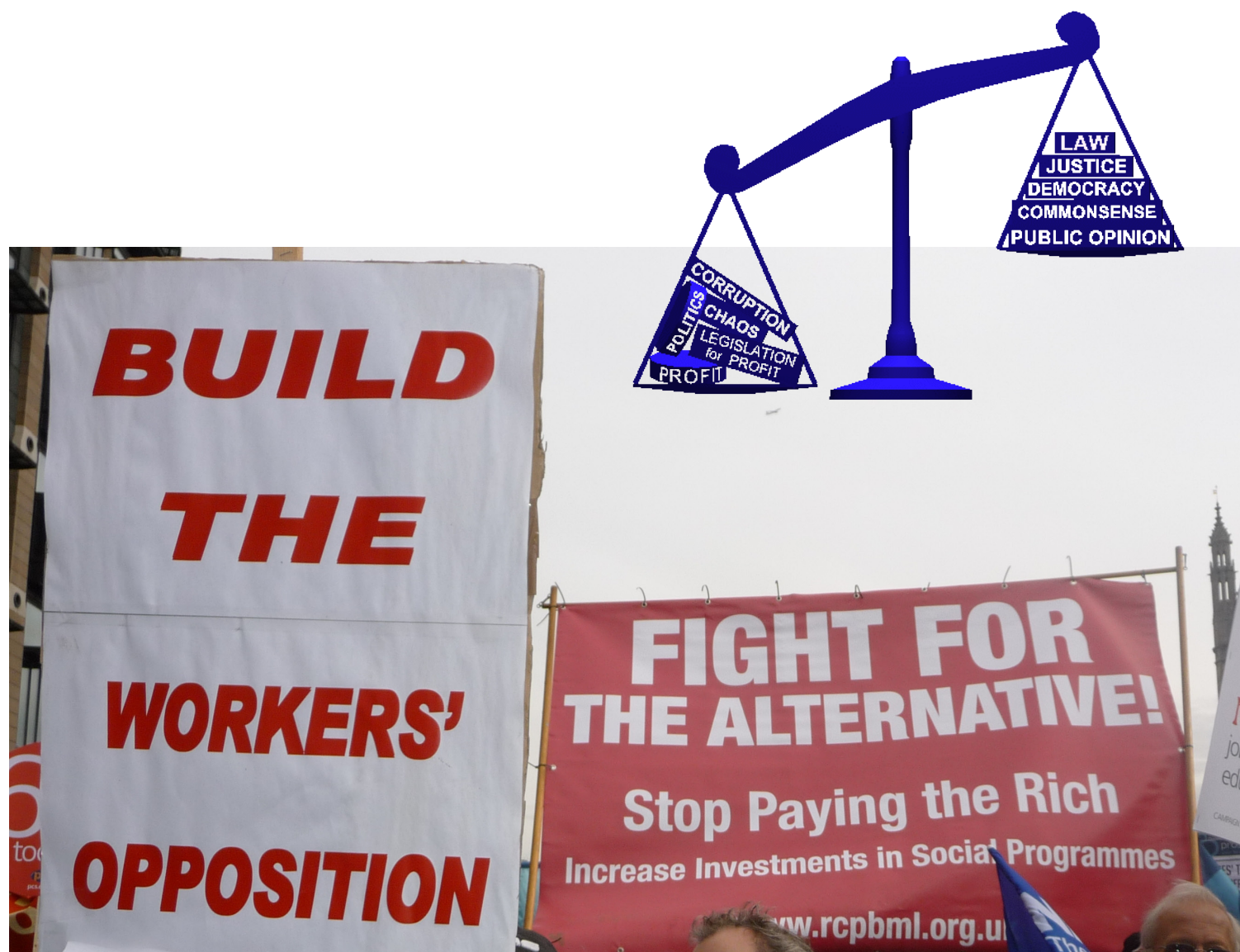


# The Line of March

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## ***THE TASKS OF THE WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT***



**The Future Lies in Fighting in  
Defence of the Rights of All!  
Build the Workers' Opposition!  
Public Right, Not Monopoly Right!**

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## *FROM THE TUC CONGRESS 2013*

# The Tasks of the Working Class Movement in the Wake of Congress

The basic task facing the working class movement in the wake of the TUC Congress 2013 held in Bournemouth remains to strengthen the organisation and resistance of the organised workers' movement, and to fight for a change in the direction of society. The TUC Congress took a stand against the neo-liberal "austerity" programme, but to transform this into a genuine fight for the alternative the movement needs to fully cast away the illusions generated by the influence of neo-liberalism in the working class movement.

Perhaps more than anything, what epitomised these neo-liberal assumptions was the speech of Ed Miliband. When directly challenged whether he supported or opposed "austerity", in the light of his speech which did not give a clear answer to this issue, he answered, of course, he opposed that agenda, but did not want to make promises a Labour government could not keep because of the need to stick to "strict spending limits". This is not the politics of the alternative, it is not the politics of fighting for a change in the direction of the economy, it is not the politics of challenging the fraudulent "austerity" agenda. It is based on outmoded and outdated assumptions that there is a finite amount which can be raised for the public treasury from taxes, that of course the rich should pay more than they at presently do, but that investments in social programmes are a "cost", that workers' wages are a "cost", that pensions are a "cost", and so on. The alternative in contrast is based on the principle that all workers in the social economy contribute to producing the national wealth and rather than just receiving their "fair share", their claims on society should take priority over the demands of the private owners of monopoly capital. The status-quo is based on the denial of the rights of the working class and people, and the crux of the fight of the organised workers' movement right at this time is for the



affirmation and recognition of these rights.

