The Line of March

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FOR A CHANGE IN THE DIRECTION OF SOCIETY!

Unite in Action for a Change in Direction for Society!
Defeat the Austerity Programme!
Fight for the Alternative! For the Dignity of Labour!
Plant the Seeds of the Workers' Opposition!

Contents

The Necessity to Fight for a Change in the Direction of Society!

Call of the Northern Region of RCPB(ML) on the Occasion of the 129th Durham Miners Gala and Big Meeting

The Durham Miners Gala and Big Meeting organised by the Durham Miners Association (DMA), taking place on Saturday, July 13, 2013, again brings together thousands of working class people, of all ages, from all over Durham and the north-east of England, as well as many other parts of the country. Besides the DMA and the ex-pit village lodges, union branches in all sectors of the economy from manufacturing, steel and transport to public sector workers in local government and health now regularly send their members and organise for them and their families to take part. Also, as is well known, the Gala has a noted international character with miners and workers in struggle from other countries taking part every year as well.

The prospect of the Gala brings huge excitement to the working people of the north-east at a time when the working class and people are under extreme pressure from the attacks of Coalition government. It is a government which has shown in practice its contempt for the very notions of society and the public good, as well as for the values and traditions of the working class which uphold what is progressive in society. That is why for the working class and people the Gala always stands out. The Gala gives the lie to the assertion that the workers with their traditions, their organisation, their culture, their interests and their rights are a thing of the past. The Gala affirms that what is central to the workers' lives is that they must be political. Recent years have seen the DMA organised in the ex-pit lodges, and the strengthening of the ties with the other unions across the northern region and nationally. This year as well there has been a new initiative launched by the DMA to safeguard the future of the Gala, launched with union branches and individuals affiliating to the new Friends of the Durham Miners' Gala Society, which has been a huge success.

As workers take part in the Durham Miners Gala and Big Meeting this year there is one thing that captures the essence of what is facing the working class movement at this time. It is the necessity to fight for a change in the direction of society, it is for the workers to constitute themselves as the Workers' Opposition. The banner has been raised to fight for the alternative. This means to take up for solution how to turn things around, how to end the backward neo-liberal direction which the monopolies are imposing on society which is causing untold hardship. It means to take up the pro-social direction based on the independent politics and programme of the working class. It means building the broadest political unity around that independent politics and programme of the working class, a political unity based not on handing over the initiative to any condescending saviours but on the strength of the working class itself, who are capable of getting into motion to resolve the crisis in favour of the majority of society. It means the working class itself utilising the strength of its organisation and numbers to rally all of society round it to build the new.

For the people to have control over their lives means that people wherever they live and work have to be the decision-makers. This in turn entails that the owners of monopoly capital must be deprived of the power to disempower the people from being the decision-makers. An alternative direction for society, the fight for a society which is human-centred, means that the social product produced by the working class must be reinvested in social programmes, public services and the productive economy,

especially manufacturing, so that all can prosper from industrial mass production and not just a privileged few.

Today, our Party takes part in the Gala with its programme, *Fight for the Alternative! Stop Paying the Rich, Increase Investments in Social Programmes! For an Anti-War Government!* This represents the embodiment of the independent programme of the modern working class fighting to place itself at the centre of politics in Britain, to build its resistance and its opposition, to fight for a new direction for society.

The working class is the only social force capable of establishing this new society. This includes building its own political party based on the new, based on modern definitions, based on being the most organised force, with one programme, a programme to end the exploitation of persons by persons and uphold and defend the rights of all.

With this in mind, and being cognisant of the crisis in the system of unrepresentative democracy which denies the working class its voice in government, we give the call to all participating in this year's Gala to plant the seeds of the Workers' Opposition. This means to build on the movement to fight for the alternative by strengthening the mass character of the workers' organisations, to act in a new way, with the sights set on defeating the anti-social offensive and its austerity programme and establishing a new pro-social, pro-worker and pro-public direction for society.

Details of the gala plus first chapter of David Temple's history of the Gala: http://durhamminers.org/Gala.html

Fight for the Alternative! Fight to Turn Things Around and Resolve the Crisis in Favour of the Working Class and People! Unite for a Change in Direction for Society! Plant the Seeds of the Workers' Opposition! We Are the Opposition to Austerity! We Decide!

FIGHTING FOR A CHANGE IN DIRECTION OF THE NHS:

Justice for Lewisham Week

After nine months of a very vigorous fight to save Lewisham Hospital in South East London, the Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign (SLHC) reached a significant stage in its work with the "Justice for Lewisham Week" of June 29 to July 5. It comprised the People's Commission, the Judicial Review – the legal challenge against Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt made by Lewisham Council and the SLHC – and the celebration on July 5 of the 65th anniversary of the birth of the NHS.

The background to the Justice for Lewisham Week is Hunt's decision on January 31 to endorse the South East London Trust Special Administrator (TSA) Matthew Kershaw's proposal to downgrade Lewisham Hospital as part of his reorganisation of hospital provision in South East London Health Care Trust (SLHT) which is bankrupt largely through PFI debts. Kershaw tried to offload the financial problems of the SLHT onto Lewisham Hospital even though it is a solvent and successful hospital and not part of the SLHT.

