remarkable document in that it charts in detail from a Marxist perspective the London



Pete Glatter in the 1970s, a bus driver who theorised the Rank-and-File for the IS.

busworkers struggles in the 1930s in what was the most powerful Rank-and-File movement ever seen in Britain. Whilst the anarchist methods of operating had to be rejected in favour of DC in fact this was used as a cover to impose bureaucratic centralism; the turn was away from the R+F tactic of winning the base and towards capitulating to the 'broad left' TU bureaucracy.

The SWP leadership is torn between the push from a radicalised membership, disgusted at the debacle of Respect, where they were forced to adapt to the Islamists around the Muslim Association Of Britain (MAB), abandoning women's right to choose (also Galloway's reactionary position) and keeping its positions on the Unite Exec.

Members are not really satisfied with the scapegoating of Rees and German; they acted on behalf of the whole CC.

But all this opposition is for nothing if the big question of practical politics facing the SWP Conference is ignored. After the Unite faction deferred the decision to the CC on whether to back Jerry Hicks against Len McCluskey for Unite General Secretary the CC also failed to take a decision so the Conference has to decide. It is good that, unlike the SP who never bothered to consult their members, the SWP has a real debate on this. The GRL's *Open Letter* details these arguments.

But the big political questions of the hour are the ones that really matter and both the DO and the Democratic Centralist faction are silent on these. Can Imperialism really sponsor revolutions in Libya and Syria for the greater good of the semi-colonial masses, let alone the world revolution? With Hicks or McCluskey – with the Rank-and-File or the left bureaucrat? In what ways are the wars on Libya and Syria and the R+F tactic connected? Marx's aristocracy of labour and the booty of Empire? These are crucial questions for all revolutionaries.

Book Review: Gregor Gall, *Tommy Sheridan – From Hero to Zero?*

Welsh Academic Press, 376 pps, £25,

By Charlie Cook

*Then it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' Tommy, 'ow's yer soul?
But it's 'Thin red line of 'eroes' when the drums begin to roll ...*

*An' if sometimes our conduct isn't all your fancy paints,
Why, single men in barricks don't grow into plaster saints;*

Rudyard Kipling, *Barrack Room Ballads*

If ever 'a little local difficulty' on the left spun out of control, it was the Tommy Sheridan affair. Insiders had spotted signs of trouble back in 2001; Operation Rubicon ¹ suggests it'll rumble for a while yet. Debate on it typically resembles a football supporters blog without the wit, leaving many observers poorly informed.

Gregor Gall is Professor of Industrial Relations at Hertfordshire University and a recognised commentator on Scottish affairs: it is reasonable to expect his book to offer competent analysis. Sadly, it doesn't. Though it impressed some in the chattering classes, it recycles the self-serving and partisan Good vs. Evil theme already peddled by comrades. ²

Love 'em or loathe 'em, all accept that Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) members brought a touch of colour to Scottish politics by defeating Thatcher over the poll tax, standing up for little people and campaigning for MSPs to bring what many hoped would be humanity to Holyrood. ³

But, the theme runs, all was lost That Night in 2004 when *The News of the World* broke its Sheridan sex sleaze story. The yarn had everything: a tanned, caddish lothario, southern swingers clubs, crowd-in-a-bed-romps, a sultry screw-and-tell scribe, nobbled witnesses and Wronged Women. ⁴

More serious were later claims that Sheridan had had an affair with SSP member Fiona McGuire, a former call-girl with drug-abuse problems who'd attempted suicide as a result of stress associated with the revelations. ⁵ Sheridan insisted he'd never met her. Shortly after, apparently in an effort to prevent the paper from hounding McGuire, SSP organiser Duncan Rowan told it of an affair between Sheridan and another SSP member, Katrine Trolle. Breaching confidence, the paper ran the story.

Aghast, SSP tops summoned Tommy (it's always 'Tommy') to the Executive Committee. ⁶ An electrically-charged meeting heard him confess not all but enough. Discussion followed, Sheridan left; given time to reflect, it was clear the swine was determined to sue. The 'fess story quickly leaked to the press and was duly published; the EC immediately (events forced our hand . . .) announced that yesterday's hero had been 'taken of his buttons' – he'd quit as convenor.



Tommy Sheridan and his wife Gail on his conviction at the perjury trial.

Predictably, the SSP split. Former colleagues, oh so-o-o-o reluctantly but the law's the law you know, flocked to tell The Truth at two trials. The first (2006) heard Sheridan's libel action against News Group Newspapers with current and former SSP members appearing for Murdoch. The second (2010) tried Sheridan for perjury with much the same people saying much the same things for the Crown.

Both trials saw showboating from both sides, starting with former Sheridan china Alan McCombes in melodramatic 'I'm Spartacus' moments at the libel trial. He refused to hand the court the minutes of the key committee meeting; the court handed him twelve days for contempt and the promise of more. Happily for all, the 'secret' minutes were leaked to the press; a face-saving retreat followed. The court then heard SSP members sing in unison of how they loved The Truth, how Sheridan was A Liar and how *The News of the World* was spot on.

After Sheridan (justifiably) sacked his brief, few gave him a prayer but the jury found for him seven to four regardless.⁷ The beak awarded him £200K and, nobody's fool, suggested that people had lied.

He had a point. Anyone assuming that witnesses the jury had not believed would be scrutinised first had forgotten that Murdoch was at his zenith and that the SSP, though theoretically impoverished, was ambitious and media-savvy.

The briefs had barely hung up their gowns when Barbara Scott, at the time parliamentary assistant to two SSP MSPs, summoned a press pack for escort and two MSPs for company and power dressed round to the rozzers to present The Evidence. ⁸ As a trial report later noted:

. . . three or so days after Tommy Sheridan's victory in the libel trial, Scott] took the original notes to Fettes Police station in Edinburgh and told the police she had evidence that a crime, i.e. perjury, had been committed by Mr Sheridan. She did this, she claims, to 'clear her name' and, when asked, confirmed that she was accompanied to the police station by then



Andy Coulson was detained by police investigating allegations of perjury at Tommy Sheridan's trial.

MSPs Carolyn Leckie and Rosie Kane.⁹

The probe took two years: McPlod spent an impressive 52,000 hours turning Tommygate over good and proper no expense spared, News International lodged an appeal and paid potential witnesses aplenty amid rumours of the Digger lobbying to ensure No Slacking.

In December 2007, Sheridan was charged with one offence of suborning and nineteen of perjury.¹⁰ His wife, Gail, faced seven perjury charges. The trial began in October 2010.

- Eleven SSP EC members testified that Sheridan had 'confessed' at the EC as minuted but four insisted that no confession had been made. The jury had to decide who to believe.
- The prosecution made much of a 38-minute¹¹ video dated 2004 of Sheridan confessing all to former buddie George McNeilage who had apparently recorded him out of indignation at his conduct. In 2006, McNeilage sold the video to *News of the World* Scottish boss Bob Bird in a Keystone Cops escapade for, it is said, £200,000. Oddly, the tape did not show Sheridan's face.
- Sex researcher Anvar Khan admitted that she'd lied exotically about her affair with Sheridan to boost sales of her book.¹²
- Sheridan hauled in former Wapping suit Andy Coulson, who insisted that *News of the World* staff had not misbehaved.