The prevailing atmosphere of the 2013 Congress was that of getting further organised to resist the imposition of the fraudulent "austerity" agenda and to take up collective responsibility for the fate of society. It was not to toe the line or tamely submit to some other force or political party simply because it declares that it is pro-labour. What was weakest about the Congress agenda was the lack of recognition of the need for the organised working class to develop its own independent thinking, politics and programme. At the same time, there exists a strong determination that whoever advocates a programme against the public interest is going to get opposed by whatever means necessary by the workers' movement. This is the fertile ground in which to develop the movement to build and strengthen the Workers' Opposition, the opposition of the organised working class against the "austerity" agenda and fight for the alternative, for a new direction of the economy and for society, in which it is the working class which is empowered and in which the people are the decision-makers.

## *The Future Lies in Fighting in Defence of the Rights of All!*



# Royal Mail Privatisation and the Fight to Defend Public Services

One of the crucial and most passionate debates at the TUC Congress 2013 was on the necessity to oppose the privatisation of Royal Mail. The debate was also linked to the struggle to reverse rail privatisation and the need to take a stand in defence of all public services.

As if it were a calculated insult to the TUC and the workers of Royal Mail, the government made the announcement of the flotation of Royal Mail on the day following the conclusion of the Congress. Business minister Michael Fallon declared that the government would press ahead with the disposal of the majority of Royal Mail despite the fact of the possibility of workers of the Communication Workers Union (CWU) balloting for strike action in mid-October. The government then lost no time in offering shares in Royal Mail for sale and, as has been reported, the offer was massively oversubscribed. Shares rocketed by as much as 38% within hours of the sell-off. Scandal-hit Goldman Sachs and UBS are running the sale of Royal Mail.

The government's argument that it needs to privatise Royal Mail in order to "modernise" and "compete in a thriving parcels market" is entirely fraudulent. CWU general secretary Billy Hayes remarked of the privatisation: "The taxpayer has lost out immediately and we all now face an uncertain future for our postal services which will be run for profit instead of public service. Privatisation is about greed." TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady said that "everyone knows that in the long run the postal service will get worse, just as other privatised industries have ended up abusing markets and ripping off consumers".

There has been a long struggle of the postal workers and their union, backed by public opinion, against the privatisation of what is now Royal Mail. The mover of the motion at the TUC Congress against privatisation raised the fundamental issue: who benefits? Is delivery of mail to remain a public service or is running the service to pay the rich to become paramount? The monopolies require the delivery of mail to remain in place without the necessity to pay for its full value. It is the postal workers themselves who are fighting for the public good, for the delivery of post not just to big business but to every resident in town and country to remain.

Of course, the mantra of "competing in the global market" has been gradually imposed since the neo-liberal ideology and practice has been imposed by government and the ruling elite. It is especially since the wrecking activity towards social programmes has intensified that open privatisation and the uphold-



*The campaign to protect postal services.*

ing of monopoly right against the public good have come so much to the fore, as they have with the health service. It was in 2009 that the Royal Mail workers took a stand against the government dictate of New Labour dedicated to part-privatisation and driving down the wages and conditions of the workers. Under New Labour, Royal Mail ceased to have a monopoly in the handling of letters in 2006. Today, the old arrangements have had their day, and the issue has become one of the contest between the Workers' Opposition and the owners of monopoly capital as to which the new arrangements should be.

The TUC Congress motion against Royal Mail privatisation combats the Coalition government argument that privatisation "is the only method that can secure investment for the service". This is a start. It also points out, "In the previous year Royal Mail made £411m profit as a public service, and could become self-financing." The issue is that the added value created by the Royal Mail workers, which the £411m undoubtedly underestimates through illegitimate capital-centred assumptions, must be realised in order to ensure that the postal service serves the public good.

As the motion emphasises, the postal workers have already rejected privatisation in an independent ballot by 96 per cent on a 74 per cent turnout in May this year. This was so, despite the government's attempts to buy off the workforce with its proposals of a free distribution of shares to staff. The workers are also determined to safeguard their future terms and conditions.

The privatisation of Royal Mail appears now as a *fait accompli*. The speed with which it has been implemented has been a concentrated attack not only on the postal workers, but also on the very conception of a public postal service fulfilling the needs of society and the social economy. It is an abrogation of the government's responsibility and an abuse of its power to push it through against the interests of the workers and against the popular will. The *Line of March* applauds the determination of the postal workers and of the organised working class as a whole to take a stand in defence of Royal Mail and in defence of all public services. It is essential that all should support this stand and not be reconciled to privatisation, and that the workers participate in the mass movement in defence of public right against monopoly right.



# Defend Existing Defined Pensions!

## Fight for Decent Pensions for All!

This year's TUC Congress once again debated the defence of occupational pensions, the state pension and state pension age. In the stand for the alternative, the fight is to defend existing defined pensions and for a future with decent pensions for all.

The General Council Report highlighted the *Public Services Pensions Act* passed in April that put in place legislative framework to further attack public service pensions. This Act not only outlawed final salary pension schemes in public services but, as is already happening in the private sector, it has opened up deregulation of these public sector pensions based on average earnings and Defined Benefits (DB) on retirement and their replacement with "Defined Contribution" (DC) schemes. DC schemes give no guaranteed payments on retirement but depend on the individual's "portfolio" with which you can "buy an annuity". Such DC schemes are rife with scandalously high private sector management charges, advisory charges and other costs. Furthermore, over the last year the TUC and trade union pension negotiators reported that they have had to fight the introduction of the application of EU insolvency rules to Defined Benefit pension schemes "which would have drastic implications" as DB schemes were declared insolvent. As a result, they reported that the Commissioner Barnier has said he will not include the issue of solvency rules in his plans in the changes of the EU directive although he noted "it will remain and issue in the longer term". Opposed by the trade unions, the government is also continuing to allow the destruction of private sector DB pension schemes through cash incentives and other means whilst continuing to roll out its auto enrolment of workers in pension schemes across the whole economy.