The Justice for Lewisham Week was a tremendous achievement for the SLHC and one that is likely to have long-term ramifications beyond Lewisham Hospital itself, even beyond the battle to change the direction of the NHS. The SLHC is an inspiring example of large numbers of local people from all walks of life, ages, nationalities all coming together and uniting around one aim – to save their local hospital. But the ramifications of this go far beyond – not only to the whole future of the NHS but as a sign of the times – that people are not going to put up with the continued onslaught by this and previous governments and will fight to hold them to account.

The power, energy and dedication of people in the SLHC have been consolidated and have brought out their creativity through acts of conscious participation which have contributed to the campaign. The inventiveness and the achievements of the campaign have been notable. The People's Commission shows that the working people in their millions must be the decision makers, enacting the laws and making the crucial decisions governing their lives, not the rich and their representatives.

A Victory for Lewisham Hospital is a Victory for Everyone!

Successful Lewisham People's Commission of Enquiry

Lewisham People's Commission took place at the Catford Broadway Theatre on June 29. The form of the People's Commission was that of a genuine commission of enquiry in which expert witnesses, leading clinicians, GPs, nurses, patients and community members gave evidence about the government proposals for Lewisham Hospital in the context of the anti-social direction for the NHS as a whole. Michael Mansfield QC chaired the Commission and a team of barristers conducted the examinations. The Commission panel also consisted of Baroness Warnock and award-winning poet author and journalist Blake Morrison.

Lord David Owen and Lewisham Mayor Sir Steve Bullock also addressed the Commission. Evidence was presented to the panel by key academics Professor Colin Leys and Allyson Pollock about privatisation and the role of PFI in the NHS. Leading GPs, hospital clinicians and nurses also gave evidence, as well as patients and patient representatives, the Council and local businesses, and religious and community representatives. Over the past few weeks, much evidence has been painstakingly collected in video form by interviewing concerned people, and this will also be represented at the Commission.

The Commission was held in the context that the private sector is utilising the public services in Britain as a source of huge profits, amounting to billions of pounds. The Coalition government intends to open the floodgates to the private sector, while imposing a programme of "austerity" and declaring Trusts bankrupt. In these circumstances, the Commission is contributing to fulfilling the need for a public investigation into the whole programme of privatisation, the necessity to reclaim the huge profits of the private sector for the public purse, and to reverse the direction so that health care is provided on the basis that it is a right.

It is significant that a working group within the SLHC, one of a number it has set up to advance its work, spent many months of intense planning and organisation to ensure that the Commission was successful and fulfilled its aim. A Conference Pack was given to the several hundred people who attended containing London Health Emergency's critical response to the TSA's draft report "Saving the cancer, sacrificing the patient", together with Professor Colin Leys' "The Plot Against the NHS" and the SLHC's response to the TSA's draft report.

The evidence presented represented a thorough-going exposure of the government's wrecking of the NHS in the service of private interests. The speakers gave powerful and irrefutable factual evidence against TSA plan; its proposals were revealed as being nonsense and a total sham driven by financial considerations not health care needs. What also emerged was the incoherence even of their financial considerations. The huge cost of implementing the proposals would mean it would take at least 10 years for any financial benefits to result from the closure of Lewisham hospital. Sir Bruce Keogh's claim the proposals would "save 100 lives a year" was exposed as being the fictitious nonsense it was, as also was the truly risible claim that travel times to other hospitals would only be increased by one minute. The effects of PFI were also revealed as being devastating, with as much as 30-60 years being required to pay off the debts. The witnesses who spoke at the Commission, plus many other witnesses whose evidence had been previously recorded, incisively and often movingly spoke of the devastating effect the government's proposals would have, not just for the people of Lewisham but throughout South East London.

The day was divided into six sessions, each dealing with a different aspect of healthcare needs.

Louise Irvine, GP and chair of the SLHC was the last witness. She said that it was outrageous to suggest that it was easy to access care for Lewisham people without Lewisham Hospital. Like many other witnesses, Dr Irvine said that downgrading and closing Lewisham would severely disrupt the close relationships built up over eight years between local GPs, and social and community care. She pointed out that the consultation period, only 30 days, was far too short and the consultation forms very difficult to complete. Like other witnesses, Louise Irvine said the consultation was all about vague "aspirations and visions" without anything concrete in addressing people's health care needs. When asked about the SLHC, Louise Irvine said that it had been the most amazing experience, with the first meeting, soon after the news of the downgrade was announced in October 2012, attracting 600 people followed by local demonstrations in November 2012 and January 2013 with 15,000 and 25,000 people respectively. Asked what she thought the SLHC revealed about the people of Lewisham, Louise Irvine replied that "they really value the NHS, are prepared to fight, and don't take things lying down". She added that the show of passion and intelligence and level of criticism that had been manifest in the evidence has been amazing. "People here are very determined that whatever happens we're going to keep

Dr Louise Irvine

on fighting to save our hospital." In answer to a question put to her by Blake Morrison about the sale of land around Lewisham Hospital, Louise Irvine replied that the proposed sale of land would certainly not be used for healthcare but to pay off the PFI "which has to be constantly fed". She said that the proposals do not even make sense financially as the cost of the re-organisation would be £160 million so with "savings" amounting to £19 million a year it would take at least 10 years to pay off the cost of the re-organisation.

