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128th Durham Miners Gala and Big Meeting



**Build the Worker's Opposition to the
Coalition Agenda!
There is an Alternative!**

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128TH DURHAM MINERS GALA AND BIG MEETING:

Build the Workers' Opposition to the Coalition Agenda! There is an Alternative!

This year's Durham Miners Gala comes at a time when it has become bitterly clear to the working class movement that the Coalition agenda represents an all round attack on the public good in favour of the rich and their monopolies. This ongoing capital-centred agenda is wreaking havoc on the whole economy, public services, the NHS, jobs, pensions, pay, small businesses and on all the rights of the people. Once again the Durham Miners Gala will play its role in bringing the working class and people of the north-east together in their thousands to meet and discuss how to further build the resistance around the alternative and to zero in on the government's arrogance that it can get away with anything. This workers' opposition is not just a rearguard action undertaken in desperation but it is resistance that continues with its agenda that there is an alternative and that the crisis must be resolved in favour of the working class and people.

Of course the agenda of the Coalition has the outlook of the ruling elite of making fireproof the interests of the big monopolies and banks to protect their billions of pounds in profits at the expense of the people and so then present everything that the working people have fought for in terms of public services, jobs, welfare benefits, pensions and pay and conditions as "costs" to be cut back. The Coalition agenda is also to use the



"national debt" and "quantitative easing" as massive pay-the-rich schemes, while using the pretext of "reducing the deficit" to impose "austerity measures" on the working class and people. The propaganda about the "debt crisis" has reached such outrageous proportions that the issue of "sovereign debt" is being used by those who act as the executive power in the Eurozone to impoverish and wreck whole countries like Greece and Ireland. Since the last Durham Miners Gala the working class movement has been continuing to aim its blows against this ruling elite with one of the biggest one-day strikes over recent times on November 30, 2011, in the fight for decent pensions for all and with continued actions across the country this year to defend those very public services, jobs, pensions and pay and conditions under attack. This is the fight for the alternative – for a change of direction to the pay-the-rich system. The workers' movement agenda is for society to stop paying the rich and their monopolies and instead hold them to account so that the billions of pounds these monopolies expropriate in added value form the labour of the masses of working people is claimed by society for the welfare of all.



It is in the current situation where the movement of the working class and people for the alternative has taken root and is developing that the ruling elite is attempting to try and divert this opposition and stem this



movement for the alternative. Just as the anti-war movement has faced the onslaught from this ruling elite in the form of the government and their state demonising Muslims, imprisoning them without trial, singling their communities out for special attack to try and break the coherence of this movement and destroy it, the movement for the alternative is also faced with a barrage of propaganda against every section of the people – from the youth to unemployed, to doctors, to immigrants to try and break the unity of the working people in every kind of way. Here the aim of the workers' opposition is to uphold the rights of all and to stand by its watchword that an injury to one is an injury to all.

The Coalition government is bending over backwards to accommodate the dictate of the big banks, its arms industry and all the monopolies not only over Britain but also over the entire world. It arrogantly dreams of making Britain a great power that dominates the world again. It continues the criminal war in Afghanistan on which it spends vast sums. Having bombed Libya killing thousands to exact regime change it is now the most bellicose of the European powers for interference in Syria for the same end. Alongside the US, France, Israel and other NATO countries, Britain is acting as the centre of backwardness in the world, riding roughshod over the demands of the people and the vast majority of countries for a peaceful resolution of conflicts. The threat to Syria and Iran has brought it into serious contention with Russia and China which threatens to destabilise the whole world. For the workers' movement, that fight is for the alternative to war and for an anti-war government to make Britain a major factor for peace and stability in the world. A government that stands for no troops on foreign soil, for withdrawal from NATO and all aggressive military alliances.

Over the last year many workers who looked to the Labour Party have seen that it continues to be unable to carry out its own declared redefining of itself from "New Labour" to "Labour" and it maintains the pro-war consensus over Afghanistan, Syria and Iran and echoes the divisive stands of the ruling elite that try to wreck the unity of the people in this fight for the alterna-

tive. Many of the youth do not look to the Labour Party, and whilst the movement is for the unity of all in building the Workers' Opposition this can only be done in addressing the question as to how the struggle for the alternative can engage the whole movement of the people and be effective.

The times demand that the workers build their opposition and become organised as an effective independent political force in their own right. Their demands will need to centre around: an economy that guarantees the right to a livelihood; safeguarding the NHS as a publicly-provided National Health Service with an end to privatisation; an end to the barbaric wars and the bringing of the troops home from foreign soil and withdrawal from NATO; education provided as a right and not a privilege; respect for the natural environment in the interests of human existence; not-for-profit banking, credit and insurance under direct public control; public ownership of industries fundamental to the social economy; a peaceful social environment in which the national economy is developed not to serve maximum profit of the rich who take more out of the economy than they put in, but to serve the claims of the people on society. Such a programme can be summed up as: Stop Paying the Rich! Increase Investments in Social Programmes!

At the 128th Durham Miners Gala, the Northern Region of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) calls on the working class and people to continue to build



an organised Workers' Opposition to end the dictate of the big banks and monopolies over the economy and of the big parties over Westminster. The workers in all sectors, and of all nationalities and political views, must unite and oppose the attempts of the class enemy to divide them by setting one section against another. They must not hand the initiative to any other force, but must constitute themselves as a united opposition in the workplaces, colleges and communities, discussing among themselves to decide everything. Build the Workers' Opposition as a powerful force to change society!

There Is An Alternative! Build the Workers' Opposition!

No to Monopoly Dictate! No to the Wrecking of the Social Economy!

Stop Paying the Rich! Increase Investments in Social Programmes!

Fight for a Pro-Social, Anti-War Government!