In January, the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) published the white paper *The Single-Tier Pension: a simple foundation for saving (STSP)* commencing in 2016. The General Council Report, whilst saying that a single pension for all was preferable in principle to the present fragmented and means-tested state pension, raises major concerns about "its implementation and design" which is to reduce investment in pensions and not increase them. The Report calls for extra investment in the STSP "so that it is a higher level, in order to achieve a dignified retirement for all".

In the debate at the TUC, noting "the opposition of the Scottish government to the UK pension policy", the adopted TUC composite motion on pensions condemned the decision of Westminster which has resulted in an increase in employee contributions, the raising of the normal retirement age to 68 and cuts to pension income by as much as 40%. Congress recognised that "the replacement of DB with DC pension schemes has transferred all of the risk from the employer to the employee". In this way, Congress recognised that the government is further

robbing the pension funds of their surplus to pay the financiers under the guise of paying off the government deficit. In this context, speakers in the debate pointed out that it is fraud that the government claims that "reform" of pensions is necessary because of increased longevity of the population.



Many delegates speaking at Congress reflected the continuing actions and strikes of the workers to defend occupational pensions in the workplace, to fight for a decent state pension and to oppose the raising of the retirement age. In speaking on the pension motions, the NUT delegate described as historic the agreement with the NASUWT to continued actions with other one-day strikes taking place on October 1 and 17 in defence of their pay, pensions and conditions and a further one-day national strike in November. Matt Wrack, general secretary of the Fire Brigades Union, spoke about the defence of their pensions and in particular the pension age and its relationship to the fitness of fire-fighters. He emphasised that in spite of all of the recommendations to retain their retirement age at 55, including the government's own commissioned report, firefighters were being subject to a change in their occupational pension age from 55 to 60 and beyond. As a result, the FBU have balloted for strike action by 78%, and in fact started their actions last week.

This TUC debate highlights the urgent need for these struggles to defend pensions that the workers' movement is waging to become part of an effective Workers' Opposition to hold the government to account. The government's attack on pensions must be defeated. To do this the working class must first eliminate the influence of the consciousness that presents their pensions as a "cost" on the economy. This is the self-serving notion of the ruling elite that presents themselves as the "wealth creators" and the industrial and public service workers as a cost and drain on the economy. The alternative direction for the economy is based on the reality that it is the industrial and public service workers that *add* value to the economy whilst it is the rich that are the cost and drain on it.

Taking a stand for the alternative means workers' rights are guaranteed, their livelihoods, including pensions, safeguarded, and responsibility for the public good put as the centrepiece of the social economy. Defined pensions must become a universal social programme similar to universal health care delivered by government. They must be funded in exchange for the value workers bring to the socialised economy and produce during their working lives. On this basis workers must continue their fight to defend existing defined pensions and for a future with decent pensions for all.

# The Future of the NHS

This year's debate on health was in the context of the General Council Report on the work on health, and the composite motion "The future of the NHS", which all highlighted what was described as the robust opposition by unions, patients, communities and NHS staff to the *Health and Social Care Act 2012* and now focusing on opposing the implementation of the Act.

The Congress went on to condemn the government's use of the Francis report to denigrate the NHS and in particular focused the attention rather on the "damage being inflicted on the NHS in the name of efficiency savings and competition". The Congress motion "The future of the NHS" called on the General Council among other things to "campaign to promote the value of a properly funded, accountable and publicly delivered NHS as the most fair and cost effective way of delivering high quality, comprehensive health care and to campaign to give NHS staff and local communities a genuine say in the future of their own local health services".

As the General Council Report points out, the core agenda of the government has been to "break up public services through fragmentation and privatisation". It is this wrecking of society that the General Council also agreed that the "TUC should bring together unions that were engaged in national disputes, or disputes of national significance". In this context, the General Council Report says that there is agreement among the trade unions that any relevant industrial action "needed to be part of a bigger campaign including 'mass community action' against austerity".

The mass actions of the people of Lewisham and Mid Staffordshire have been essential to this whole resistance at this



time. The challenge for the working class movement is to ensure that the victory at Lewisham through a mass campaign, which involved the whole community, in mass demonstrations, a People's Commission, in taking the struggle against the government into the courts, etc., becomes an historic point. It can serve as an inspiration and example in the fight of everyone to change the whole direction for the NHS and uphold the right to health care throughout Britain.

It is taking a stand for the alternative and planting the seeds of the Workers' Opposition which will turn things around, not surrendering the initiative to any other force but basing the workers' movement on its own thinking and independent programme and pro-social outlook.

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## *THE BATTLE FOR THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE NHS*

# Who Has the Interests of the Health Service at Heart?

On July 17, it was reported that Barts Health NHS Trust announced that it is at risk of "financial failure" and is planning major cuts. How can a Trust be in risk of "financial failure"? Health workers and professionals produce enormous value for the society, and the government must be

duty bound to exercise its responsibility for the provision of health care as a right. In other words, talk of "financial failure" is a fraud, covering over that the arrangements that the government is willing to make all favour paying the rich and go against the funding of social programmes which are essential for a modern

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society.