At a late stage, the prosecution dropped most charges, including those relating to group hanky-panky at a Glasgow hotel; Gail was acquitted altogether and Sheridan of suborning. The jury eventually cleared him of lying about Anvar Khan but convicted him eight votes to six¹³ on five other charges. He was sent down for three years.

The News of the World noted that 'Today's sentence also provides closure for the many witnesses who very bravely exposed their own lives to public scrutiny when they testified to Mr Sheridan's guilt'.

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Gall's account

Gall's is the second book on the affair by an SSP member. The first, *Downfall* by Alan McCombes, is perhaps the most partisan, badly-written polemic I've ever read. Much Greg Kettle, part William McGonagall and all Good vs. Evil, the language is so frenzied, the account so distorted that adjectives travel in pairs for safety; some points are shameful.¹⁴ The author seems profoundly disoriented politically.

Though Gall's account argues essentially the same line in a similar tone, it is slightly more measured and, with over 1100 footnotes, has the appearance of scholarship. (Most cite sources but many recount tedious intra-left gossip, much of it snide.) Less impressive are its scant index – more anon – and poor editing. The text says '(see later)' time and again, suggesting it went to press before cross references were entered. At twenty-five quid a pop, that's shabby.

The first five chapters are a fair account of Sheridan's rise, The Poll Tax Years, the formation of the SSP and The First Holyrood Tour. Gall explains that they were drafted during the good times in anticipation of a hagiographic biography.

They were, therefore, drafted before That Night. It is the account of what happened after That Night that is misleading. Space prevents one challenging every point but some must be examined.

The Case of the Fraught Executive

Gall's outline of the November 2004 executive meeting accords with others but adds that:

As normal, this SSP EC meeting was minuted as per the SSP's constitution of the party with no requests at the meeting from anyone (including Tommy) for this rule to be set aside.

It was indeed minuted (though the minute's competence was disputed) but the 'as normal' bit may not be so true. A former SSP member told me that it was not EC practice to minute *discussions*:

The norm was for the minutes to provide scant details about what comrades said or proposed, noting only the decisions taken and who spoke. It meant you could not hold people to account politically.

It also explains the outrage that a meeting that was effectively a disciplinary hearing to sack the leader was minuted at all, let alone in such detail, that the minutes, despite being hotly disputed by participants with contrary recollections, were distributed widely and leaked to the press.

McCombes seems to support this claim when he writes that '[Scott] was not an elected member of the executive but at-

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tended the meeting specifically for the purpose of recording the minutes’ .¹⁵

What cannot be disputed is that the meeting was ‘a disciplinary hearing to sack the leader’ – participants even voted on how to announce his resignation. Within hours, Sheridan had gone.

Every left-leaning political group has disciplinary procedures which, by tradition, provide for hearings conducted by members not on leadership bodies, written charges and due notice. Duplicity and purges are, of course, equally part of left tradition but some norms are generally observed.

It is *not* normal practice to remove long-standing leaders by leaking salacious gossip to media wolves to arm-twist ‘resignations’. That many were angry with Sheridan or that he may have merited dismissal is irrelevant. Any reasonable observer reading accounts of the meeting can conclude only that the ‘confession’ was obtained under duress. Proper procedure never came into it.

It is tempting to ask if the minutes were not taken in factional spirit for purposes (later served) other than routinely reporting to members.¹⁶ The decision to record the discussion was foolish at best. Rights only matter when those who need to exercise them are prevented from doing so. It is odd that a professor of industrial relations writing eight years later *still* finds nothing amiss in a biography preoccupied with his subject’s morals and other people’s rights.

The Mystery of the Missing McGuire

The most serious allegation made That Night was that Sheridan had, in his affair with Fiona McGuire, exploited a vulnerable woman and driven her to attempt suicide. McCombes spreads his telling over several lurid pages but Gall barely mentions it. It matters because the story had been discredited. The jury decided that Sheridan had committed perjury in other evidence but it’s hard to discover from Gall’s book that the McGuire story was not even mentioned in the indictment. On the substantive issue of a *coercive* relationship, *The News of the World* had libelled Sheridan.

The Secretary Who Disappeared

However one judges Barbara Scott’s trip to Edinburgh’s finest, her role demands consideration in any serious account – there might have been no trial without it. I can find no mention of it in Gall’s book beyond the cryptic line: ‘a member of the public made a complaint of perjury on 5 August 2006’ even though the ‘member of the public’ was Ms Scott.¹⁷



Alan McCombes’s elaborate chokey drama had actually been a sham. The story, pertinent to any objective account of the trial, is not mentioned.

The Curious Affair of the Coy Affidavit

A key moment in the perjury trial was when Ms Kane was asked about a story that appeared in the Scottish *Sunday Herald* in May 2006 and if she had any knowledge of who the ‘senior SSP official’ was who had signed an affidavit laying the basis of that story. She said she had not known at the time but had found out ‘in the last two weeks’. On further questioning, she revealed the official in question was Alan McCombes.¹⁸

In short, McCombes gave a sworn statement to a notorious hack three months *before* the libel trial; it didn’t spill the ‘confession’ but did say that the SSP would publish ‘as it chose’ unless Sheridan quit as convenor. Outsiders knew the outcome sought by leading members; the SSP rank-and-file didn’t. McCombes’s elaborate chokey drama had actually been a sham. The story, pertinent to any objective account of the trial, is not mentioned.

Some of Our Entries Are Missing

To return to shoddy indexing, it is frustrating that, though there are entries for peripheral figures such as Neil Kinnock, there are none for key players Fiona McGuire, Barbara Scott and Katrina Trolle. Omitting one name might be unfortunate, omitting two might just be careless but omitting three (and examining their owners’ roles perfunctorily) is a striking coincidence. Has Gall clumsily air-brushed events that clash with his ‘message’? Whatever, the record is distorted to the advantage of his party.

On Psychic Authors and Mawkish Juries

As noted, the prosecution dropped several charges. In a passage of magnificent nonsense, Gall argues that they had only ever been included as a negotiating ploy and that dropping them didn’t mean that Sheridan was innocent, only that the briefs lacked proof.¹⁹ On the contrary, the trial summary suggests that the pertinent evidence didn’t withstand cross-examination.

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Later, noting that the verdict was eight-to-six rather than unanimous,²⁰ he suggests that some jurors were minded to acquit not because they didn't believe the evidence but out of political sympathy for the accused. He says the same of the libel jury.²¹ Both claims are mischievous and improper speculation.

The Professor Who Misunderstood

Though they are no secret on the left, the book offers no analysis of the political and social divisions that were the ultimate cause of the SSP's implosion. Gall also seems unable to grasp that many, whatever they think of Sheridan, were appalled by SSP succour for News International.

Politicians with more libido than sense and more hubris than insight are commonplace. Parties of the left typically look to leadership committees, not nod-and-wink deals with press barons, to deal with personality issues. They rarely handle them well but few, if any, ever get into the mess the SSP did. It was pitifully out of its depth.