In his concluding remarks, Michael Mansfield praised the People's Commission as being "one of the most disciplined, most focussed, most efficient enquiries generated by public consciousness" through the quality of the witnesses and organisation. He wanted to make people at large aware, far beyond Lewisham, what is going on in all welfare services. He spoke of the Commission as demonstrating the possibility of change. Michael Mansfield ended by saying that what was revealed was the absence of democracy in what the government were doing. Jeremy Hunt was "reserving the right to devolve responsibility", saying, "It's nothing to do with me – it's the market." Michael Mansfield referred to the "set up to fail system in which the private section is going to profit". He also pointed out that the present situation was a legacy of previous governments, particularly the setting up of PFIs which, he said, have to be revoked. Michael Mansfield said that, in issuing the panel's report, he wants to demonstrate that the public are not going to put up with being fed with false information and diktats from the government. He concluded finally by saying that the People's Commission had been a wonderful experience which few of us will ever forget.

In the opinion of *The Line of March*, the Commission was a significant event not only for the SLHC but also for the fight to save the NHS throughout the country. The picture it uncovered, though specific to South London, nevertheless has resonances throughout England. To achieve their full effect, the results and conclusions of the Commission must become widely disseminated. The event was a powerful demonstration of the self-motion of the movement to safeguard the future of the NHS, and its unity in fighting to achieve its aims. As a People's Commission, it was a powerful contribution to informing the participants and the people at large. It further contributes to the demand to hold the government to account for its wrecking and privatisation of the NHS, to repeal the Health and Social Care Act, to outlaw the dictate of private interests over the NHS, and to ensure a full binding public enquiry with the aim of restoring to the public Treasury what has been stolen through using the health service to pay the rich.

Outlaw the Involvement of the Private Sector in Public Services!

Save Lewisham Hospital Judicial Review

The Judicial Review Hearing was held from July 2-4 at the Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand, central London.

Day 1 of the hearing was preceded by a big demonstration of 150 people outside the court with banners and placards: "Save Lewisham Hospital" and "Justice for Lewisham". The banner "A Victory for Lewisham Hospital Is a Victory for Everyone" was very prominent. So many people wanted to attend the hearing that Judge Justice Silber agreed to a bigger courtroom to seat the gallery of 70-80 campaigners and delayed the start until they all were seated. The first day was dominated by legal arguments on *ultra vires* (challenging Hunt on abuse of his powers in shutting down acute and full maternity services) from the Lewisham Council's barrister.

In Day 2 of the hearing, the government's legal team tried to argue that "the Trust", i.e. the one in financial difficulties, could be any trust (e.g. Lewisham Hospital Trust) in order to give the government legal justification for dragging Lewisham Hospital into sorting out the financial debts of a different Trust. The two legal teams representing the SLHC and Lewisham Council dealt with this deceit very effectively. The rest of the day concerned the government's failure in its re-organisation proposals to meet the "4 Tests" required for NHS reconfigurations, (local GP commissioning support, clinical evidence to justify service changes, enhanced consultation of public and patients and justification for any impact on patient choice). The failure to meet these four tests was very clearly demonstrated in the Peo-

ple's Commission. Evidence was clearly put forward such as the failure to consult on children entirely, the failure to consult on the maternity option adopted, the lack of clinical evidence that would stand up to scrutiny, and the reduction in choice, especially for women was a blow for the government case.

A dramatic back-drop to Day 3 was NHS London's announcement that they intend to close nine A&Es from London's 29 current A&Es over the next five to six years. However, the highlight of the day was the amazingly weak legal defence of why the government need not pay regard to the "4 Tests" commitment repeatedly given by the Prime Minister and Secretary of State specifically on Lewisham: that services would not be diminished or closed unless the "4 Tests" were met. The government QC had to argue that the Secretary of State should not be "fettered" by having to keep his promises.

The "4 Tests" were a real challenge to the government side: the QC was unsure whether he could answer the judge as to whether and when the Secretary of State could or should respect these tests – precipitating an embarrassing urgent consultation described as a "car crash".

At the end of the hearing there was a feeling of great optimism that the SLHC and Lewisham Hospital had won the case against the government hands down. Tony O'Sullivan of the Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign summed up this feeling by commenting: "I felt extremely proud of our legal team, our community, our hospital and our campaign."

Whose NHS? Our NHS!

The Hunt for Hunt

On Saturday, June 15, the Hunt for Hunt action, a Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign initiative joined by Unite, the union, was a very successful event.

The action included local NHS campaign groups from all over London, including Charing Cross, Hammersmith, Central Middlesex and Ealing, comprising some 150 people travelling in four coaches. They all converged on Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt's constituency in Farnham, Surrey. The aim of the action was to make clear in no uncertain terms that people are totally opposed to the attacks on health care and to the privatisation of the NHS.

Because of Jeremy Hunt's inability to visit a NHS Hospital as Health Secretary, the campaign decided to take the fight to his doorstep. An invitation to meet Unite and local people in Farnham had been ignored, with not even a polite declining of the invite.

Petition points were set up in Farnham and the activists went door to door, engaging residents in discussion about the issues. Thousands of leaflets were distributed, headlined, "*Our NHS Is under Threat* – Will you help us to save it?" The leaflet stated: "We are calling on Jeremy Hunt to: *Stop* the closure of vital hospital services; *Stop* the privatisation of the NHS; protect *local* hospitals for *local* people."

The response from Jeremy Hunt's constituents was very positive and friendly with many people expressing their deep concerns about what is happening to the NHS and deploring its increasing privatisation. What quickly became apparent was that the local people of Farnham were equally concerned about the future of the NHS in their MP's hands. In just two hours, over 1,000 Farnham residents signed the petition against the wrecking of the NHS, and many people thanked the activists for coming to their area to campaign in defence of the NHS.