BUILDING THE WORKERS' OPPOSITION:

Attempts to Impose a Capital-Centred Outlook on the Jaguar Workers at Castle Bromwich

It was announced at the beginning of May that Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) is to invest £200 million in expanding its plant at Castle Bromwich to build the new Jaguar F-Type sports car. JLR is owned by the Indian conglomerate Tata. According to the media hype, 1,000 jobs are set to be created by the investment.

It should not be forgotten that JLR approached the then Labour government in 2009 for financial support, which was refused. Now, according to press reports, JLR is on course for record profits this year of around £1.5bn. The F-type is described as a premium car, the successor to the Jaguar E-type.

As a component of its capital-centred project, JLR prepared in April a “new product proposal” the theme of which is that the workers are a potential block to this project, and that in order to secure a “sustainable long-term future” at Castle Bromwich there is a need to re-state the plant’s commitment to “flexible and efficient working practices” and introduce “new flexibilities”. It is said that this deal is needed to keep the plant open to the year 2030. Current agreements would keep it open until at least 2020.

When the workforce considered this deal, they rejected it, with a vote of 68% against. The management attempted to railroad it through, as the workers on the whole were only given a few minutes to read and understand the 12-page document before voting on it. Nevertheless, it was very clear that there was an attempt in the deal to increase the length of the working week, and introduce stringent compulsory overtime.

The “new product proposal” gives a long list of the existing working practices that were implemented in the 1990s, such as “short notice movement of tea breaks and flexible lunch breaks”, “bell to bell working”, “ability to have fixed or flexible holidays, or a combination of both”, “efficient overtime arrangements”, “option to call or flat October shut down”, “ability to move annual shut down dates in accordance with operational requirements”, “zero line stops for Trade Union briefings”, and many others.

Now the workers were expected to ballot in favour of “improving our working processes and practices, and building on them, in return for securing new product and jobs at the plant”. The proposed practices are grouped under the headings of: “Reducing our cost base”; “Volume flexibility”; “Creating a high performance and safe environment”; “Future plans for the Castle Bromwich site”.

It goes without saying that the emphasis throughout is on the workers showing more “flexibility” and that they are con-

sidered a “cost” of production by JLR. The plans include compulsory working of up to 12 Saturdays in a 12-month rolling period, drugs and alcohol testing, and “health and safety” standards which lays the onus on the workers under the guise of creating an environment “in which our employees can deliver their best performance”.

Having rejected the proposed deal, the workers have grown even more uneasy about its provisions and the difficulties the future holds in store when JLR considers them not as human beings but as adjuncts to the making of maximum capitalist profit in competition with other capitalist concerns in the market place. It is known that some shop stewards who originally endorsed the deal have now resigned over the matter.

On the other hand, the reporting in the media has taken the position of blaming the workers for putting the future of the plant in the balance. Having posed the issue in this way, they then ask: “Are Jaguar workers right to vote against changes?”

Workers are not opposed to a thriving economy. On the contrary, they are demanding an alternative to being made to suffer the burden of the economic crisis which is not of their making. But “growth” not based on a genuine pro-social alternative is not the answer to the crisis and the problems of the economy either. An alternative must be found in which they workers themselves figure as a conscious organised force upholding the well-being of the people and the general interests of the economy and society.

Jaguar and Land Rover sold 805 cars in April, 56 per cent up over April 2011 and Land Rover 2,925, 46 per cent up. The company wants to go further and maximise its profits at the expense of workers’ jobs by making overtime on Saturday’s compulsory and increasing production through existing labour. Owners of monopoly capital like Tata are demanding concessions from workers, both those currently employed and others when they return to work, and a destruction of all established social norms.

By their actions, Jaguar workers are rejecting with contempt the disequilibrium of a “return to work and manufacturing” under the dictate of capital and its demand for concessions, a lower standard of living and destruction of all social norms that defend the well-being of the people. A “return to work and manufacturing” must be based on the recognition of the rights of the working class and established social norms that provide protection for the people’s well-being.



RESISTING THE ANTI-SOCIAL OFFENSIVE:

The Government Must Be Held Responsible for the Plight of NHS Trusts

Health Secretary Andrew Lansley on June 25 began the process of placing an NHS trust in administration for the first time, setting in motion a legal process of applying the “failure regime” to the South London Healthcare Trust. This would see all board directors suspended and a “trust special administrator” sent in. When the administrator has made their report, the Health Secretary can consult on dissolving the organisation and transferring staff to other bodies or in fact closing wards and services. The decision as to what the outcome should be would then be presented to Parliament.

It is mooted that the Department of Health’s director of provider delivery, Matthew Kershaw, is among those being considered for the trust special administrator role. At the same time, it was also reported that “hit squads” could take over at 20 more NHS trusts which the Department of Health has identified as “clinically and financially unsustainable”.

Health Secretary Andrew Lansley is utilising, for the first time, a process of using the “failure regime” powers in the 2009 Health Act passed under the Labour government. It is said that the South London Healthcare NHS Trust has gone £150million in the red over the past three years. One of the main drains on finances is the PFI deals negotiated under New Labour that are said to be costing £2.5billion in the long term.

The Health Service Journal reported that the “three-site acute trust recorded a £65m deficit in 2011-12 on a turnover of £438m”, and it said that it had discovered that “the trust’s initial plan for 2012-13 was for a deficit at least as big again”. Andrew Lansley has sent a letter to Dr Chris Streather, chief executive of the trust since it was formed from three separate organisations in 2009, who announced two weeks ago that he was leaving for another post. The Health Secretary said that he recognised that not all of the trust’s problems were of its own making. But he added, “Nonetheless, there must be a point when these problems, however they have arisen, are tackled. I believe we are almost at this point.

“I have sought to provide NHS organisations with the help and support they need to provide high-quality, sustainable services to their patients, which South London Healthcare Trust stands to benefit from.

“However, even after this support has been provided, your organisation still expects to be in need of significant financial resources from other parts of the NHS and I cannot permit this to continue. That is why I am considering using these powers.