A spokeswoman for Barts Health Trust said: "The Trust have no plans to cut or remove services. We are currently looking at all the services we provide to identify and remove areas of waste and duplication and improve productivity and efficiency." So, there are "no plans to cut or remove services", only looking at the services to "identify and remove areas of waste and duplication and improve productivity and efficiency"! A cut by any other name!

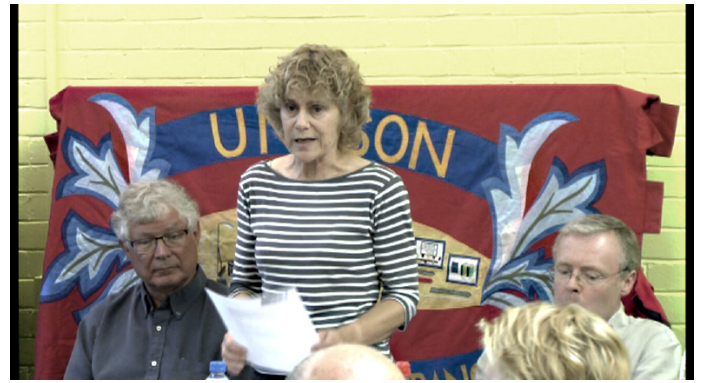
Chief executive Peter Morris wrote in an email to staff: "We are in the business of providing high-quality safe care and just like all businesses, whether in the public or private sector, we need to be a financially stable organisation. ... We are simply spending more than we have available. We need to reverse our current direction to avoid financial failure and protect services for our patients."

The chief executive is being disingenuous when he speaks of the "need to reverse our current direction". He should have spoken of the "drive to intensify the anti-social direction" of the health service. That is to say, the neo-liberal, capital-centred underlying outlook and preconceptions that the health service is "just like all businesses" is abundantly clear from his statement.

According to "We Are Waltham Forest Save Our NHS", Whipps Cross and other hospitals across East London are facing devastating cuts with 14,000 vacancies to be left unfilled, 323 nursing and admin jobs to be cut, the pay of 1,000 nurses and low paid nurses to be cut back, as well as a reduction in the number of specialist nurses.

It is in this context it now appears that concerns put to the local Adults and Older Persons Scrutiny sub-committee about proposed cuts to the Stroke Rehabilitation and Acute Services at have resulted in Barts suspending a Whipps union representative, Charlotte Monro, from Trust consultation forums over trade union activities in support of staff and local health services. Barts is also threatening disciplinary action for raising concerns in defence of services.

The Unison Waltham Forest Health Branch issued a press release on July 18 which stated: "Charlotte Monro, the chairperson for Unison at the hospital, has been barred from representing



Charlotte Monro addressing meeting of "We Are Waltham Forest"

members at the Trust-wide staff consultative forum pending an investigation in connection with her trade union activity. This is happening at a time when Barts Health Trust has announced concerns over its finances that could threaten the jobs and the future of Whipps Cross Hospital. The move has been condemned in a letter sent from Unison to Barts Trust Chief Executive Peter Morris calling for the disciplinary threat and ban to be lifted. Branch secretary for the union Len Hockey said: 'We take this extremely seriously as an attack on the right of our union and any trade unionist to represent their members effectively and to organise and to speak out and campaign in defence of staff and services. Charlotte has a record over many years of campaigning in defence of health workers and health services including to save Whipps Cross Hospital and is widely respected in the hospital and local community.'

In the view of *The Line of March*, the suspension of Charlotte Monro, a long standing union activist, and the disciplinary accusations represent an attack on all health workers and is part of the offensive against the NHS and a component of the intensification of its anti-social direction. In particular, it appears as a component of the offensive against Whipps Cross Hospital.

*The Line of March* condemns the action against the Waltham Forest Health Branch Chair and calls on all to take a stand in defence of a health service which serves the interests of the people and to vigorously oppose all attempts to further privatise the NHS and use it as a source of profits for the monopolies.

## Victory for Lewisham! The Fight Goes On!

On September 14, the Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign celebrated the judicial review success six weeks earlier with a victory parade and party. In his judgment, Mr Justice Silber ruled that the Health Secretary had acted unlawfully in approving plans to downgrade Lewisham Hospital.

Despite the rain, hundreds of people met in the centre of Lewisham and marched past Lewisham Hospital. The purpose of the day was not just to celebrate victory but also to let the community know of the dangers facing the NHS and that the fight goes on.

The celebration ended in Ladywell Fields, just by the hospital, with local bands, choirs and entertainers. A special printed edition



of *Workers' Weekly Internet Edition* was distributed along the route of the march as well as widely in Ladywell Fields.

A representative of *We Are Waltham Forest Save Our NHS* said at the rally that “the Lewisham campaign has become a symbol of what whole communities can do when people refuse

to be silenced” ... “your campaign is not over and others like mine are just beginning.” The chair of Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign Louise Irvine said, “Today we are celebrating our big win recognising that the fight goes on and hoping for many more wins to come.”

## Save Our NHS March and Rally

**O**n September 9, more than 50,000 people took part in the TUC-organised national demonstration in Manchester: “*Save Our NHS. Defend Jobs and Services. No to Austerity.*”

Represented from trade unions and their branches across the country were large contingents from people fighting to save A&E, maternity and other services at hospitals such as Lewisham, Stafford and Barts.