Gall's core argument that Sheridan was the sole author of his downfall as justice took its course is disingenuous.²² Suing *The News of the World* was indeed a serious misjudgement but SSP member Duncan Rowan gave the paper the Katrina Trolle story, the SSP EC secured its 'confession' by unsavoury means, an unknown SSP member leaked it to the press and a known SSP leader handed it to the court. SSP member George McNeilage made and sold the entrapment tape, SSP member Alan McCombes gave *The Herald* his secret affidavit and SSP member Barbara Scott went to the police. Over twenty SSP members testified for Digger and Crown alike.²³

In short, though many sought the conviction, SSP members secured it. They didn't have to, they chose to. The pertinent question is why. With Diggerati now facing their own trials, the story needs to be told properly.

Gall doesn't even begin.

Notes

1 A police probe into claims that News International's Andy Coulson, Bob Bird and Douglas Wight lied at Sheridan's trial. The three have since been charged.

2 Galls tells readers on page 342 that he is a member of the SSP.

3 The poll tax campaign had been led by members of the Militant tendency; the SSP was a later amalgam of disparate Trotskyist and social issue groups with ex-Militant members in prominent roles.

4 The story broke in *The News of the World* on 31 October 2004. Sheridan's former companion Anvar Khan wrote *Pretty Wild: The Most Honest Diary About Men, Women and Sex You'll Ever Read*. On 28 January 2011, *The Sun* alleged that 'Tommy Sheridan's lust-fuelled night at seedy Cupids swingers' club included a NINE-IN-A-BED orgy . . .'. Many women were

indeed abused during the events but opinions differ as to who abused whom.

5 When McGuire testified at the libel trial, the story included cocaine-fuelled, five-in-a-bed orgies. Long after it had been discredited, it emerged that the paper, which paid McGuire over £20,000, had also hacked her phone.

6 9 November 2004.

7 Scottish civil juries have 12 members, criminal juries 15. Both allow for majority verdicts.

8 Sadly, a video of the stunt has disappeared from YouTube.

9 <http://sheridantrial.blogspot.co.uk/2010/10/day-one-afternoon.html>
The blog's daily summaries of the trial are universally accepted as a reliable record.

10 Suborning: inducing a witness to commit perjury.

11 Eighteen minutes had been deleted, reportedly on privacy grounds.

12 *The Guardian*, 29 October 2010.

13 One juror had been discharged.

14 McCombes argues that Sheridan's supporters were 'as susceptible to manipulation by a demagogic orator as the crowd at a Nuremburg rally' (p 123) and that studying Sheridan had given him insight into 'the psychology of tyranny' (p 219), drawing parallels with Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin. That said, some loved the book. *The Sunday Herald's* Tom Gordon blogged: 'Although written by a modest man, the book has a savage turn of phrase and a wonderful repertoire of metaphors'. Indeed it does. For more perceptive analysis, see Ian Bell, *The Scottish Review of Books*, 7.3.

15 *Downfall*, p 136. Confusingly, he later claims that EC discussions were always minuted without saying who by. (He then describes an IRA Army Council secret cache of – minutes. It's that sort of book.)

16 Alan Taylor noted in *The Scottish Review of Books* (7.1) that 'Not the least of Tommy Sheridan's difficulties was trying to explain to the jury in polite language how vicious and conspiratorial left-wing politics are. Most of us, when told that eleven people swear blind that someone said something in a meeting, would believe that they were telling the truth'.

17 Page 209 and footnote. Former Conservative MSP Brian Monteith also raised the issue with police. Ironically, Monteith's own expulsion from Holyrood's Tory group (for briefing the press against his party leader) followed accepted procedure.

18 http://sheridantrial.blogspot.co.uk/2010/10/day-8-morning-session_18.html

19 Page 225, notes 136, 137. Gall does not comment on the judge's decision to acquit Sheridan's of suborning. Happily, the rants of minor academics are unlikely to undermine the presumption of innocence.

20 A hung jury (seven votes to seven) would have meant acquittal.

21 Pages 183 and 226 ff.

22 As William MacDougall commented on the libel trial in *State of Nature*, 'Any seasoned media-watcher would see that the whole thing was quite obviously an elaborate tabloid stitch-up . . . but for the fact that witnesses for News International's defence also included members of Sheridan's own political party'.

23 Once charges were dropped, the minutes and the tape became, as a prosecutor said of the tape, the 'solid foundation' of its case.

Mali: Defeat French Imperialist Invasion

LCFI statement on Mali, 21 January 2013

French Imperialism has invaded Mali (2,000+ troops by 19 January, bombardments by French war planes) with British air assistance as part of the modern day ‘Scramble for Africa’. Following their successful assault on Libya a division of labour has apparently been agreed in what is a pre-planned long term strategy. France will invade and assist its proxy rulers in this region, having previously dealt with the Cote d’Ivoire in line with its Francafrique strategy.¹ Britain will in turn expect assistance from France; Somalia is next in line. This is all under the overarching leadership of the US who are preoccupied with their geopolitical wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as they surround China and prepare for WWII to deal with their rivals. And Israel, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey are on hand to deal with Syria and Turkey.

The Berlin Conference (1884–85) unleashed the first colonial Scramble for Africa and with much the same aims as today’s wars – to secure raw materials and markets and to prevent their rivals gaining them. At that conference it was agreed that the land had to be actually occupied to gain international recognition, hence the scramble. It is hard to see such an agreement today and even if it comes it will not prevent the inevitable war with between rival powers. Today Western Imperialism is led by the US with Britain and France as their main allies and they are faced by Russia but more importantly China (though Russian nuclear capability is bigger and more advanced in many ways) who are expanding their influence here as elsewhere in the Western hemisphere. Obama’s urgent warning to Cameron not to withdraw from the EC is motivated by the fear of an EU break up when Germany and its closest allies would be very tempted to abandon the euro and look east to Russia and China leaving Spain and Italy facing ever tougher dilemmas about which rival camp to join.

An article in the Online Asian Times, *Burn, burn - Africa’s Afghanistan* Pepe Escobar tells us:

Mali borders Algeria, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Senegal, the Ivory Coast and Guinea. The spectacular Inner Niger delta is in central Mali - just south of the Sahara. Mali overflows with gold, uranium, bauxite, iron, manganese, tin and copper. And - Pipelineistan beckons! - there’s plenty of unexplored oil in northern Mali.”²

It is clear that an intervention is not only in Mali, but it acquires the character of a regional war involving Mali, Algeria, Libya and all countries of the region. Here gold is one of the most important mineral extracted. And it is extracted in the most primitive manner using child labour. Human Rights Watch produced a report on 6 December 2011: MALI Child labor in Gold exploitation, Hazardous



Work, Mercury Poisoning, and Disease. It reveals that:

child labour in artisanal gold mining is common in many countries worldwide, particularly within West Africa’s gold belt, which spans Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal. Mali is Africa’s third largest gold producer... children as young as six dig mining shafts, work underground, pull up heavy weights of ore, and carry, crush, and pan ore. Many children also work with mercury, a toxic substance, to separate the gold from the ore. Mercury attacks the central nervous system and is particularly harmful to children... Figures obtained by Human Rights Watch from the Malian Ministry of Mines put the amount of artisanally mined gold exported per year at around four metric tons, worth around US \$218 million at November 2011 prices. Most of this gold is exported to Switzerland and the United Arab Emirates, Dubai in particular.