“I appreciate that any decision to use these powers will be unsettling for staff, but I want to stress that the powers are being considered now so that patients in south east London have hospital services that have a sustainable future.”

In a tone reminiscent of Angela Merkel referring to Euro-zone debts, a Department of Health source said that the measures should signal to other trusts “that they cannot continue to provide poor services or rely on bailouts from other parts of the NHS”. The chief executive of NHS London, Ruth Carnall, told the Health Service Journal that she regretted the “compromise” that created South London Healthcare Trust in its current form, and had wanted a more radical solution to the problems in south-east London when the trust was formed in 2009. She said that managers could be placed under “very, very intensive political pressure” around reconfigurations.

The “failure regime” process

After consulting the trust, strategic health authority and commissioners – which Andrew Lansley has done – the Health Secretary can make an order appointing the trust special administrator. This has to be laid before Parliament before it breaks up for the summer. The administrator will take up their post within five days of the order. Within 45 working days, the administrator must produce and publish a report for the minister to lay before Parliament. There is then a month-long consultation before the final report is presented to the minister and Parliament. Within 20 days of that, the minister must make a decision and publish it.

What is meant by “bankruptcy”?

Questions are being raised about why the Department of Health has to go through this so-called “bankruptcy” procedure. It smacks of a calculated drama as a warning to other trusts to cut-back on health spending. One commentator wrote, “Will this lead to a marauding pack of private interests circling the doomed body of this large trust?”

Like capitalist concerns merging in order to counter a falling rate of profit, the merging of NHS trusts is becoming more frequent. Despite or perhaps because of these mergers, the trusts are becoming very difficult to manage according to the politically motivated criteria laid down by the government. Many of these mergers are already being called disasters.

The government’s criteria revolve around the “productivity” and “efficiency” of the provision of health care. NHS trusts furthermore are in a position of having to “compete” with the private healthcare market. The government is washing its hands of responsibility for the right to provide society with the health care it needs.

It is a strange definition of “bankruptcy” and “failure regime” that the Health Secretary is using. It could be said that

the Health Secretary's logic is bankrupt, and the regime of privatisation and business models for the NHS is failing. Why should an army of accountants and administrators be parachuted into such NHS trusts as the South London on the orders of the Health Secretary? The goals set by the Department of Health are proving impossible to achieve given the constraints on Trust budgets and financial structure that the government dictates.

The Hitchingbrooke Trust in Cambridgeshire has already been taken over by a private capitalist concern on the grounds that it had run up "debts" of over £40 million. But what is the problem? The government is refusing to invest in health care, and more and more NHS Trusts are therefore in these financial difficulties. The language of the government is that other parts of the NHS should not have to "bail out" them out to ease their "debts". This logic is being applied to the detriment of health care across England. Among those trusts under the spotlight in this way are the Surrey and Sussex Healthcare Trust, the St Helier University Hospitals Trust, Newham University Hospital Trust, Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals Trust, Whipps Cross University Hospital Trust, North Middlesex University Hospital Trust, North West London Hospitals Trust, Scarborough and North East Yorkshire Trust, and Dartford and Gravesham Trust. Many of these trusts have been shouldering crippling PFI interest payments and inherited large debts from PFI capital spending.

Meanwhile Stephen Powell, chairman of the Commons Health Select Committee, told Radio 4's Today programme that there was an "over-dependence on hospitals" and that one focus of the restructuring may be improving "care in the community". Thus the right of society for a decent level of health care is being portrayed as an "over-dependence on hospitals". Figures are blithely banded around of the South London Healthcare Trust "losing over £1 million a week", as though the provision of healthcare were a cost of production. Chris Ham, chief executive of health think tank the Kings Fund, also warned on the Today programme that not only other NHS Trusts, but potentially even Foundation Trusts at the very top, could go through the same process.

Who decides on the healthcare budgets?

What is mystified is just how the NHS Trust budgets are decided. All the talk is of debts, losses and inefficiency. What is covered over is the reality that the level of healthcare spending is being cut by executive decision of the government. Health care is made into a commodity to be bought and sold, with purchasers and providers. Now it is "rationalisation" and "administration" which is on the cards.

Under the Health and Social Care Act, the NHS Executive is to be abolished, as are the Regional Health Authorities. It is being suggested now that as the Coalition had not planned to keep any non-Foundation Trusts, since the Act suggested that as all Trusts would become Foundation Trusts and manage their own finances, it made no provision for them in terms of how



they are managed, and so now it seems it is convenient to get rid of them by declaring them all bankrupt! If further a Trust is saddled with the legacy of a PFI deal, like the South London, they would never get Foundation Trust status because Monitor would not deem them sufficiently "solvent" to go independent. So Lansley has had to concede with some measly words that it was not all their fault. But the fact remains that they have been set up to "fail".

The NHS Trusts, like the South London Healthcare NHS Trust, were more directly managed by the NHS through the NHS Executive and the regional health authorities. This was the legislation brought in by the previous Conservative government but then added to by New Labour which spawned the Foundation Trusts and Primary Care Trusts, and then PCT commissioners as well.

In this new health market, whilst Foundation Trusts are deemed to be more independent, all NHS trusts are funded by a system of "payment by results" income based on a national tariff for listed procedures and types of patient admissions. This is often summarised as "money follows patients". This funding comes through the commissioners (PCTs and larger PCT commissioning groupings) who negotiate contracts with the trusts for the year of a certain number of hip replacement operations, a certain number of emergency admissions, and so on. If the trust treats fewer patients then they get less funding. If they do more they might get more money, but it is sometimes disputed. There are various ways the government has introduced to avoid paying the full tariff. For example, if more patients are admitted as emergencies than a baseline number chosen from a couple of years ago, only a third of their tariff is paid. If a patient is re-admitted to hospital within 28 days of discharge, they do not get paid for. There may be some discretion on this, but hard up commissioners looking to save money will want to avoid paying.