Dr Louise Irvine, chair of the Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign, addressed the thousands that attended the rally in Whitworth Park. She pointed out that the community got together and decided that they were going to fight, and not accept the government dictate. She said that with two mass demonstrations, the last one with 25,000 people from the community, “We took the government to court and we won our judicial review.” She then emphasised, “So today, we’ve won at the moment, we’re on the up – we’ve won one battle, but it’s just one battle in a



much longer war.” Dr Irvine said that the campaign is not under any illusions, as the threats to Lewisham Hospital and hospitals across the country still exist. She concluded, “We want to link up around the country because I think you can build a movement by building strong local campaigns as well.”

### AT THE LABOUR AND CONSERVATIVE PARTY CONFERENCES

## Miliband's One Nation Labour Cannot Settle Scores with “Austerity”

**F**ollowing his recent speech to the TUC conference, Ed Miliband gave his leader's speech to the Labour Party conference on Tuesday, September 24. Whether consciously or unconsciously, its assumptions were based on promoting illusions about the character of a class society, of a society with rich and poor, of worker and owner of capital, of the nature of “austerity” and “recovery”, of what the working class must do to lead society out of the crisis and fight for a programme for

the alternative. This is a serious problem for the development of the workers' movement and the requirement to build a Workers' Opposition to lead the fight for the rights of workers and build a future in defending the rights of all. It is a serious problem in muddying the waters when the diversion is being put up as to whether the issue is to maintain or to break the link of the organised workers with the Labour Party, as it confuses the issue of the necessity of the working class to develop its own pro-



gramme, based on its own values and its own thinking.

In what was largely a rehash of his conference speech a year earlier, Miliband continued to repeat, over and over, his “One Nation” phrase, this time supplemented by his insistence that “We are Britain” and “Britain can do better than this”.

According to Miliband, “it falls to us, to build One Nation, a country for all, a Britain we rebuild together”.

He was actually clearer last year: “One Nation: a country where everyone has a stake. One Nation: a country where prosperity is fairly shared. One Nation: where we have a shared destiny, a sense of shared endeavour and a common life that we lead together.” He sees this as taking up the mantle of Disraeli (or the 14th Earl of Derby before him, whom Miliband painted as “Red Ed” at the TUC Congress), whose vision Miliband expressed at that time as “a vision of a Britain where patriotism, loyalty, dedication to the common cause courses through the veins of all and nobody feels left out. It was a vision of Britain coming together to overcome the challenges we faced.” It was a bizarre claim then, and it appeared even more bizarre when addressed to delegates (or “audience” as Ed Miliband called them) at the TUC Congress in Bournemouth.

Last time, he asserted that for Labour a One Nation Party meant that “we can’t go back to Old Labour. We must be the party of the private sector just as much as the party of the public sector.”

This time, he called for “a politics that hears your voice – rich and poor alike – accepting their responsibilities to each other”.

What, one might ask, are the responsibilities of the poor to the rich?!

Try as he might, Miliband cannot hide the reality that, just as New Labour was the “party of business”, One Nation Labour is a party that is not willing or capable of settling scores with the neo-liberal assumptions of austerity. Miliband’s “One Nation” is practically identical to Cameron’s “we’re all in it together”.

“Leadership is about risks and difficult decisions,” he tells us. “It is about those lonely moments when you have to peer deep into your soul... guided by the only thing that matters: your sense of what is right.” This is the kind of leadership Britain needs, because “to make Britain better we have got to win a race to the top, not a race to the bottom. A race to the top which means that other countries will buy our goods the companies will come and invest here and that will create the wealth and jobs we need for the future but we are not going to be able to do it easily... It is going to be tough; it is not going to be easy... We are going to have to stick to strict spending limits to get the deficit down. We are not going to be able to spend money we don’t have...”

And to the TUC, he said: “We know life won’t be easy under a Labour government. We’ll have to stick to strict spending limits.”

In other words, austerity. “I know that means you ask: What do we have to say to our members about what would be different under a Labour government than a Tory government? The answer is we’d make different choices in pursuit of a fundamentally different vision of our economy.”

This is Miliband’s One Nation economy – meaning nothing more than “one that works for all working people, not just a few at the top”.

His recent speeches seem full of such trivialities, from which



*Ed Miliband at the TUC Congress on whether he supports or opposes austerity* follow baseless claims such as “a Labour government would get our young people working again”. It is a pragmatic idea of an economy that “works for all”, including the idea of “fairness”.

In his TUC speech, Miliband said: “What makes an economy succeed is not just a few people at the top, but the forgotten wealth creators. The people who put in the hours, do the work, do two jobs... They’re the people who make our economy strong. They’re the people we have to support to make a recovery that lasts.”

It is this putting in of extra work, squeezing out more, that makes the economy strong and that a Labour government will encourage. It is what we should all be doing. This is entirely in line with the central themes of “fairness” and “responsibility” that characterise the present Conservative-Liberal programme. An economy that “works for all” is one that gets “the best companies to come here”, one that succeeds in the global race. It is a continuation of the idea that workers and the entire population should be behind the interests of “British business”, as one nation; the illusion is that this can work fairly and responsibly for all.

Miliband wishes to create a kind of party that fits with these aims. It is in this context, and using the pretext of the Falkirk affair, that the debate is generated about the connection with the unions. Whatever the past history of the Labour Party, its present reality is that it has long since consolidated its role as a cartel party – it no longer represents the working class in parliament, but forms part of the state apparatus itself. The plans to change membership rules, including that members of affiliated unions would have to opt in rather than out of membership, are the final stages in severing the connection, taking the ending of Labour as the political wing of the organised working class to its conclusion.