And a comment by on Pepe’s article by Te Pu Win, Toronto, sets it all in its proper context of inter-Imperialist rivalries:

... China is the biggest trading partner to Africa now and has about 200 companies invested in Mali. This mess puts China in a pickle too and how China’s leaders handles this situation will be crucial to her immense sourcing needs in Africa. With increasing complexity in conflicts, China is adding capacity for rapid-response teams in case of dangers to expatriate Chinese workers in faraway lands. Their Y-20 super transport plane is not ready yet as it can transport 99 tanks. Her carriers are not ready yet also.

Most of the ethnic/religious conflict in this part of Africa has deep historical roots - from the Arab invasion in the 13th century. This is now exacerbated by neo-colonialism/racism and the so called “United” Nations Security Council, a racist imperialist entity which due to its military (nuclear) superiority can intervene with impunity anywhere it deems its interest are “threatened”.

Pepe explains the forces on the ground in Mali and how they got there:

It all started with a military coup in March 2012... The coup leader was one Captain Amadou Haya Sanogo, who happened to have been very cosy with the Pentagon. Essentially, Sanogo was also groomed by AFRICOM, under a regional scheme mixing the State Department’s Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership program and the Pen-

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tagon's Operation Enduring Freedom. It goes without saying that in all this "freedom" business Mali has been the proverbial "steady ally" - as in counterterrorism partner - fighting (at least in theory) al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)... Over the last few years, Washington's game has elevated flip-flopping to high art. Special Forces were very active side by side with the Tuaregs and the Algerians during George Bush's presidency. During the first Obama administration they

started backing the Mali government against the Tuareg. Muammar Gaddafi always supported the Tuaregs' independence drive; since the 1960s the NMLA agenda has been to liberate Azawad (North Mali) from the central government in Bamako. After the March 2012 coup, the NMLA seemed to be on top. They planted their own flag on quite a few government buildings, and on April 5 announced the creation of a new, independent Tuareg country. The "international community" spurned them, only for a few months later to have the NMLA for all practical purposes marginalized, even in their own region, by three other - Islamist - groups; Ansar ed-Dine ("Defenders of the Faith"); the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO); and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

Western Imperialism is now faced with the consequences of backing the Islamists in Libya; their former war allies are now their foes in Mali. Their victory in the overthrow of Gaddafi struck a big blow against Chinese and Russian investments and ambitions in Libya and they are hoping for further success in Syria. The obvious greed and corruption of the looters of the Free Syrian Army has resulted in the growing influence of Al Qaeda in the Syrian opposition. In Mali Western Imperialism fears China will move in with offers of infra-structure and schools and hospitals. This strategy has paid off well for them elsewhere in Africa and contrasts with the totally parasitic exploitation of Western Imperialism. Of course Chinese/Russian capitalists are just as brutal when called upon to put down the working class as we have seen in the involvement in South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia etc.

In the West the mass media has focussed on the Islamists imposition of Sharia law in the areas it has captured. These reports may be suspect but we do not seek to deny the reactionary character of the Al Qaida forces, their brutally backward oppression of women and gays



Areas of significant Tuareg population. Part of the region where child labour is used in artisanal gold mining.

and lesbians and their willingness to sell out to Imperialism whenever the opportunity affords. Their strategy is to manoeuvre between rival imperialist blocs in order to advance the privileges of their own elites. The 'revolutionary mullahs' of Iran are now multi-billionaires oppressing the masses in Iran in alliance with Imperialism wherever possible. They are truly reactionary anti-Imperialists. But when they are at war with the forces of

Imperialism we must support them in that fight. We can never hide the reality of their reactionary backwardness – the photograph of the two teenage boys hanged in Iran for being gay has done more to assist Imperialist propaganda than anything Obama, Cameron or Holland might say – but we know that sub-Saharan Africa, like the rest of the semi-colonial world is starving or semi-starving because Imperialism, Finance capitalism in alliance with the global multi-nationals, is sucking the life blood out of the 'Dark Continent'.

And Pepe spells out the actual preparations for the war:

As early as February 2008, Vice Admiral Robert T Moeller was saying that AFRICOM's mission was to protect "the free flow of natural resources from Africa to the global market"; yes, he did make the crucial connection to China, pronounced guilty of "challenging US interests". AFRICOM's spy planes have been "observing" Mali, Mauritania and the Sahara for months, in theory looking for AQIM fighters; the whole thing is overseen by US Special Forces, part of the classified, code-named Creek Sand operation, based in next-door Burkina Faso. Forget about spotting any Americans; these are - what else - contractors who do not wear military uniforms. In practice, it's Western militarization (with Washington "leading from behind") versus the ongoing Chinese seduction/investment drive in Africa. In Mali, the ideal Washington scenario would be a Sudan remix; just like the recent partition of North and South Sudan, which created an extra logistical headache for Beijing, why not a partition of Mali to better exploit its natural wealth? By the way, Mali was known as Western Sudan until independence in 1960. In the Activist Post blog we are informed:

Meanwhile in the Democratic Republic of the Congo M23 rebels are preparing to march to the capital and overthrow the government. UN reports confirm the Washington is

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supporting the rebels. In December 2012, influential insider on Africa Dr J Peter Pham published a paper, "To Save Congo, Let It Fall Apart." He argues that Congo is an "artificial entity" that is "too big to succeed," and therefore, the policy direction taken by the US should be one of promoting balkanization:

What Pham is suggesting is policy to bring out the collapse of the Congolese nation by creating tiny ethno-nationalist entities too small to stand up to multinational corporations. The success of M23 must surely have shaken President Kabila, whose father came to power with the backing of the Ugandan and Rwandan regimes in 1996, employing the same strategies that M23 is using today.

Kambale Musavuli, of the Washington DC-based NGO, Friends of Congo, has it right says:

People need to be clear who we are fighting in the Congo... We are fighting Western powers, the United States and the United Kingdom, who are arming, training and equipping the Rwandan and Ugandan militaries. ³

How has the rest of the left reacted to the invasion? All have condemned it (no 'proxy' rebels here) but their conclusions are weak and soft on their own ruling class.

The metropolitan working class will never break its own chains and come to the assistance of the global South if they are not able to break from their allegiance with their own ruling class in its foreign wars of Intervention. And that takes a conscious Marxist use of the Anti-Imperialist United Front, no political support to reactionary anti-Imperialism against its own working class and poor, but a united front against Imperialist attacks and their local stooges everywhere.