Some specialisms, like elderly rehabilitation, are not payment by results with a national tariff, and they are paid for as a service. Then all Trusts also have to make the 4% efficiency savings year on year. Accountancy rule changes from the Department of Health have often meant that small annual over-spends can suddenly become tens of millions of pounds. With Foundation Trusts, their "independence" means these debts cannot be wiped out and a number of the Foundation Trusts have

had private consultative companies like McKinsey imposed on them by Monitor who have forced cut-backs, closures and job losses. Whilst some NHS trusts have had historical debt wiped out by the NHS chiefs, nationally or regionally, because they are directly managed, others such as Whipps Cross have been made to keep the debt to act as stick to force a merger with other trusts, since it was agreed to wipe it out with the merger.

The whole system of “payment by results” and budgetary constraints is ludicrous and incoherent. If there were issues of improving efficiency in the way the health service or hospitals are run, then they could be addressed and dispassionately dealt with. In fact, society can and should address the requirement for a constantly rising level of healthcare for all as of right. But the hysteria about “bankruptcy” and “failure” is completely fraudulent. It covers over the fact that the government is both slashing its investment in health care for society, and turning

Fight to safeguard the future of the NHS!

over the health service to become a sphere of rich profits for the healthcare monopolies. The issue of who sets the budget is never mentioned.

The announcement of the setting in train of the “failure regime” by Andrew Lansley serves to underline that the changes being brought about by the Health and Social Care Act must be fiercely resisted, and the whole direction of the running of the NHS must be changed. The government must be held responsible for the plight of the NHS Trusts. It cannot be accepted that the government is just doing its duty and everyone else is to blame. “Hit squads” are not the answer, neither is privatisation. In fact, they are part of and symptomatic of the problem. The future of the NHS must be fought for by affirming that health care is a right, and that the people have a right to decide on the future of the NHS. The government has absolutely no mandate for its wrecking of the health service.

The Queen’s Speech – Addressing the Interests of the Owners of Capital, not the General Interests of Society: Part 2

(For Part 1, see *The Line of March*, June 2012)

The Bills commencing in the House of Lords announced in the Queen’s Speech further address the interests of the owners of capital.

Bills commencing in the House of Lords

House of Lords Bill 1 is the **Trusts (Capital and Income) Bill 2012-13**, which was carried over from the previous parliamentary session, having received its second reading on April 25. This Bill effects the recommendations of the Law Commission report *Capital and Income in Trusts: Classification and Apportionment*. It changes various technical rules on capital and income in trusts, which, it is asserted, will modernise and simplify the process. This Bill only applies to England and Wales.

The second Bill to be introduced in the Lords is the **Groceries Code Adjudicator Bill 2012-13**, which had its second reading on May 22. It will set up a Groceries Adjudicator which will enforce the Groceries Code.

According to the Explanatory Notes prepared by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, the Competition Commission reported in 2000 on the relation between large supermarkets and their suppliers, which resulted in a supermarket code of practice to regulate the market. However, a later report

in 2008 showed that supermarkets were still following “anti-competitive” practices. In response, the Groceries Supply Code of Practice (the Groceries Code for short) was written. This Code applies to retailers with a turnover of more than £1bn in Britain, and came into force in February 2010.

Such attempts to create voluntary regulation through agreement with the big supermarkets having failed, the present Bill was published in draft form in May of last year. Rather than a curtailing of the power of the monopolies, it represents an outlook of recognising monopoly right and enshrining it in law in the form of regulation. With its capital-centred perspective of defending “competition”, it can only in the long term lead to further domination of distribution and exchange by big retail monopolies.

The European Union (Approval of Treaty Amendment Decision) Bill 2012-13 is the third House of Lords Bill. This Bill received its second reading on May 23. The background to this Bill is the signing on February 2, 2012 of the Treaty to Establish a European Stability Mechanism (ESM).

The ESM will replace the interim European Financial Stability Facility and European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism in the Eurozone, which were created during the unfolding of the European sovereign debt crisis.

This treaty was signed only by Eurozone states. Britain refused to participate. However, an amendment to the Treaty on

the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU, the new name given in 2009 to the 1958 Treaty of Rome) is required to give the ESM legitimacy in European law. The following will be added to the TFEU:

“The member states whose currency is the euro may establish a stability mechanism to be activated if indispensable to safeguard the stability of the euro area as a whole. The granting of any required financial assistance under the mechanism will be made subject to strict conditionality.”

Amendments to the TFEU must be ratified by all EU member states, regardless of their currency. Foreign Office Minister Lord Howell expressed the line that “Eurozone stability is important for our own stability”. However, various Conservative Lords, such as former Chancellors Lord Lawson and Lord Lamont, have used the debate to express their opposition the euro or criticise Eurozone governments. Nevertheless, it is likely to be passed, given that both Houses of Parliament approved the draft treaty change decision in March last year. Thus Britain will play its role in bringing about the arrangements that it supposedly refused to participate in creating.

The fourth House of Lords Bill is the **Crime and Courts Bill 2012-13**, which had its second reading on May 28. This is one of the major Bills of this parliamentary session, making sweeping changes to the justice system, following on from the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, which replaced the police authorities with directly-elected Commissioners. It represents the next stage of the government’s programme of changing the arrangements between the police, the judiciary and the executive, which were outlined in the paper *Policing in the 21st Century: Reconnecting Police and the People*, released shortly after the 2010 election.

Following that paper’s notion of “efficient” justice and policing, the Bill will create a new national framework with a single County Court and a single Family Court for England and Wales. It will create a new National Crime Agency (NCA), responsible for organised crime, border policing, “economic crime” and “online protection”, underpinned by a central intelligence hub, various coordination arrangements and a National Cyber Crime Unit. The NCA will replace the existing Serious Organised Crime Agency. The National Policing Improvement Agency will also be abolished. In their response to the Bill, Liberty have pointed out that accountability is being reduced as the NCA will not be subject to the same oversight as its predecessor, and will be exempted from the Freedom of Information Act. Currently, the police, immigration services and customs are not exempt from this Act.