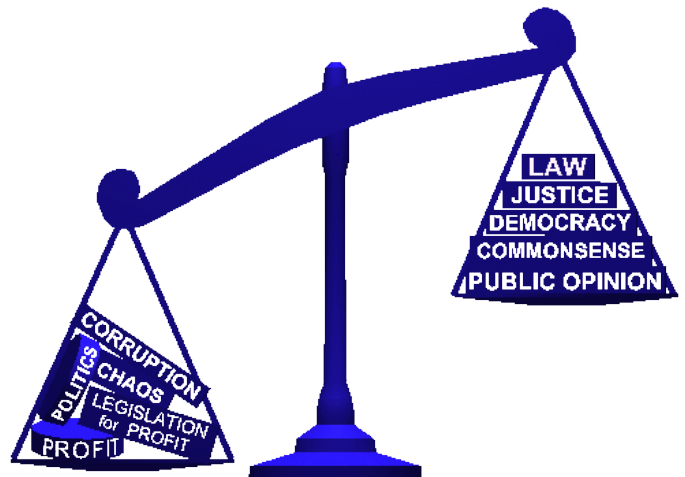
The issue for the working class, regardless, is its independent agenda. The Labour Party is groping its way in the dark towards some redefinition of itself that it hopes will work, but which is based on neo-liberal assumptions and resulting illusions. It is exactly these assumptions and illusions that block the development of the alternative, and with which the working class must settle scores. The confused ramblings of the Labour Party at this time highlight the necessity to develop that independent agenda and build the organised Workers’ Opposition to the austerity agenda and the parties which represent that agenda.

# Lobbying Bill: An Attack on the Organised Workers' Movement and on the Right to Participate in Politics

The Transparency of Lobbying, Non-party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Bill, or Lobbying Bill for short, a Government Bill presented to Parliament on July 17 by Leader of the House of Commons Andrew Lansley, had its second reading debate on September 3. Being pushed through at high speed, it was voted through the Commons following its third reading on October 9. Following the third reading vote, the Bill received its first reading in the House of Lords, where its second reading is scheduled for October 22.

Subject to widespread opposition from the outset, the Lobbying Bill has become nick-named the “Gagging Law”. Its official summary states that the Bill introduces a statutory register of consultant lobbyists and establishes a Registrar to enforce the registration requirements; regulates more closely election campaign spending by those not standing for election or registered as political parties; and strengthens the legal requirements placed on trade unions in relation to their obligation to keep their list of members up to date. Even from this description, it is clear what a mixed bag of legislation the Bill contains. The singling-out of the trade unions is particularly evident.

The TUC, in no uncertain terms, denounced the Bill as “an outrageous attack on freedom of speech worthy of an authoritarian dictatorship”. It points out that, as 2014-15 is the election year, the Bill could make next year’s congress illegal, and ban the TUC from holding a national demonstration over that whole period. The Bill is an open attack on the unions, whereby a new Certification Officer will have access to unions’ registers of the names other details of members.



“The new powers given to the Certification Officer, each union’s assurer and any investigator appointed by the CO will require unions to make membership data available to people outside the union in breach of data protection principles and privacy rights,” says the TUC. “Recent revelations about blacklisting will worry many union members that their membership will be available to outsiders.”

The TUC, in its written evidence submitted to the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee, point out that the Bill is “constitutional”, and that it contains three major changes. First, it redefines third party activity leading up to elections, shifting from the *intent* to the *effect* of an activity. Second, it widens the definition of what spending counts as “for election purposes” such that much more staff time is included. Third, it reduces the legal limit on such spending by up to 70%. Breaching the limits will be a criminal offence.

Currently, campaigning organisations including charities can spend up to £989,000 a year before a general election. This will this be cut to £390,000.

Furthermore, the Bill reduces the spending threshold for organisations to have to themselves register with the Electoral Commission, from £10,000 to £5,000 in England, and from £5,000 to £2,000 the rest of Britain and the north of Ireland. The deliberate vague wording gives the Electoral Commission wide discretionary powers of interpretation.

The Bill further follows the pattern of lumping together pieces of legislation under the banner of some particular ideal. In this, it resembles legislation attacking national minorities and



CWU delegate at TUC Congress: “Trade unions won’t be gagged”



criminalising dissent under banner of “anti-terrorism”. The present Bill is similar in its attack on the unions and on political participation under the banner of “cleaning up politics”.

Sir Stuart Etherington, Chief Executive of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, wrote to MPs on the day of the third reading to re-emphasise and raise further concerns about the Bill and its amendments. “In our view, the assurances given by ministers on the floor of the house that charities campaigning on policy issues will not be affected have not been met,” he wrote.

Graham Allen, the Labour MP for Nottingham North and chair of the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee, pointed out that the rushed schedule would make line-by-line scrutiny unlikely. He stated that “parliament has been disrespected”, declaring the timetabling “an insult to members of this house who are receiving representations about what is a very important matter but are unable to voice them in this chamber”.

This essence of the Bill is that everything political must come under the remit of the party-political system. Through changing spending thresholds, by widening the scope of definitions, and by moving from intent to effect, everything of political importance is to be brought under the control of the party-dominated system; in other words, bring all political life under the control of the cartel parties and the state they manage. It is in contempt of and mystifies the very nature of politics and political life, which is that people participate in politics to defend and further their interests.