In the afternoon, a march was held through Farnham with placards and banners proclaiming, "Whose NHS? Our NHS!" and "Hands Off Our A&Es!". The response by the local people in the town was very supportive. The march called in at the Conservative Party Headquarters but as was expected, neither Jeremy Hunt nor anyone else came out to talk!

The day ended with a short rally in which the chair of the Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign Louise Irvine, the deputy chair Helmut Heib, a representative from Unite and the Ealing Hospital Campaign gave rousing speeches. Helmut Heib powerfully pointed out the grave dangers facing the NHS while Louise Irvine spoke of the significance of the day's action and the warm response by the local people of Jeremy Hunt's own constituency which should make him very worried!

After the day's events, 19 local health activists turned up in the evening for a social organised by Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign and Unite with plans initiated to develop the work in Farnham and elsewhere in Surrey in fighting the hospital closures and privatisation of the NHS. It was felt that this bodes very well for the future and indicates that the fight to save the NHS is a nation-wide struggle.

RCPB(ML) Film Of the Hunt for Hunt
http://youtu.be/oyG65xnvaus

BUILDING RESISTANCE AGAINST AUSTERITY

Osborne's Government Spending Review

The Coalition government loses no opportunity to pursue its "shock and awe" austerity programme against the working class and people. It is acting as a dictatorship with no effective opposition from within Westminster.

George Osborne's government spending review on Wednesday, June 26, was dubbed as keeping on with his "plan for pain" by the *Financial Times*. This "plan for pain" is described as the beginning of a second wave of austerity, because the world has not stuck to Osborne's script, and reality has not been kind to the Chancellor.

What is certain is that the world will not stick to the government's script in the future either. The attempts to set the political discourse in terms of "efficiency" and "reducing the deficit" is fraudulent and diversionary. In reality, it is a programme of slashing investments in social programmes and putting the state treasury and public services in the service of the monopolies. Nor is it designed to solve the problems of the economy and will not do so. The equation does not work like that.

Rather, it is a programme to attack the vulnerable and disregard the public good in favour of upholding the interests of the monopolies and the financial elite. At its core is to divert attention away from the need for change in the direction of the economy, and instead brand those on "welfare", as well as all public sector workers, as the problem, as those who do not recognise the public good but only their own interests. This is truly to turn truth on its head.

Opposition to the neo-liberal "austerity" agenda continues to grow and develop, with more and more sections of society going into action. Osborne's spending review is the declaration of the ruling elite that the working class and people are not going to be listened to under the guise that there is no alternative to this neo-liberal agenda. However, there is an alternative to the wrecking of the economy and the attacks on the rights of all. The working class movement is developing the fight for this alternative, which must be spearheaded by the Workers' Opposition. Crucial to planting the seeds of this Workers' Opposition is for the working class and people to develop their own independent thinking, their own independent programme, agenda and politics. A new direction for the economy is called for, the alternative must be fought for on the basis that it is the working class and people who must decide!

No to Austerity! Fight for the Alternative!

The Right to a Decent Standard of Living in Old Age Must Be Guaranteed

The Pensions Bill, presented to parliament on May 9, received its second reading on June 17 and subsequently entered the committee stage. The Committee, whose responsibility is to examine the Bill line by line, was expected to report to the Commons on July 11. The Pensions Bill as presented enforces private and monopoly right by further attacking the right to a livelihood and the claims of retired workers on the social product.

The planned increase in the retirement age to 67 will be brought forward by eight years by this Bill, as well as introducing a continual review of the retirement age. Bound to the notion that pensions and other claims of workers on added value are a cost, the Bill seeks to reduce the "costs" of pension provision to businesses, making it law for the pensions regulator to make such "cost" minimisation a consideration.

Other main points of the Bill are: to introduce single-tier state pension system in place of the current system of basic pension, second state pension and pension credits; to replace the existing system of bereavement benefits with a new support payment; and to reform the arrangements of private pensions, including a system to automatically transfer individual pensions when changing employment.

Moving the second reading, Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith summarised the Bill as "about putting in place a welfare and pension system that both reflects the reality of our society now and puts us on a fair and, I hope, sustainable basis for the future. That principle underpins vital changes proposed in the Bill: ... between now and 2035 the number of people in the UK over state pension age is currently set to increase from 12.4 million to 15.6 million, a rise of 26%. With ever more pensioners ... this new pension system reflects the fact that working patterns and family life have changed over years, that people need to take personal responsibility for planning and saving for their retirement."

The argument is that, with the development of society, which has led to people living on average for longer, the provision of pensions must move further in the direction of being a matter of personal saving. The perspective is both capital-centred – that pensions are both a cost and an individual matter – and anti-human – that the problem is the length of human life. Such a backward perspective can only lead to irrational arguments.

In this situation, the need is for workers themselves to become the main opposition; to take up, elaborate and make their demands based on the political programme to stop paying the rich and invest in social programmes. Only an organised Workers' Opposition with its own independent politics can smash through the prevalent Westminster consensus and the stranglehold of the establishment parties. It is up to the working class to bring its human-centred perspective to bear on the economy, setting its direction so that it provides the rights of all, including a decent standard of life from birth until death, with a guarantee.