Liberty also point out that the Bill continues the “trend of granting wide-ranging powers to the executive”, such as through provision of new powers to the Home Secretary regarding non-custodial sentences. The Bill further alters the relation between the judiciary and the executive via a change in the method of judicial appointments. The Home Secretary will also be given the power to remove the prohibition on recording audio and filming in any court.

The Bill follows the 2011 Act in using the same catch-all style of bundling major structural changes with miscellaneous new powers and regulations into a single piece of legislation. Whereas the earlier Act was notorious for its new and arbitrary restrictions on the right to protest around Parliament Square, the present Bill attacks the rights of foreign nationals and national



minorities through the erosion of due process in the immigration system and the extending of the powers of border officials. The Bill removes the right of appeal for those whose application for a family visit visa to Britain has been refused.

Bills yet to be published

The government is to introduce two Bills concerning pensions: the Pensions Bill and the Public Services Pensions Bill 2012-13. Rather than starting from the principle that pensions are a claim on the economy, necessary for guaranteeing the right to a decent standard of living after retirement, both Bills reflect the capital-centred outlook that pensions are both a cost and an individual matter of saving and investing. It is in this vein that the Pensions Bill replaces the current state pension with a new single-tier pension and brings forward the planned increase in the state pension age to 67.

The Draft Care and Support Bill announced in the Queen’s Speech also represents this outlook. Originally, the government was to have published the full Bill in this parliamentary session. However, this has been postponed until the next session.

Carers UK Chief Executive Heléna Herklots responded: “It is deeply disappointing that the government has decided to delay social care legislation until the next parliamentary session. ... carers struggling now without support or who are receiving poor quality or insufficient services will feel let down by delays in legislation and the glaring omission from the Queen’s Speech of any mention of how we tackle the growing crisis in the funding of social care.”

The government published its paper entitled *A Vision for Adult Social Care: Capable Communities and Active Citizens* in November 2010, which gives an indication of the thinking behind what the Draft Bill will contain.

This paper elaborates the government’s “Big Society” notion with regard to social care. Care is to be “personalised”; for example “personalised budgets... are provided to all eligible people”. There is to be a “partnership” between “individuals, communities, the voluntary and private sectors, the NHS and councils”. The mention of the private sector is telling; even more so is the promotion of “plurality”, meaning “diverse service provision with a broad market”. Further, “we want people to have the freedom to choose the services that are right for them from a vibrant plural market”.

Additional private involvement combined with fending for oneself is the direction, under the signboard of “freedom, fairness and responsibility”. Indeed, the paper makes a point of tell-

ing us that “social care is not solely the responsibility of the state”.

The “Big Society” by no means puts an end to Big Government, as evidenced by the Justice and Security Bill 2012-13 and the Draft Communications Data Bill. The former has already entered parliament, via the Lords, receiving its first reading on May 28. This will provide for oversight of the Security Service, the Secret Intelligence Service, GCHQ and other activities through an expansion of the remit of the Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC). Parliament will also have a greater role in ISC appointments.

The Bill provides for closed material procedure in certain civil court proceedings. It enables the Secretary of State to apply to the court to obtain this, the judge determining whether or not it goes ahead. The judge is to grant the request on grounds of whether not to do so would be “damaging to national security”.

According to the Explanatory Notes to the Bill: “The new provisions cover reviews of certain cases where the Secretary of State has decided to exclude a non-EEA national from the UK, or to refuse a certificate of naturalisation or an application for British citizenship, in reliance of information which the Secretary of State considers too sensitive to make public.”

Furthermore, the Bill prevents the making of certain court orders for the disclosure of “sensitive information”.

The Draft Communications Data Bill has already been labelled a “snoopers’ charter” by various commentators. This Draft Bill intends to make it easier for authorities to obtain communication data, apparently without the need for a warrant. It broadens the scope of such data to include time and duration information, telephone numbers and email addresses, and the location of the originator of the communication. There will be increased oversight by the Interception of Communications Commissioner. Under the guise of catching “criminals and terrorists”, this represents a further encroachment by the state on privacy of people, according to the notion of balancing or trading-off rights with “security”.

The Children and Families Bill will change the law on parental leave, allowing it to be transferable from the mother to the father. It will also change access arrangements for divorced fathers. The GMB union were sceptical as to “what will really materialise, given the cuts which have resulted in so many job losses”, a view also expressed by Child Poverty Action Group, who said that the Bill would be “cold comfort to families targeted by the coalition’s austerity politics”.

Explained as removing “unnecessary” processes, the Bill will speed up process of adoption and, concerning school students with special needs, will replace Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Learning Difficulty Assessments with a single assessment process. The National Union of Teachers responded that the SEN Code of Practice is “not ‘red tape’ but a carefully constructed assessment system ensuring that resources are allocated equitably to meet need”.

The Bill also widens the role of and gives extra powers to the Children’s Commissioner.

The **Draft House of Lords Reform Bill** made it into the Queen’s Speech after much speculation. Its proposal for an 80%-elected, salaried, Lords, cut in size from a 789 to 300 members, does not change the essential character or function of the second chamber. Rather, it will further entrench the party-dominated system with the aim of restructuring the Lords in such a way that the power of the executive is further unchecked.

The Draft Bill is a pragmatic attempt to give a semblance of democratic legitimacy of the Lords, while limiting that legitimacy to keep the Lords in check. See the May 26 edition of *Workers’ Weekly Internet Edition* for a full report on this Bill.

The **Croatian Accession Bill** will allow Britain to ratify the treaty of accession of Croatia into the European Union, to take place in 2013. All EU member states must ratify such treaties.