On January 16, in the website of the French New Anti-Capitalist Party 2013 Paul Martial finished with these thoughts below an ironic sub-head '*Stay internationalist*':

Our position is in conflict with an almost the entire nation. Some may have to be overtaken by legitimate emotion against the barbarism of the jihadists and the suffering of the population, but now things have become clearer, it is clear that the war will be long, expensive and hard. France is the source of the problems but may not be the solution. Indeed since the independence of African States France has not ceased to support the worst dictatorships, the worst massacres, the worst wars, was involved in the Rwanda genocide and is certainly not the best placed to defend the rights of the peoples in Africa. We can only denounce the



Françafrique, its support for dictators, the fact that Holland receives Bongo, Deby, Compaore, the fact that she has not delivered a single protest against the violence of the forces of repression in Togo against the demonstrators. We reaffirm our solidarity with *the progressive African and Malian forces who oppose the French intervention.*

So no question of an Anti-Imperialist United Front against the French invasion, we support only leftist, progressive forces and you can bomb the hell out of the reactionaries and if you thereby seize the nation and its resources we really could not object because they are *such* reactionaries.

The Socialist Workers Party of Algeria (PST, Algerian section of the Fourth International) on January 17, 2013 issued a similar statement avoiding this crucial point. It ends up with what we might call a liberal democratic series of demands which cannot be called revolutionary by any stretch of the imagination

Solidarity with the Malian people and the refugees!, For a political solution guaranteeing democratic rights and development to all the components of the Malian people!

And that is the position too of the CoReP and most other French and global groups who call themselves leftists and Trotskyists. We say:

- Defeat the French Invasions of Mali
- For an Anti-Imperialist United Front with *all* forces fighting the invasion!
- Imperialism out of Afghanistan, Iraq and the Middle East and Africa.

Notes

¹ The term "Françafrique" seems to have been used for the first time in a positive sense, in 1955, by President Félix Houphouët-Boigny of Côte d'Ivoire, who advocated maintaining a close relationship with France, while acceding to independence. François-Xavier Verschave and the association Survie, of which he was president until his death in 2005, reused the expression of Houphouët-Boigny in order to name and denounce all the concealed bonds between France and Africa. He later defined Françafrique as "the secret criminality in the upper echelons of French politics and economy, where a kind of underground Republic is hidden from view"

² Online Asia Times 19 January <http://nakedempire2.blogspot.co.uk/2013/01/pepe-escobar-burn-burn-africas.html>

³ Activist Post, <http://www.activistpost.com/2013/01/congos-m23-conflict-rebellion-or.html>

Sri Lanka: Petty Bourgeois Politics of the JVP

By Sirimal Peiris in Sri Lanka

The time is opportune to analyze the mistakes committed by the JVP¹ both intentionally and inadvertently. This environment opens excellent avenues to muster action to develop socialism in Sri Lanka. The fact that political situation which prevailed in both international and local settings during the 1960 decade influenced the emergence of JVP cannot be overlooked.

The coalition of two traditional leftist parties i.e. Sama Samaja Party and Communist Party with Sri Lanka Freedom Party frustrated many a leftist.² The collapse of the leftist front that was established immediately following the setting up of the coalition and the betrayal of 21 demands of the Trade Unions destroyed the confidence placed in the traditional parties. A new approach seemed the need of the hour, especially for the youth.

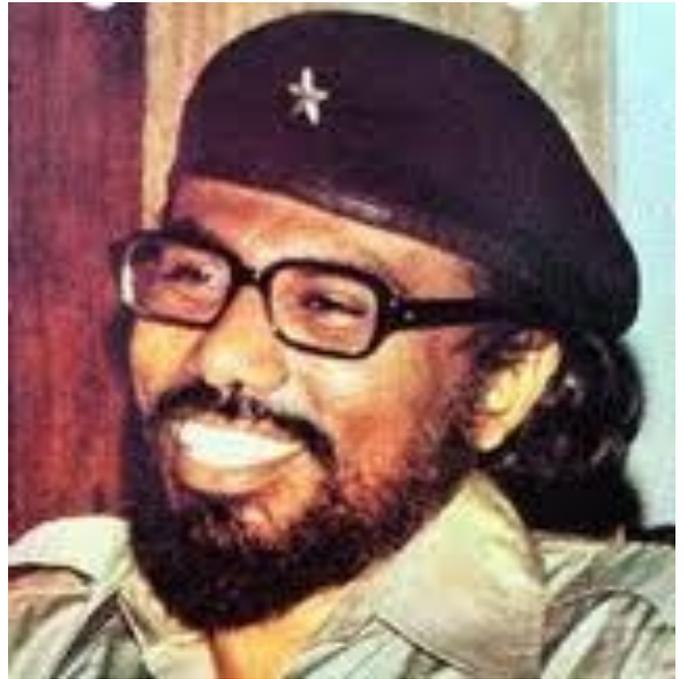
The international political setting provided a base for these youth who were in search of a new leftist movement. The political environment that resulted following the division of communism into Russian and Chinese camps, especially the Chinese Communist Party inspired these youths. The majority of these youths lacked capacity to analyse the Sino-Russian division. However, the Chinese slogans and Cultural Revolution attracted these youths.

The key character observed during this period was that many political factions who gave up their theories internationally and nationally were involved with national capitalist class and parties based on anti-imperialist slogans used by national capitalist class of respective countries having disregarded the needs of agricultural and labour sectors. Herein, the traditional leftist political parties too followed the same path.

The influence of the Chinese communist slogans and obvious decline of Sri Lanka Sama Samaja Party and Sri Lanka Communist Party were the significant factors that inspired the formation of JVP. In a political environment of this nature, JVP popularized a new political vision and a short cut to revolution among sectors of the population frustrated about the Sri Lankan left and with a poor understanding of Marxism.

They managed to bring together a group of radicals who identified themselves as revolutionists who limited their philosophy to five sessions (or lessons) of ideology while rejecting the social revolution that stemmed from basic Marxist values and norms using Maoist slogans as Marxism.

Although the transfer of the forces of production from the capitalist class to working class is a key necessity under Marxist revolution, there was no mention or emphasis about this in the aforesaid five sessions delivered by JVP. According to Marxism, social establishments need to be built through the leadership of the working class; the JVP did not present any analysis about this either. There was a



Patabendi Don Nandasiri Wijeweera (1943 – 1989) founding leader of the JVP. Wijeweera during the two major uprisings in Sri Lanka, 1971 and 1987-89.

plethora of anti-Marxist paths of action embodied in the contents of the five sessions.³

Strikes which stimulate the conscious of the working class which nurtures political will were rebuffed by JVP completely. As well, having plantation workers tagged as Indian spies, their preaching focused on attracting the attention of the majority Sinhalese diverted towards the party and to win the support of various racist groups in an indirect manner. Further, they started to suppress other emerging sectors against coalition government by sheer political brutality everywhere possible.

The charisma and agility of JVP managed to win the hearts of rural youth in the sixties. Especially, a multitude of youth who believed in gaining power at short-term rallied round the JVP. It managed to make believe the idea that attacking police stations enabled seizing power among its followers and motivated them for fighting. Whether it is possible to acquire power by attacking police stations too is a separate issue, but even if some group managed to achieve that target, it may not be possible to install an equitable society. The JVP failed to understand that such an approach would be a rebellion staged by a petty bourgeois but not a social revolution. According to Marxism, even if such a petty bourgeois managed to seize power, the cannot be continued in that way. Such factions must side either with the capitalist class or with the working class. Thus time and again the JVP demonstrated the inability of petty bourgeois to continue struggle independently.