NO TO THE IDEOLOGUES OF AGGRESSION!

Further Justifications for Intervention and Interference

Recent events have shown that the Coalition government remains committed to meddling in the affairs of the countries of North Africa and western Asia, while the former Labour Prime Minister and Special Envoy for the Middle East Quartet, Tony Blair, has re-emerged as the main spokesperson for increasing interference and intervention.

Blair's recent article in *The Guardian*, which mainly focuses on the situation in Egypt, sums up the colonialist logic and approach – he writes: "Bringing about stability in the Middle East is not somebody else's job, it's ours." He continues, "It will be a difficult and expensive struggle and it is essential that the people of the region know that the west is on their side." In his article Blair defends the recent intervention of the army in Egypt apparently on the grounds that the mass demonstrations, estimated to have involved over 18 million Egyptians, were "an awesome manifestation of people power", which if not checked would have led to what he describes as "chaos". In order to substantiate this point he speculates on what would happen if equivalent numbers came out on the streets of Britain. He concludes that the government would be toppled, while assuring readers that in Britain the army would not intervene.

For Blair, what is of most concern is "people power" and

how to contain it particularly where the mechanisms of representative democracy are weak after years when Britain and its allies have financed and supported repressive and dictatorial regimes as was the case in Egypt. In regard to Egypt he therefore claims that "disengagement is not an option" since allegedly "chaos" would be the result. In regard to Syria, where Britain and its allies have created and unleashed chaos, Blair also claims that continuing interference is vital. He makes similar arguments in regard to Iran, Libya, Yemen and Pakistan and applies the same logic in regard to sub-Saharan Africa and central Asia.

Blair's comments about the need for Britain and its allies to say "engaged" in Egypt were largely echoed by the comments of Foreign Office Minster, Alistair Burt and by William Hague, the Foreign Secretary, although both placed more emphasis on the need for that country to return to what they referred to as "democratic processes". The Foreign Secretary in particular has continued to express the views of the British government on what form of democracy should be adopted in Egypt, as if Britain were still the colonial ruler of that country, and made it clear that its meddling and interference will continue.

In regard to the situation in Syria, the government has also continued its interference in the internal affairs of that country. The Foreign Secretary openly welcomed the election of the new president of the Syrian National Coalition, the main opposition to the government of Syria, which is openly supported, armed and promoted by the British government and other "friends of Syria" as the "legitimate" representative of the Syrian people. In connection with its continued interference in Libya, another country where the military and other intervention by Britain and its allies have created chaos, the Foreign Secretary has announced that Britain would provide training for over 2,000 personnel from the Libyan armed forces. Britain and its closest allies in Libya, the US, France and Italy, are committed to training and thereby continue to exert their influence over the armed forces of Libya in a country in which they have illegally orchestrated regime change and where it is now also claimed that they are concerned about a "democratic transition". The British government is also committed to provide training for Libya's police and will interfere in various sectors of the economy.

Blair's justifications and the actions and declarations of the current government show that the rulers of Britain remain committed to a foreign policy based on interference and intervention under the guise of promoting democracy, preventing chaos and acting as the greatest friends of the people's struggles. In reality, such meddling is undertaken to prevent the people of the world realising their aspirations and solely in the geo-political and economic interests of the big powers. Such meddling and interference by the rulers of Britain and their representatives, which harks back to the days of empire, must be completely rejected and condemned.

ANARCHY INTERNATIONALLY:

Furthering Aims of Monopolies in the Face of Increasing Exposure and Division

The 39th G8 summit was held on June 17-18 at the Lough Erne Hotel and resort near Enniskillen in the north of Ireland. Participating were political leaders from Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the US. The UK hosted the event as it assumed the one-year Presidency in January this year.

It will be remembered that in 2005, Britain previously hosted the G8 at Gleneagles in Scotland, when Tony Blair was Prime Minister, at the height of the war against Iraq.Then massive demonstrations took place, followed by the 7/7 explosions.

At this summit, the big powers sought to further the aims of the monopolies, principally through: launching negotiations towards a major "free trade" agreement between the EU and the US; protecting the assumed right of the rich to evade tax under the pretext of preventing such tax avoidance; and attempting to agree plans for further intervention, specifically in Syria.

"Free Trade" Agreement

The EU and US announced the start of formal talks on a free trade agreement, unprecedented both in its size and in the short timescale through which it is to be pushed – a mere 18 months.

Presented as eliminating protectionism, boosting growth and jobs, the aim of this agreement is to remove restrictions on the powerful multinational corporations against the interests of the people. In particular, it seeks the liberalisation of the service sector, including opening up state-run services such as the NHS to the monopolies. The devastation of the NHS via the Health and Social Care Act has been exposed as preparation for this organised plunder.

Contradictions had surfaced over the issue of exclusions. France had threatened to veto talks unless the film and television industry were left out of negotiations. The other parties conceded to this demand on Friday, but in so doing opened the door to further such omissions. It is an open secret, for example, that the US is aiming for financial services to be excluded. Furthermore, campaigners for the NHS have been pressing for healthcare to be left out of the agreement.

Intervention

It is a tried-and-tested method to dress up the aims of the big powers and the monopoly interests they represent with high-sounding phrases and pretexts. One major such theme of the G8 summit was promoting "transparency", preventing "corruption" and ending "tax avoidance".