Rolled in with this, the Bill also covers changes to the constitutional Lisbon Treaty put forward by Ireland and the Czech Republic. A condition of these states to sign up to the Lisbon Treaty was the agreement to include these changes in the next accession treaty. Also included is the proposal to maintain the number of EU Commissioners at one per member state.

The **Small Donations Bill** concerns the claims of charities, coming in the wake of the controversial announcement of plans to cap tax relief on donations. For donations less than £20 collected in Britain, charities will be able to claim top-up payments from the state up to a maximum of £5000. Unlike the existing Gift Aid system, this is not tax relief, but will be funded through public spending.

An additional allowance would be available for organisations carrying out “meetings in a local community building”, for collections carried out in that building. This change is expected to particularly benefit centralised religious organisations, according to charity website Third Sector.

The **Draft Energy Bill** is purported to encourage more investment in low-carbon generation of electricity, placing more restrictions on coal-fired power station emissions.

However, it seems clear that the Bill is aimed at supporting new nuclear power. Via the Electricity Market Reform, the government will introduce long-term price contracts to encourage investment, particularly in nuclear power, as a way round illegality of state subsidy of nuclear power in EU law.

Furthermore, the Bill will create a new Office for Nuclear Regulation.

The **Draft Water Bill** is aimed at increasing competition in the water industry, by allowing every business and public body to switch water and sewerage supplier.

Similarly, the **Draft Local Audit Bill**, under the signboard of “saving money” and “increasing accountability”, will allow public bodies such as councils to appoint their own independent auditors from a competitive market. It will abolish the Audit Commission, to be replaced by a framework based on the private sector model.

Summary

The outlook of addressing the interests of the owners of capital runs through all of the legislation announced in the Queen’s Speech. The Bills further an overall agenda of restructuring state institutions and arrangements, from the practical level down to the fundamentally constitutional, with the aim of strengthening the power of the monopolies while casting aside responsibility for meeting the claims of the people on society; of backing monopoly right and trampling over public right. This is an agenda further exposed, for example, by Cameron’s recent draconian pronouncements over removing housing benefit for people aged under 25. All is justified as improving efficiency or cutting costs, and presented with high-sounding phrases such as “freedom, fairness and responsibility” or the “big society”. Based on this outlook and agenda, the Queen’s Speech does not address any of the general interests of society.

NO INTERVENTION IN SYRIA!

Britain Steps Up Its Propaganda for Aggression

It is despicable how the Coalition government is ratcheting up its rhetoric designed to justify armed intervention in Syria and topple the government of President al-Assad.

On Monday, June 21, in the House of Commons, Foreign Secretary William Hague made a blood-curdling, hot-headed and outrageously partisan statement listing what he called the “savage crimes” of the Syrian regime.

He took account of the fact that President al-Assad and the Syrian government are accusing the instigators of violence in the country as terrorists only to accuse Assad thereby of “inflaming sectarian tension” and to blame him for Syria being “on the edge of civil war”. Hague, though, was careful also to accuse the “terrorist groups affiliated to al-Qaeda” of committing “attacks designed to exacerbate the violence, with serious implications for international security”. He did not, however, acknowledge the role of the US of arming the terrorists, nor the role of British special service operators in Syria in seeking regime change.

Syria is a cultured and stable country, with a modern democracy. It has taken a stand against the schemes of Anglo-US imperialism in the region. To the big powers, Syria is a vital piece in the jig-saw of the Middle East and West Asia. With its opposition to US-backed Israeli Zionism, it is a thorn in the side of the US, Britain and the NATO powers.

Hague spoke of a three-point approach in co-ordination with the big European powers. The first, he said, is “to push for the implementation of the Annan plan”. This is gross hypocrisy given the fact that it is outside intervention and terrorism that is preventing a peaceful solution and increasing the tension. The civil war that Hague is darkly predicting for the Syrian people is not being easily fomented by the big powers. For that reason, Hague’s second point is “to increase the pressure and isolation felt by the regime”. Once more Britain is not acting like a modern state which recognises the right of a people to settle its own affairs without outside interference. It is acting as it did with Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, to mention the cases in recent history, as a big chauvinist power. It manufactures in a Hitlerite manner the pretexts for regime change, and covers them in the cloak of ensuring “justice, accountability and humanitarian assistance”, as Hague spoke of as his third point.

In the face of the violence of the opposition forces, the Syrian regime is taking its own measures to maintain the integrity and sovereignty of Syria, and the security of its citizens. It is completely unacceptable for Britain and the NATO powers to conspire to remove the Assad regime as they are doing, which includes expelling Syrian diplomats, and tightening their “stranglehold on the regime’s resources and external sources of support, building on the 15 rounds of EU sanctions that already target 128 individuals and 43 entities” (Hague’s words).



President Bashar al-Assad speaks to the Syrian People’s Assembly, June 4, 2012, emphasising the national responsibility of the Syrian government. He concluded: “Be united for the sake of the national interest and the citizens, even when you have different views and opinions. The real official is that whose heart beats to the rhythm of his people. Our guiding light is always Syria’s sovereignty, independent decision, territorial integrity and the dignity of its people. Always remember that individuals are ephemeral while the people is eternal; and that state positions come and go while the homeland is always there. I wish you every possible success in the tasks you are charged with in this first legislative course.”

William Hague ominously spoke of sending a team of “British experts” to gather testimony, and a team of Syrians “trained by the United Kingdom”. He openly declared that Britain is increasing “funding for the Syrian opposition and civil society groups, providing £1.5 million of assistance in this financial year to help provide human rights monitoring and media training for activists, and other non-lethal support, such as communications equipment”. He then concluded by saying that if all else fails, “Britain will work with the friends of Syria group to increase further the isolation of the regime and to adopt sweeping new sanctions across the world”. This so-called Friends of Syria grouping was specifically established with Hague’s purpose as its aim.