Petty Bourgeois Politics of the JVP

Mrs. Bandaranayake, when Prime Minister, was once challenged to throw a stone at a police station. ⁴ However, it has to be noted here that the JVP managed to attack 94 police stations in 1971 and had some stations under their control. Once the rebellion started and was in progress, it could not be maintained. Unavailability of the support of Sri Lankan working class in particular and the community in general brought about this situation. Many JVPers realized through experience that the disregard about the social base and belief on their members alone cannot fuel a revolution.

Irrespective of the JVP leadership, expectation of the followers that there will be assistance from countries like North Korea, Cuba, China etc., also nullified. All countries professed to be socialist came forward to protect the capitalist leader Sirimao Bandatranayake together with western countries without any shame. Not only China and Russia, even Cuba came rushing to save the capitalist leader. The imprisonment of Shanmugadasan of Chinese Communist Party and Vasudeva Nanaykkara of Sama-samaja Party was not an issue for them.

The suppression of rebellion in 1971 brings the suppression of Wellassa rebellion to one's memory. Bodies floating in rivers or dumped on roads was a common sight. Finest example of the suppression that existed was the murder of Kataragama Beauty Queen, Premawathie Manamperi. The role played by the Sama Samaja Party and Communist Party behind this suppression stunned the working class and the oppressed. This was a key factor that shattered the people's devotion to both Sama Samaja Party and Communist Party.

Under these circumstances JVP failed to face the suppression and continue their uprising for a long time – five weeks. For this very reason, their attempt to retreat to Sinharaja forest reserve too collapsed. Several legal measures were taken up against the captives. A special judicial court was set up chaired by the Commissioners and trials commenced against the captives.

Contradictions about its theories became more conspicuous when the main rebels separated into factions. Wijeweera and the majority held the stance that the rebellion was a plot by Loku Athula whereas Loku Athula betrayed JVP totally. At the end of the trial, Podi Athula mentioned that there was no alternative path of action other than doing whatever possible with the government of Sirima Bandaranaike.

With the change of government in 1977 and J R ascending to power, all political prisoners of the JVP were freed. Thereafter, some liveliness was visible in the JVP and the doors was open for self-criticism. Although some ideology emerged within this self-criticism about the need for working class leadership, international base and central-



Sri Lankan youth supporters of the JVP who participated in the uprising of 1971 under arrest.

ized democracy that could prevail in the party; the JVP did not attempt to make any structural changes. Therefore, the JVP returned its former mode of operation. The JVP did not extend any active support for the general strike in 1980. The JVP which rejected the election system, accepted the District Committee system which was rejected by all other parties.

As regards the racial issue, the JVP took a standpoint that promoted Sinhalese racism. They exerted a concerted effort to rebuild the party on Sinhalese racism. Amidst these, the 1983 racial riots flared up and J R Jayawardena proscribed JVP along with Nava Sama Samaja Party and Communist Party. Later, both Nava Sama Samaja Party and Communist Party managed to get the proscription lifted and the JVP went underground. They staged an armed revolt again as an alternative for suppression by the government. JVP managed to continue the revolt for a longer period (1987 – 1989) on this occasion but the party could not counteract against the suppression unleashed by the government. The suppression was so virulent and all the leaders were killed.

Following the strong repression the JVP managed to regroup. Herein, youth groups took the leadership. These groups were anti-capitalist to a certain extent but lacked a clear approach to overthrow the capitalist class. Especially, grave Sinhalese racism was applied to win non-progressive Sinhalese factions instead of reaching out to the Tamil youth. Although JVP was subjected to violent oppression by the SLFP government in 1971 and UNP government in 1988, there was no indication of any lessons learnt out of those experiences.

Due to the petty bourgeois base of JVP, no significance was given to the idea of gaining power independently. In 1994, they strived to bring Chandrika Bandaranaike to the presidency. Next, they contributed to the growth of capitalist class by joining hands with SLFP to form a government. Then they were busy at their best to help Mahinda Rajapaksa to become the President. They were against the devolution of power to solve racial problem. As well, they

Petty Bourgeois Politics of the JVP

backed the war against the Tamils with supportive criticism. Also, by associating with movements like the Patriotic Front, JVP leaders were allowed to work in coordination with capitalist class. This paved the way for leaders like Wimal Weerawansa to join racially motivated capitalist factions.

The JVP was pushed to the extreme of opposing Mahinda Rajapasa because of the attempts made by Rajapaksa to destroy the JVP. Because of this push the JVP reached wrong positions that were worse than any mistakes they committed in the past. They supported Sarath Fonseka, the helmsman of the racial war as the common candidate. This meant that JVP had joined hands in a common front with UNP.

The current leader of the JVP, Somawansa Amarasinghe, dressed in European attire, had to appear before the business community to distribute certificates. These were not accidental phenomena that occurred within JVP. A petty bourgeois faction is unable to function on its own in the society. They either have to mingle with the capitalist class or with the working class. Herein, JVP selected their oppressor - the capitalist. We have to analyze the current commotion in JVP in the light of this situation. This confusion is not due to mistakes of one or two leaders but owing to lack of knowledge as to how a social revolution should take place and due to being petty bourgeois.

When the JVP continued with errant politics of this nature, it is inevitable that the groups who believed in them develop a sense of betrayal about them. The course of action the JVP has to follow is to analyze the reasons for being opportunistic and inclining on wrong political decisions. A revolutionary cadre could be developed who were courageous in isolation but following a correct logic and were prepared to face criticisms by opponents fearlessly. Instead, entering into agreements with regressive analyses will not help. Giving in to regressive consciousness by JVP indicates that they have a belief that Marxism is ductile and malleable enough to apply to suit a particular country or a particular nation. This is common to all groups like the JVP. Instead of investigating into the sources of mistakes committed by JVP, alternative groups also try to blame individual leaders for particular mistakes. Today, both JVP groups should look for theories that could manipulate subjective factors.⁵

Early break-away groups also failed to pay attention to this. Due to this very reason, most of those groups strayed into NGOs.

The action required today is to establish a party that protects democratic centralism based on Marxist principles to serve as the progressive battalion of the working class. If JVP were to come out of the mire, they have to



The JVP supported General Sarath Fonseka, the helmsman of the racial war, as the common candidate of a coalition of parties chiefly the UNP and the JVP.

start from there while ending the search for Wijeweera and by shedding light at nooks and corners which were missed by Wijeweera and substituting the findings for Wijeweera's commitment.

Notes

1 JVP, Janathā Vimukthi Peramuna (People's Liberation Front) falsely claims to be a Marxist-Leninist Communist party. The party was involved in two armed uprisings against the ruling governments in 1971 (SLFP) and 1987-89 (UNP). After 1989 the JVP became openly reformist and electoralist and as such participated in the 1994 Parliamentary general election. In neither orientation did it ever turn to the working class to lead a socialist revolution, as the article explains.