This has been particularly promoted by the British government. Its G8 factsheet on transparency begins: "Transparency about the ownership of companies and land and also about where money flows from and to is critical for developing countries. Removing conflict and corruption, having the presence of property rights and strong institutions are vital for countries to move from poverty to wealth."

"Strong institutions" is an echo of the imperialist line of "good government", a well-known cover for intervention, particularly in Africa, while by "property rights" we understand monopoly right.

Related to this, on the issue of Syria, which was a key aspect of the G8 negotiations with the stand of Russia currently a barrier to the aims of Anglo-American imperialism, William Hague ominously declared that there are no "palatable" choices and that they are not "in the business of ruling out any options".

Tax

Following a series of high-profile exposures resulting from the actions of campaigns within the movement against austerity, the big powers have been forced to appear to be dealing with avoidance of tax by the rich and the monopolies.

Again it is Britain that has been taking the initiative here, and it is with Britain that the hypocrisy is most blatant. Britain is a world leader in maintaining tax havens, such as the Cayman Islands, Jersey and numerous other locations, with a record of saving the monopolies from paying tax all along the line. The new tax avoidance rules introduced in the recent budget actually "give a green light to large companies and wealthy individuals to continue avoiding tax"*. This is the leadership that Cameron brought to the G8: the aim is to further institutionalise tax avoidance under the banner of its prevention.

Military takeover

Such is the opposition to the secret, anti-democratic and pro-monopoly discussions and deals made by the G8, that it has become the norm for massive military operations to surround its summits. Yet, even by G8 standards, the scale of the security arrangements around the Lough Erne hotel was enormous, described by The Guardian as "overwhelming".

Military vehicles of various descriptions – jeeps, helicopters and boats – were deployed. Reminiscent of a medieval fortress, the summit was held on a small island surrounded by a steel barrier; this barrier itself cost over £4m. The total cost came to a reported £50m. It is also significant that of the 8,000 police deployed, nearly half were brought over from England and Wales.

Actions

Actions organised in opposition had a local character compared to previous G8 meetings. Around 1,000 people took the 6-mile "G8 Not Welcome" march from the centre of Enniskillen to the security perimeter. This included people protesting against "fracking" for natural gas, which is being driven through at the demand of the monopolies without serious investigation into the effects on the human and natural environment and which is a big issue in the region, alongside those opposing austerity, particularly cuts to public services.

Demonstrations also took place in Belfast and Dublin. 10,000 attended Belfast's Big IF concert aimed at the issue of global poverty.

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* War on Want, "Avoiding avoidance: Why the government's proposed 'anti-abuse' rule will fail to tackle tax avoidance", 21 January 2013, http://www.waronwant.org/attachments/Avoiding Avoidance UPDATE - 21-01-13.pdf

Unconstitutional Shock-and-Awe Closure of the Greek State Broadcaster

In an act of shock-and-awe, the largest party in the Greek governing coalition unilaterally and without notice announced the immediate closure of the state broadcaster Hellenic Radio-Television (ERT) on June 11, with the loss of all 2,656 jobs. This was an act of constitutional significance and has intensified the deep political crisis in Greece.

Coalition leader New Democracy declared the shutdown under the pretext of corruption and wastefulness, announcing that a new national broadcaster, New Hellenic Radio, Internet and Television (NERIT), would be launched with a reduced budget and less than half the number of staff. In this respect, it represents a part of the austerity programme, particularly given the passing of an act of parliament in April to cut 15,000 public sector jobs by the end of 2014 as a condition for the next instalment of funds from the EU, European Central Bank and IMF. Further, it represents a move towards increased private control of broadcasting in Greece, while allowing the government to tighten its hold over what remains of public broadcasting.

Over and above even these considerations, the shutdown of ERT was in violation of the Greek Constitution. It was issued as a presidential decree or "act of legislative content" – a form of prerogative power exercised on the advice of the government, requiring no preceding parliamentary debate. Article 44 of the Constitution states: "Under extraordinary circumstances of an urgent and unforeseeable need, the President of the Republic may, upon the proposal of the Cabinet, issue acts of legislative content."

Not only was the decree against the spirit of "an urgent and unforeseeable need", it was in no way made "upon the proposal of the Cabinet", being brought about by one party of the ruling coalition without so much as consultation with, let alone the agreement of, the other two.

The ERT workers' union POSPERT also challenged the decree on grounds of the European Charter of Social Rights, the European Convention of Human Rights and Article 15 of the Greek Constitution, which covers public broadcasting.

This act indicates a new level of brazenness in politics. The ruling class is treating its own political theory and mechanisms with contempt; the act is a sign that it is prepared to abandon its own norms of governance. The decree was a declaration that We Will Act, regardless, and opens the door to the real possibility of the suspension of the democratic process in Greece. These developments are a sign of the weakness of the establishment élite in the country at this time.

The proportion of votes received by the parties that make up the governing coalition is reflective of the broad disaffection in Greece with representative democracy (the combined share of the three coalition partners combined was just 48%). The previous party-in-power/party-in-opposition status quo was shattered in recent elections with a collapse in the vote of the dominant establishment parties. In the resulting disequilibrium, a coalition representing a minority of electoral support has clung onto power in the face of widespread opposition to its forcing through of the devastating austerity programme demanded by the financial oligarchy. The present act, which Greek trade unions have described as a "coup-like move", has blown this unstable situation apart, rupturing the coalition with the exit of the Democratic Left.