That the Foreign Secretary of the British government should be acting in the manner of an imperialist and colonialist war-monger is completely unacceptable for the working class and people. They cannot be fooled into believing that Westminster has become a champion of peace and human rights. It is against both peace and human rights for the British government to take open steps to overthrow the Syrian regime as it is doing. Britain must end all its interference, open and covert, in Syria. The Workers’ Opposition must be built in Britain itself to hold the British government accountable for its crimes.

Turning a Washout into a Triumph of Backwardness – a Very British Manipulation

By our royal correspondent

The main fact of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, as is obvious, was that tens of millions did not put out flags – in the writer's street only two houses out of 200 did – hold street parties, or line the streets and riverbanks. For the vast majority struggling to make ends meet, it was a few days respite before returning to the daily grind, once more taking up resistance to the attacks on their rights and livelihoods as the representatives of the rich attempt to unload the burden of the crisis onto the backs of those who did not cause it; preparing once again to step up the struggle against pension cuts, tuition fees rises, destruction and privatisation of the NHS, the endless and criminal foreign wars, and all the other evils of the day.

Such facts, of course, did nothing to deter the media hacks and political lackeys of the ruling financial oligarchy. A triumph of loyal support for the long-outdated feudal institution of monarchy was planned and – according to them – a



The unemployed bussed in to work as unpaid stewards and forced to sleep under London Bridge

debacle, was claimed to be a huge success. A triumph for British stoicism, they trumpeted! Hyperbole reached new heights of absurdity, and the banal inanity of the presenters plumbed new depths.



triumph duly took place. Even the fact that the centrepiece of the celebrations, the river pageant, was a disastrous washout due to the weather, with dozens in danger of hyperthermia rescued from the river, the old Duke himself hospitalised following the

It is said the Queen has no power. This is claimed to be the beauty of the monarchical system in our so-called democracy. However, it clearly draws a veil over where power lies, provides in an essentially secular age the appearance of a God-given authority to the crimes of the gangsters and careerists in the service of the financial oligarchy who make up the cartel parties in the parliament, and whose stranglehold on the polity denies any exercise of the popular will. In such circumstances, the personal qualities of the individual mean little. The Queen, it is claimed, is a modest and diligent person, albeit with no major achievements in her 60-year reign, no enlightened opinions to speak of, though steadfast support for every military adventure and war crime to which "her" governments have assigned the forces of the Crown. Unremarked by the groveling media, it was nonetheless notable that most of the royals were decked out in military garb, an indicator of where the monopolists will undoubtedly turn when their rule is seriously challenged.

Has the expensive and ludicrous charade changed the course of events? It seems very doubtful! A happy memory, perhaps, for the gullible, with hopefully not too many colds. But back to business for the remainder grappling with the problems of the day.

DISCUSSION OF THE CRISIS IN EUROPE:

Annexation of Europe's Nation States into a Union of European Monopolies

Politicising private monopoly interests in Europe with the expansion of continent-wide executive power

*(from an article by K.C. Adams,
TML Weekly Information Project)*

Continuous economic crises have pummeled Europe since 2008. Every solution the ruling oligarchy has implemented has made the situation worse. The aim of the dominant monopolies, which own competing parts of the economy, to protect and expand their own private empires comes into contradiction with the socialised nature of the modern economy. The cascading debacles are being used by the private monopolies to push their agenda for a Europe under their domination. Their agenda demands the end of the European nation states, which are described as obsolete and serving a different era before the emergence of global monopolies and their need for direct executive rule.

The suffering of the peoples of Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and elsewhere in Europe brings home once again the necessity of the working class to come to the fore. We are witness to representatives of the owners of monopoly capital reduced to self-serving incoherence in the face of the problems of their respective economies of mass industrial production. Even with the enormous capacity of modern production, the ruling elite cannot guarantee livelihoods or the security and rights of the people, which are theirs by virtue of being human. The potential of modern economies is more than enough to meet the needs of the people but is squandered under the dictatorship of the monopolies. The monopolies and their owners and directors are incapable of utilising the enormous capacity of the socialised economy. Their private narrow aim and ownership and control of competing parts of the economy are in contradiction with the socialised reality of modern production and distribution and the necessity for the economy to be under the control of the actual producers.

The onslaught of monopoly capital in Europe is met with the desire of the working class and peoples to resolve the crisis in their favour. They are striving to make their voice effective but face the problem that workers are deprived of their own thinking, view, outlook, and independent politics and agenda to deal with the political, economic, social and cultural problems of the modern era. Workers are faced with the historic necessity to intervene in life as it presents itself with their own thinking, views, outlook, and independent politics and agenda.



The Eurozone

The working class of each nation state is fighting the status reserved for it by government – the role of spectator without its own agenda or strength to defend its own interests and those of their respective societies. The ruling oligarchs in conjunction with the monopoly-controlled media frame the debate as one between a Union of European Monopolies and unleashing racial, ethnic, religious, nationalist and other divisions within and amongst the nation states governed by insular political parties. The ruling oligarchy throughout Europe is playing both cards to deprive the working class from finding its bearings and uniting behind its own program to constitute itself the nation, vest sovereignty in the people and defend the rights of all.

The European Union of 27 countries was established formally with the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty in 1993. The eurozone is an economic and monetary union of 17 European Union member states.

Centralised European control of the economies of eurozone members is already pronounced. Executive rule is the norm. Decisions are not discussed in any institution where the polity of the member states have anything more than nominal representation.

European Economic Crises Intensify

Several member countries of the Eurozone are experiencing an unparalleled collapse not seen since the 1930s. The peoples of Greece, Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Italy are suffering terri-

ble levels of unemployment, insecurity, state-organised racist and fascist attacks and cuts to social programs and public services. Even the German working class, for many years held up as the strongest and most resistant to inroads on its well-being has seen recent year after year deterioration of wages, benefits, pensions and working conditions. In fact the ongoing crises are being couched in the mass media and in the mouths of the European ruling oligarchy as a “chance to break the back of the German, Italian and French working class” and bring it down to the lower levels of wages, benefits, pensions and working conditions of the smaller member states, especially in the south.