2 The United People's Freedom Alliance is a political alliance in Sri Lanka. The current leader of the United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) is Mahinda Rajapaksa and Susil Premajayantha is the general secretary of UPFA. The alliance was initially formed by: Sri Lanka Freedom Party, Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, Sri Lanka Mahajana Pakshaya, Muslim National Unity Alliance, Mahajana Eksath Peramuna, Democratic United National Front, Desha Vimukthi Janatha Party

3 Basic JVP education consisted of a series of five classes for new members. The five lessons consisted of:

1. The crisis of the capitalist system in Sri Lanka – where the JVP contended that the capitalist system was in crisis and ripe for revolutionary change.
2. The betrayals of the left movement – where the JVP contended that the traditional left the LSSP (the Trotskyist party who betrayed the revolution by entering Bandaranaike's Coalition in 1964) and CP had betrayed the revolution.
3. The experiences of the international communist movement – where the revolutionary histories of the Soviet Union, China, Cuba and the communist bloc in general was discussed.
4. The history of the JVP – where new recruits were told that the loss of life in the 1971 insurgency was due to the adventurist policies of a minority in the party.
5. The revolutionary path that Sri Lanka should take – In this class the JVP emphasized that Sri Lanka could not usher in the revolution following the models in other countries, such as encircling the villages from the cities as in Russia, or encircling the cities from the villages as in China or through protracted guerrilla warfare from a secure hideout as in Cuba. Rohana Wijeweera, <http://sriolog.com/who-is-who/politicians/rohana-wijeweera/>

4 Sirimavo Ratwatte Dias Bandaranaike (1916 – 2000) was a Sri Lankan politician and the modern world's first female head of government. She served as Prime Minister three times, 1960–65, 1970–77 and 1994–2000, and was a long-time leader of the Sri SLFP. (Wiki)

5 Refers to the Frontline Socialist Party which is now producing a newspaper in English, Frontline, <http://www.flsocialistparty.com>. We will analyse the development of this group in the next issue.

Venezuela: United Front to defeat the right and imperialism

No confidence in Maduro or other bourgeois factions!

Bolshevik Party and Trotsky's Permanent Revolution for real socialism in 21st century!

Statement by the Liaison Committee for the Fourth International 17 January 2013

In the dispute between the bourgeois factions that are now being played out in Venezuela much more is at stake than the future of Chávism.

In Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela, bourgeois oppositions backed by Anglo-American Imperialism are increasing the pressure on the semi-colonial Governments to nourish growing pro-Imperialist appetites amid the international economic crisis. This is preparing the conditions for new coalitions of puppet rulers.

A few months after losing the presidential election, but taking advantage of the fact that the winner may not preside over the country, in the post-Chávez era different fractions of the right emanating from Chávism and those which are pro-US are seeking to contain the expansion of the rival bourgeois block, China-Russia, in Latin America. This had begun to win influence there from the first decade of the 21st century.

These manoeuvres of imperialism to prepare for a post-Chávez Venezuela are also preventive measures that aim to avoid the formation of a common platform in three key countries in the three large river basins of America's South. These are the Orinoco, the Amazon and the River Plate system (the Uruguay and the Paraná rivers in Uruguay and Argentina) formed by Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela. Here Russian-Chinese core interests can establish itself in the context of confrontation of big global blocks above, in order to consolidate and expand their influence in the Western hemisphere.

Reaction is gambling on the constitutional dispute going on in the electoral institutions. The division in the bourgeoisie is now mainly between Diosdado Cabello, a Chávez ally, recently elected as the head of the National Assembly and representative of the sector linked to the military and the former trade union leader Vice-President Nicolas Maduro, who is more pro-American. ¹

The 'Bolibourgeoisie' (Bolivarian bourgeoisie) was born from the crisis of bipartisanship in Venezuela after the regime established by the Punto Fijo Pact of 1958 ² began to decline primarily because of falling crude oil prices between late 1980s and early 1990s. It is in this context that the crisis of the superstructure is lodged in the petro-state.

This is where the capitalist state draws most of its resources from state control of the oil revenues. The state force which has a strong interests in the control of the oil revenues, the army, emerges and prepares conditions for a future recomposition of the petro-state on a new basis when the world market allows it because:



Nicolas Maduro (right) rejected claims that he and Diosdado Cabello (left) are rivals to succeed Hugo Chavez.

1. The bourgeois army has a high specific gravity in the capitalist state, thus ensuring that the army has control over part of the revenues from oil exports;

2. Greater articulation of social consensus is extended, thus making some concessions to all the workers, which is essential for achieving such consensus.

3. It is from this superstructure that the conditions emerge for new actors to appear within the native bourgeoisie, i.e. within the Bolivarian bourgeoisie.

All above mentioned points are made regarding the superstructure initiatives but that rests ultimately on the infrastructural fact of the ties between Venezuela and the world market. This in turn leads to an appropriation of a portion of the oil revenues by the bourgeois state which gives rise to a semi-colonial type of capitalist Petro-state.

After fourteen years this signals a replacement and the likely exit from the scene of the Bonaparte who officiated in the conflicts between various bourgeois fractions both global and local. This Bonaparte also restrained the proletariat and regional insurgencies and opened the way for a new settlement of its semi-colonial status with US imperialism. They have established a strategic alliance with Juan Manuel Santos of Colombia, a strategic alliance which focuses on the road map which points to the military capitulation of the FARC. ³

Thus Chávez in turn paved the way for a future reorientation to imperialism as Bolivarianism, repeating, in their own way, the same trajectory of many bourgeois nationalist movements in the region such as the Lázaro Cárdenas del Río President of Mexico 1934-1940 (who granted refuge to Leon Trotsky) or Juan Domingo Perón (President of Argentina 1946-55 and 1973-74).

Despite the reduction of the exports of Venezuelan crude oil to the U.S., the country now is the third largest international source of petroleum for the master of the



Signers of the 1958 Punto Fijo Pact, from left to Right: Rafael Caldera, Jóvito Villalba and Rómulo Betancourt.

North (just behind Saudi Arabia and Canada). Because of its infrastructure Venezuela has strong tendencies to maintain links with USA which takes half of all exports that it produces and about 40% of its oil. These objective facts are continually expressing themselves in the superstructure of the state and particularly in its hard core: the army that now, mostly, defends the legitimacy of the mandate of Chávez, but gambles on the succession via Cabello.

Not by chance, a document was published at the beginning of January by the “*Institutional Military Front*” signed by more than seventy generals and colonels of the armed forces who support the claim of right, and “given the complex national situation, calls upon our comrades in arms to fully carry out their military duties and fully respect the National Constitution” (diarioenlamira.com 9/01/13).

In this sense it is vitally important that the Venezuelan proletariat breaks with any type of expectations put in the supposed “anti-Imperialist wings” of the bourgeois army. Confidence in the hard core of this hostile machine which has been tested by the proletariat to its utmost in universal history will be paid for by the defeats for the proletariat itself resulting in rivers of blood.