This goes hand in hand with the manner in which the shutdown took place, which can only be described as shock tactics. In a matter of hours following the sudden announcement of the dissolution of ERT, the broadcast signal had been completely shut down and screens tuned to its channels went black. Communications were severed, while armed police evicted staff from transmission stations, according to reports.*

Rather than be sent reeling by the speed of developments, the response of people was determined: oppose the dictate and keep broadcasting. Tens of thousands have been demonstrating in Athens, Thessaloniki and other Greek cities, as well as outside of Greek embassies around the world, including in London. BBC staff in Scotland also staged a demonstration. ERT staff have remained in the Athens headquarters and other buildings such as the ERT3 studio in Thessaloniki, continuing to broadcast via the internet and with the assistance of a satellite provided by the European Broadcasting Union.

On June 17, Greece's highest administrative court, the Council of State, rejected the shutdown and ordered that ERT be permitted to resume broadcasting. However, it also upheld the proposal to replace ERT with a smaller operation. The government has so far ignored this ruling, while the workers' more than two-week occupation continues.

In a press release, the POSPERT union declared: "The now two-party coalition government will not terrorise us with its authoritarianism! We are working for public ERT, we are defend-

ing democracy! We are not giving up the fight, unless ERT opens again as if it had never been shut down for even a day, without any layoffs or violation of labour rights."

In an interview with Press TV, POSPERT leaderPanagiotis Kalfagiannis said: "There is no solution to this without involving the ERT employees. The workers have to be an integral part of any development. The ERT frequencies have to be restored."

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*For a detailed account, see Michael Nevradakis, "Chronicling the Greek Government's Shutdown of ERT", www.dailykos.com, June 17

Condemn the Acts of Piracy Against Bolivian President Evo Morales!

On July 2, in flagrant violation of international law and diplomatic norms, the governments of France, Italy, Portugal and Spain refused to grant permission for the plane carrying Bolivia's President Evo Morales to fly over their territory, forcing the plane to make an emergency landing in Austria. Paris, Rome, Lisbon and Madrid acted at the behest of the US, under the pretext that former CIA agent Edward Snowden may have been on Morales' plane. The US has made it clear that it will bully, pressure and openly coerce any country that might provide refuge for Snowden, who exposed the massive US spying and violation of people's rights in the US and throughout the world.

Whether or not Snowden was on Morales' plane is not the central point. What is central is that the Obama regime has arrogated to itself the "right" to violate international law as it deems fit. The big powers of Old Europe, Britain and certain Commonwealth countries have adopted piracy and gangsterism as their mode of conduct in international affairs. It confirms the disintegration, erasure and sweeping away of previous arrangements that prevailed in the latter half of the 20th century. The forcing down of Morales' plane is one more indication of this. It is a very dangerous situation which must be comprehensively opposed.

"We have dignity, sovereignty and pride in our peoples," President Evo Morales said. He stressed that he will not permit any country to subject Bolivia to any form of blackmail or intimidation such as the treatment he received. He pointed out what happened to him was no mistake, but part of the imperial politics against the Bolivian people.

Bolivia sent an official letter to the United Nations calling on it to censure the European countries which did not permit President Evo Morales and his aircraft to fly over their airspace or refuel.

Leaders from the member nations of Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) participating in mass rally in Bolivia on July 4, supporting President Morales and Bolivia's sovereignty

The letter, delivered to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, was signed by Bolivia's permanent representative to the UN, Sacha Llorenti, and details the actions of the French, Portuguese and Spanish authorities against the presidential plane. It says that such actions on the part of the countries concerned pave the way to a harmful precedent that could affect other dignitaries and endanger peaceful coexistence between states.

The letter describes the behaviour by these countries as a flagrant violation of international law and the personal security and liberty of the Bolivian president. A breach of the most basic rules of diplomacy to which states are bound has been committed, the letter goes on to say. It calls the acts unjustifiable aggression on the constitutionally elected President by virtue of his political position. It points out that having someone like Evo Morales occupy the office of President certainly irks the global powers who believe they still have imperial authority over the nations of the world, the letter says.

In the letter, Bolivia asks the UN Secretary General to report to the international community to ensure that this incident does not go unpunished and to prevent setting a dangerous precedent that could affect other heads of state.

The letter calls on Ban Ki-moon to himself speak out against these actions that clearly prove that liberty and the most basic rights can be subjugated to the interests of the few at the expense of the majority.

The actions of European states against the Bolivian presidential aircraft are outrageous hooliganism, which violate all norms of immunity of a president of a republic, the sovereignty of countries and the official flights of their highest representatives.

The dangerous levels of anarchy and incoherence in international affairs can be seen in the fact that the European Union is protesting against the US spying on their official offices in Washington and Brussels yet member countries are co-operating with the US by committing acts of piracy against the President of Bolivia, denying lawful access to their airspace and boarding and searching his presidential aircraft, which are all hostile acts in violation of Bolivian sovereignty and international norms.

These events show that private interests have taken over the governments of these countries involved. Might does not make right and never shall no matter how righteous the cause is deemed to be. Where is the British government to denounce these acts of international hooliganism against Evo Morales, President of the sovereign Plurinational State of Bolivia?

Condemn this International Piracy! No to the Violation of the International Rule of Law!