To accomplish a victorious assault on the European industrial working class, the most powerful monopolies want to establish their supreme dictatorship within a Europe without national or other restrictions to their rule. In the opinion of the ruling elite, the economic crises have become an opportunity to accelerate the anti-social restructuring of Europe into a Union of European Monopolies based on unchallenged monopoly right and the denial of the rights of the people. In the words of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, “Member countries should hand in power to the EU headquarters gradually in a bid to prevent such a crisis from happening again.” Merkel calls on the nation states of Europe to give up more powers to the central authorities “step by step” towards a “political union.”

The crisis is framed as a lack of central executive authority to take the important decisions that would right the European ship and that the nation states are failed states incapable of reforming their economies to suit the European monopolies. The economic



Mass rally in Madrid, April 29, 2012

money around to serve private interests. Debt never built or produced anything, only the working class transforming the bounty of Mother Nature can produce or provide services. Debt can be eliminated with a simple decision and ruling by those in authority. Organisation of production and distribution under the control of the actual producers to serve the needs of the people and the general interests of society within a self-reliant economy that engages in trade for mutual benefit is the problem to be addressed. Defence of the rights of the people, which are constantly under threat from the imperialist system of states, is the problem. The working class is charged by history to take up those real problems for real solution.

The aim of the monopolies to serve their private interests is in opposition to the public interest and blocks the public authorities from taking any decision that restricts monopoly right to serve public right and interest and the common good. The narrow aim of the monopolies is in contradiction with the broad demands of the modern economy and politics. The European economy in all its nation states is socialised while ownership and control remain private and increasingly dominated by industrial/financial/commercial oligopolies. That is the contradiction, which in its broad material conditions must be resolved under the leadership of the working class upholding the human factor/social consciousness.

Owners of monopoly capital want expanded political authority to serve their private interests, depoliticise public interest and maintain their private iron grip over political power and the socialised economy, which is divided into competing privately owned parts. With executive power over Europe (with the current exception of the UK and a few others that remain within the US imperialist empire), the most powerful monopolies stand ready to confront the European industrial working class in a showdown to completely gut the post-WWII social contract and weaken its resistance, so as to compete with US/UK monopolies and to suppress and gain control of Russia, China, India, Brazil, and all other countries and peoples of Asia, Africa and the Americas through all means including war.

The working class of Europe holds a grave responsibility to combat this reactionary project representing monopoly right. It must not hesitate in uniting and defending its interests and the rights of all and block the monopolies from their fascist path towards a Union of European Monopolies. It must develop its own agenda that suits the material conditions to open a way forward for humanity.



Mass rally in Syntagma Square, Athens, outside the Greek Parliament, February 12, 2012

crisis is presented in such a way to lead people to unfounded conclusions that favour a European-wide dictatorship of the monopolies, the destruction of the existing nation states, and their economic and political integration into a European union under the control of the most powerful monopolies.

The monopolies never question let alone address the reality that private monopolies and their owners are captive of their own narrowness, but why else would “debt” become the overriding concern to the point of ludicrous obsession and incoherence. Debt is not a problem; debt is merely the movement of

KOREA IS ONE!

The Korean People's Just Struggle for Reunification

June 15, 2012, marked the 12th anniversary of the signing of the June 15 North-South Joint Declaration between north and south Korea. This historic event was decisive in giving impetus to the movement for the reunification of Korea.

Korea was divided through force of arms in 1945 by the United States. This division was exacerbated when the US instigated the Korean War. Since then, the US has maintained a hostile atmosphere and tension by its ongoing refusal to sign a peace treaty with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea according to the terms of the Armistice Agreement which ended the fighting in the Korean War. The signing of such a treaty will not only contribute to peace on the Korean peninsula, but will stabilise the region which would favour not only the Korean people but also the peoples of East Asia and the world.

Great strides towards unification were achieved from 2000 to 2007 because both sides were guided by the spirit of genuine openness and co-operation codified in the June 15 Joint Declaration. When the Lee Myung Bak government took office in south Korea, the US introduced a hostile spirit in relations with



New flats built in the Mansudae district of Pyongyang, capital of the DPRK

The DPRK continues to calmly hold firm to the historic task of reunification. The onus is on the US and south Korea to demonstrate through words and deeds a sincerity towards proposals for peace and a just reunification such as the DPRK has put forward since 1953, and which Koreans in the north, south and overseas have consistently demanded.

The US imperialists are opposed to the Korean reunification movement because it will thwart their geopolitical aims in Asia and their policy to contain China. They keep the war-mongering at fever pitch. Countries such as Japan, as well as the monopoly media in Britain, slander the DPRK so as to isolate it and justify aggression against it.

A reunified Korea would be an economic powerhouse, a champion for the independence and self-determination of all nations and peoples and a nail in the coffin of Anglo-US imperialism.

In the face of the treachery of the Lee Myung Bak government, the Korean people continue to be steadfast and resolute. They are relying on their own political unity, and pushing forward their nation-building project of creating one unified Korea based on their own efforts, peacefully and without outside interference.

We are sure that the Korean people will achieve reunification. The *Line of March* calls on all the progressive forces to support the Korean people in their just cause, and where possible participate in the work of Friends of Korea in Britain to this end.



Friends of Korea meeting on June 23, 2012, "DPRK Eyewitness Reports". (left to right: Andy Brooks, Michael Chant and Dermot Hudson - Andy Brooks and Dermot Hudson reported on visiting the DPRK in April)

the DPRK. The possibility for progress has been forestalled by recent actions on the part of the US and south Korea to deliberately wreck the movement for reunification.



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