The whole process demonstrates the extent to which the dictate of the Cameron-Clegg government prevails, with power



concentrated in the hands of the Cabinet, and a contempt for the aspirations of the electorate not only for their empowerment, but for any say in the direction of the political process. In particular, it attempts to reduce the organised workers' movement simply to a lobbying group, which must be regulated, while the root cause of the corruption at Westminster, the subordination of the whole of decision-making to the interests of the monopolies and the financial oligarchy, goes unacknowledged and unfettered.

What the times are calling for is that the Workers' Opposition must fight for democratic renewal so as to deprive those whose interests are to serve monopoly capital and hold back progress, of the power to deprive from coming to power those whose interests are to serve the general interests of society and open the door to progress. *The Line of March* calls on the working class and the whole electorate to join in the movement to defeat this whole Bill, which is against the most fundamental right of the people to participate in politics, to organise to defend their interests and to uphold the general interests of society.

## The Workers' Opposition Must Fight For a Right to a Livelihood For All!

This month at the Conservative Party conference, Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne announced another major attack on unemployed workers with his “Help To Work” Scheme. This was closely followed by David Cameron’s announcement that unemployed youth under 25 would no longer

be able to claim unemployment and housing benefit under a next Conservative government if they did not join “work, training, or education schemes”.

The unemployed are already subject to the government’s present fraudulent job creation scheme called “Work Programme”.



This scheme has left thousands of unemployed people forced to work a 30-hour week for 26 weeks without any pay other than their meagre “benefit”, or lose any financial support. As a result, very few jobs have been created and many have lost benefits and been reduced to even further poverty as a punishment if they fall foul of the arbitrary rules. Such schemes are geared not to get people into work but to get people off benefits regardless of the human cost. The new “Help To Work” is another such scheme to heap further abuse on those that cannot find work.

The reports point out that the “Help To Work” scheme is to “force unemployed claimants who have been unemployed for up to three years to either do 30 hours a week unpaid community work, report to a job centre daily, or undergo intensive treatment to tackle underlying problems like illiteracy or mental illness”. It is estimated that around 200,000 long-term Jobseeker’s Allowance claimants could be affected. Osborne told party members at the Conservative Party’s annual conference in Manchester, “For the first time, all long term unemployed people who are capable of work will be required to do something in return for their benefits to help them find work.” He continued: “Help to work – and in return work for the dole. Because a fair welfare system is fair to those who need it and fair to those who pay for it too.” The scheme which was designed by the pensions secretary Iain Duncan Smith is to cost £300 million to implement. The “fairness” of Osborne’s plan can be seen by the fact that once again money from the public treasury will end up in the coffers of those employers and organisations who agree to “create jobs” for which unemployed workers will get no pay.

There is nothing new in this “Help To Work” scheme when as media commentators recognise along with the present “Work Programme” it is identical to the US-style “workfare” (or welfare-to-work) programme. The Department for Work and Pensions’ (DWP) own 2008 internal analysis of similar programmes that were implemented in the United States, Australia and Canada concluded, “There is little evidence that workfare increases the likelihood of finding work. It can even reduce employment chances by limiting the time available for job search and by failing to provide the skills and experience valued by employers. ... Workfare is least effective in getting people into jobs in weak labour markets where unemployment is high.” In 2012, the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) reviewed the DWP’s impact assessment into how its mandatory “Work Programme” was working. Former Cabinet Office chief economist and NIESR director Jonathan Portes wrote: “Whatever your position on the morality of mandatory work programmes like these – the costs of the programme, direct and indirect, are likely to far exceed the benefits.” He continued, “At a time of austerity, it is very difficult to see the justification for spending millions of pounds on a programme which isn’t working.”

However, one could ask what is behind these almost serial announcements year on year by the Coalition government heaping straightforward humiliation on unemployed people and driving down the level of life for everyone? Such schemes literally criminalise the unemployed as part of criminalising society. Opposition politicians, some even in the Liberal side of the Coalition, express some outrage, but then confine themselves to remarks that the government should be designing better schemes to support the unemployed into work. None point out that today



the monopoly capitalist system in Britain, which is in crisis, provides no serious prospect of employment for millions of young and old alike and it is system and state of affairs in the economy that should be condemned and brought to account as such a modern economy should be able provide a livelihood for all.

The government continues to pour billions of pounds into the coffers of these monopolies, mortgage lenders and banks claiming that this will “create jobs”, whilst at the same time attempting to divert attention from the job crisis by laying the blame on the unemployed. It is alleged that they need to be either forced or “supported” into work in the labour market. But the solution is not their criminal schemes, or “creating job opportunities” in the labour market when the labour market is anachronistic and geared to paying the rich and their monopolies. The solution lies in creating a new direction for the economy that stops gearing the economy to paying the rich and their monopolies.

Such a new direction starts to change the economy so that the claim of the working class and people is at the heart of the economy and not the rich and their monopolies. It is this direction towards a planned economy that would enable society to increase its investments in production, services and social programmes. The working class must fight to guarantee the right of all to a proper livelihood for those that can work and for those unable to work. The Workers’ Opposition demands an end to these “workfare” schemes and fights for the right to a livelihood for all.

# Fight to Defend the Rights of All! No to the Racism of the Ruling Elite!

The Conservative Party conference raised a shameful hue and cry about “foreign criminals”, about “terrorists”, and about “illegal immigrants”. It did so not because such issues are an objective problem for society, but in the context of trying to create the atmosphere where the people as a whole do not fight to defend the rights of all. It is part and parcel of the anti-social offensive, the violation of the rights of individuals and collectives, and demonstrates the thoroughly racist approach of the ruling elite.