DEMONSTRATIONS IN BRAZIL:

The Voice of the People Must Be Heeded

By Renato Rabelo, National President of the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB)

The popular and youth manifestations that are growing and expanding all over the country have a reason, a social cause. For PCdoB, democratic matters are intertwined with social issues. Therefore, for democratic advance to take place, it is precious and auspicious to know through these more authentic manifestations what our people urge for and feel tormented by.

Usually there are greater reasons that build up and surface through apparently simple claims. The fight against high prices for urban transportation and the dissatisfaction with the extremely high investments in the construction of football stadia are acute manifestations of the stress the population from great urban centres in Brazil is undergoing.

Our cities have grown at fast pace, however, without having adequate structure for such transformation. That caused a concentration of severe social problems, making cities inhospitable for their inhabitants, mainly the ones who live in the outskirts. The outbreak of these happenings that are spreading throughout the country is a warning. This is an outpouring of the real life conditions in the cities, which amongst other problems are now on the agenda and must be faced as a priority.

We believe that governments that are really democratic and committed to ensuring social advance, that is, the governments that we are leading or somehow participating in, have the duty to look for ways to start addressing these serious urban problems. One of the solutions advocated by the PCdoB Programme is having an Urban Reform with an integrated development plan, renewal and humanisation of the cities. It is a growing demand.

Measures to face the urgent housing issue, which strongly impacts on urban centres, have been taken by President Dilma Rousseff through Minha Casa Minha Vida Programme (My House, My Life). This programme helps the financing of popular housing. There are also several ongoing projects to solve structural and urban mobility issues through PAC2 [Phase Two of the Growth Acceleration Programme]. The burning issue now is to finance quality mass transportation, enabling citizens to displace without having to constantly use cars.

PCdoB will engage in finding the necessary emergency measures to reduce the price of urban transportation fares and to improve the overall efficacy of public transportation. PCdoB will act by using its influence in the social movement and its participation in democratic governments. There must be a joint effort gathering the federal, state and city governments in order to find a way to meet these needs.

BUILDING FRIENDSHIP WITH THE DPRK:

Historic Anniversaries of the Korean People

A Friends of Korea reception and social was held at the RCPB(ML)'s John Buckle Centre on July 7. A meeting of remembrance to mark the 19th anniversary of the passing of President Kim Il Sung on July 8, the social also celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Korean people's victory in the Korean War. The guest of honour was Hyon Hak Bong, Ambassador at the Embassy of the DPRK in London, who gave a short presentation outlining the outstanding achievements of President Kim Il Sung. The meeting was chaired by Michael Chant, Secretary of the Friends of Korea, and hosted by the Preparatory Committee (Britain) to Celebrate the Korean People's Victory in the Korean War, whose other participants also made brief contributions. After the formal part of the meeting, the participants socialised with the Korean comrades over refreshments and Korean snacks.

Ambassador Hyon Hak Bong speaking, with Michael Chant in the chair

The DPRK defeated the US and its allies and forced it to sign the Armistice Agreement on July 27,1953, and quickly built up an independent, socialist state from the ashes of war which, despite all difficulties faced over the last 60 years, continues to be a bulwark against US imperialism, a force for peace in the world, and the beacon for the Korean reunification movement. This is no small achievement given the extent of the Korean holocaust and the four million Korean civilians who died in that war. US imperialism has never ceased its aggressive activities against the DPRK, and continues to be ever more wanton in its violation of the UN Charter and international law.

In a speech to a unit of the Korean People's Army in October 1953, Kim Il Sung said:

"As you know, the Korean war ended in our victory. It is true that we failed to wipe out the enemy and we have not yet reunified the country. However, we defeated the huge armed forces of US imperialism, the ringleader of world imperialism, and its 15 satellite countries, and forced them to sign the Armistice Agreement as we demanded. This is a great victory for us."

Kim Il Sung recounts: "Once a British Labour Party member came to Korea as a representative of the Women's International Democratic Federation. When she was coming to Korea she did not think it likely that the troops of the US and her own country could ever commit such barbarities. While in Korea she looked around … and witnessed with her own eyes the tragic scenes caused by the indiscriminate bombing by the US and British imperialists on our peaceful towns and villages and their massacre of innocent people in cold blood. This changed her views and, on her return home, she exposed their crimes."

Kim Il Sung delineated the victories achieved in the three-year war:

"First, the Korean people and the People's Army, through their heroic struggle, repulsed the enemy's invasion and defended the democratic base in the northern half of the Republic with honour."

"Second, in the Korean war the Korean people and the People's Army not only inflicted a military defeat upon the enemy but also caused him a severe political setback."

"Third, the Korean people, the People's Army, Party and government bodies, social organisations and their officials were tempered, and they gained rich experience in the three years of the war. This is one of the greatest victories we achieved."

"Fourth, the justness of our people's fighting aim and their self-sacrificing struggle have greatly raised our country's external position and prestige, and we made a great contribution to the cause of safeguarding universal peace and security."

Kim Il Sung explains the factors that enabled the Koreans to defeat the forces of aggression. The Korean people, he says, are the awakened people of a new Korea who have regained their country and sovereignty. They have the Workers' Party of Korea as their leading and guiding force. And they enjoy the support and encouragement of the international democratic forces.

The working class and people have to ensure that another unjust and criminal US-led war of aggression with Britain's participation will never again happen on Korean soil. The *Line of March* is convinced that the Korean people will prevail, once and for all, over US-led attempts to thwart their socialist nation-building project.

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