The ‘socialism of the 21st century’ did not allow the struggle for workers’ control of production to advance by one iota. On the contrary in all the struggles in which the workers moved radically by occupying factories they were murdered or harshly repressed by the Chavist regime, in order to increase the political organisms for co-option and social control of the masses by the semi-colonial petro-state hegemonised by the Bolibourgeoisie.

The Organization of American States (OAS) recognises the legitimacy of Vice-President Nicolás Maduro). Imperi-

Venezuela: United Front to defeat the right and imperialism

alism thus points the way forward for the “*Ministry of colonies*” (as Che said) and has gambled on plan A in the co-opting post-Chávez Chávism.

The approach of Venezuela to Washington is more of a bridge-building exercise. They are using this together with the role of the different Latin American governments such as the PT in Brazil to press for the acceleration of the rhythms of capitalist restoration in Cuba with the Castro bureaucracy which dialectically influences and is influenced by the Bolibourgeoisie. Imperialism is fully aware of this process.

Chávism is also preparing to attack the workers. *The Economist* 15/12 says that:

Whoever ends up running Venezuela will face some tough economic decisions. The government cranked up public spending to unsustainable levels during this election year. Having grown by around 5% this year, the economy is likely to slow. Mr Chávez has scotched expectations of an early devaluation, which would raise the local-currency value of the government’s oil revenues, allowing it to reduce a budget deficit estimated at 14.7% of GDP this year by the Economist Intelligence Unit, our sister company. Inflation, at 18%, is likely to rise next year, even though the president has similarly jibed at raising the (massively subsidised) price of petrol. ⁴

The Government released, “the announcement by the Minister of planning and finance Jorge Giordani increase gasoline and tariffs of public services” (Elimpulso.com, 23/11/2012). But the finance houses have different plans to Chávez; a devaluation is projected for next year:

Both the English investment Bank Barclays and Venezuelan research firm Ecoanalítica projected that the Venezuelan currency it is very likely to be devalued by 46% during the first quarter of the year (*Universal*, 26/10/2012).

This implies the increase of inflation and wages corrosion. The legality and the devaluation are in order to pay external debt, since “Venezuelan foreign debt service is \$ 12 billion each year” (Notitarde.com, 11/08/2012). An article in *The Washington Post* from 9/01 says that:

Roberta Jacobson, the most senior diplomat for Latin America, spoke by phone with Vice President Nicolás Maduro in November and discussed ways to improve ties on various issues such as fighting drug cartels and terrorism.” They even report that “Maduro and others from the inside of the Chávez Government also seek a rapprochement [with the Government of USA, Ndr]” and that “the U.S. diplomat Kevin Whitaker has also been in regular contact with Roy Chaderton, the Venezuelan Ambassador to the OAS in Washington.



The flags of the US and Venezuela entwined and Chávez and Castro in happier times: “The cause of the Latin American unity cannot be satisfied by the bourgeois nationalist governments that privilege their commitments to imperialism over the united struggle of all against this attack. The unity of workers and peasants at the continental level and the struggle for the Socialist United States of Latin America and Caribbean, is the only way to expel the imperialism from the continent.”

Chávism smoothes the path to the right and imperialism by demagogically exploiting the social misery that increases more and more in Venezuela. If Chávism would like to deepen popular mobilization to defeat the right, it would not have to adjust and pay the debt, but they instead should give satisfaction to the claims of the masses.

Therefore we call on workers and popular Venezuelan militancy to speak out against these attacks, against the payment of debt and the commitments to imperialism, pushing a plan of struggle against any coup and all the legitimate demands of the masses.

To defeat the pressure of imperialism it is necessary to break with and expropriate them. No confidence in Maduro who is preparing attacks against the workers to pay the external debt and compromise with Yankee imperialism.

After the defeat of Gaddafi and the current attacks on Syria and the looming attack on Iran, Chávez himself already begins to flirt with imperialism; He co-directed the capitulation of the FARC and for capitalist restoration in Cuba. This is to treacherously impose the attacks of the capitalist class onto the long-suffering working class population in Venezuela. It is for this reason that we are against him. The victory of the right will accelerate the arrival of the defeats that Chávism has prepared.

The cause of the Latin American unity cannot be satisfied by the bourgeois nationalist governments that have a relationship to imperialism. The unity of workers and peasants at the continental level and the struggle for the Socialist United States of Latin America and Caribbean is the only way to expel imperialism from the continent. It is therefore necessary to overcome the limits of bourgeois nationalism. It is therefore essential to have a broad Anti-Imperialist United Front foot to defeat the right and simultaneously to win from Chávism the influence which today revolutionaries do not have over the masses.

In this way, by preparing a Bolshevik Party of the Venezuelan working class we will advance to realise all the tasks that Chávism, on behalf of Bolibourgeoisie socialism, was opposed to winning. By expropriating the right, their media conglomerates, multinationals and the native Bolibour-

geoisie, by workers' control of the PDVSA (Venezuelan state-owned oil and natural gas company) and with the method of Trotsky's Permanent Revolution we will forge a strategy that will allow workers and popular insurrection to conquer the Bolivarian bourgeois government and establish a workers' and peasants' government, the only one capable of establishing the basis for socialism in the twenty first century.

Notes

1 The dispute now turns on two differing interpretations of the Venezuelan constitution. Chávez's allies claim that a provision of the constitution allowing the president to be sworn in before the Supreme Court as an alternative to the national legislature indicates that there is no hard deadline for the president to assume office. The pro-US opposition disputes that interpretation and has called for the country's Supreme Court to step in and settle the matter. If Chávez dies before he is sworn in then things become even more fraught. (Wiki)

2 The 1958 Punto Fijo Pact was a formal arrangement arrived at between representatives of Venezuela's three main political parties: Acción Democrática, COPEI (Social Christian Party) and Unión Republicana Democrática, for the acceptance of the 1958 presidential elections, and the preservation of the rising democratic regime. It excluded the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV, now part of Chávez's coalition). This was supposed to underpin the transition to democracy. The 1959 Cuban Revolution influenced PCV and student groups hoping to repeat Fidel Castro's success in Venezuela. Many leftist students formed the Revolutionary Left Movement (Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria, MIR) in April 1960. (Wiki)

3 The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army (Spanish: Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia—Ejército del Pueblo, FARC—EP and FARC) are a Colombian Marxist–Leninist revolutionary guerrilla organization involved in the continuing Colombian armed conflict since 1964. The FARC—EP are a peasant army with a political platform of agrarianism and anti-imperialism inspired by Bolivarianism. (Wiki)

4 *The Economist* concludes with this assessment of the contending forces:

If Mr Maduro does take over, his other main battle will be to prevent factional fighting within Chávismo, hitherto held in check only by Mr Chávez's personal authority. As a civilian, Mr Maduro would be at a disadvantage in dealing with the armed forces, which Mr Chávez has turned into the military wing of the PSUV. As a radical leftist, he would be mistrusted by pragmatists, who include many army officers and newly enriched Chávista businessmen, whose leader is Mr Cabello. For now, however, all eyes in Venezuela are on a sickbed in Havana.

<http://www.economist.com/news/americas/21568377-seriously-ill-hugo-ch%C3%A1vez-names-nicol%C3%A1s-maduro-pictured-right-his-successor>