Home Secretary Theresa May’s speech to the conference laid the ground for the introduction of the Immigration Bill into Parliament. This is a bill to ensure that the deportation from Britain of immigrants can take place before the due process of appeal is taken up, and to reduce the number of grounds for appeal from 17 to four.

The attack on the rights of all by focusing on the alleged problem with “immigrants” goes hand in hand with the attack on working people, especially the youth, who allegedly require the spectre of being forced into slave labour to get them into work. Together, the attack is parcelled up into the phrase of “for hardworking people”.



It is furthermore an attempt to say that national minority communities, particularly those that espouse Islam, should be told that they cannot be considered part of society unless they uphold what the ruling elite defines as “British values”. Those that do not are to be classed not only as second-class citizens, but as not a legitimate part of society. They must be considered as part of the “enemy within”. This is the significance of the infamous “go home” Home Office campaign.

It can be mentioned in this connection that the *Daily Mail* character assassination of Ed Miliband’s father Ralph as a man who “hated Britain” exposes more clearly that the “go home” and “kick out foreign criminals” propaganda is not just some “nasty party” prejudice. It is directed against all who do not accept the values of neo-liberalism, or who are considered by the ruling elite as “extremist” or “fundamentalist”, a threat to the “British way of life”.

David Cameron’s referred at the Tory Party conference to the government’s doing “whatever it takes” to ensure it can override the judicial process and the safeguarding of the rights of the individual on the grounds that someone poses a threat to the country



or have no right to be in Britain. It can be seen that these remarks are part of the concerted attacks and threats directed not so much against those that break the law, as to all who take issue with the direction that society is headed, and are determined to fight for a future in which the rights of all are defended and guaranteed.

Theresa May said at the conference, “The Abu Qatada case proved that we need a dramatic change in our human rights law. We’re going to cut the number of appeal rights, extend cases where we deport first and hear the appeal later, and use primary legislation to make sure judges interpret the ‘right to a family life’ properly.” This case and the use of the term “hate preachers” are being used as a pretext and precedent for its further planned human rights abuses, to further prepare the ground to attack the rights of all. It should be mentioned that there was a shocking unanimity from all sides of the House of Commons in support of the deportation of this “dangerous man” when he was flown in an RAF plane to Jordan on July 7.

It is unacceptable that sections of society should be persecuted in the name of



preserving “British values”. What is happening is that the UK Border Authority, the police and other bodies are being given powers to act with impunity. Whole sections of society are being branded as terrorists or illegal immigrants. The detention centres for so-called illegal immigrants are a stain on all civilised values.

The government’s contempt for the rule of law and for justice cannot be accepted. *The Line of March* calls on all democratic people to step up the struggle in defence of the rights of all.



# Hands Off Syria! Fight for an Anti-War Government!

**R**epresentatives of the government have used the opportunity afforded by the recent UN General Assembly and UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution on Syria to continue to spread disinformation about the actions of the government of the Syrian Arab Republic, to signal its determination to continue to meddle in Syria's internal affairs and to demand regime change in that country.

UNSC Resolution 2118 was unanimously adopted and requires the "scheduled destruction of Syria's chemical weapons" in keeping with the agreement reached recently by the governments of Russia and the United States in Geneva. A UN mission began inspections of these weapons on October 1. Their decommissioning will be undertaken under the direction of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Most importantly the UNSC agreed that the use of chemical weapons anywhere "constituted a threat to international peace and security", thus creating the conditions for the future use of various sanctions in response to any violation, including the possible deployment of military force under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. The UNSC also agreed that non-compliance with the Resolution by the Syrian government "or any use of chemical weapons by anyone in the Syrian Arab Republic" would also result in the imposition of what were described as "Chapter VII measures".



Foreign Secretary William Hague was adamant that the Resolution had established "an important international norm". He continued to blame the government of Syria, which he described as a "brutal regime", not just for its alleged use of chemical weapons in the recent attack at Ghouta but for the deaths of all the tens of thousands of Syrians killed throughout the recent conflict. Speaking at the UN General Assembly, Nick Clegg, the Deputy Prime Minister, had accused the al-Assad government of "committing a war crime" in relation to the events in Ghouta. This presentation of events is then used to justify the demand of the British government and its allies for punitive measures against Syria and regime change in that country, which they hope will be brought through the use of force as well as through other means. It is in this context that the government and its allies back the rebel Syrian National Coalition, which they refer to as "the legitimate representatives of the Syrian people", as if to assert that this is a matter that can be decided by the big powers

rather than by the Syrian people.

In a recent interview, President al-Assad pointed out that the US had previously opposed a Syrian proposal to eliminate all WMDs in the region since this would have exposed its ally Israel, the country with the largest nuclear and chemical arsenal in the region, a country that has used chemical weapons and one of the few never to ratify the Convention on Chemical Weapons.



The crisis in Syria, in which Britain, the other big powers and their allies have played a major role, continues to have dire consequences for the Syrian people and those of the region. Tens of thousands have lost their lives and many more have been injured or forced to flee their homeland and seek refuge abroad. It is clear that the problems confronting Syria cannot be resolved by the use of force and are being exacerbated by its use and by the continued interference and threats of Britain, the other big powers and their allies, whose actions are contrary to international law and the UN Charter.

The overwhelming majority of nations are calling for a peaceful Syrian-led solution to the crisis in Syria. The peoples of the world are opposed to the use of force to settle disputes and particularly opposed to the use of force by the big powers that currently dominate the UN Security Council and use it to advance their own narrow interests. The government of Britain continues to act in a manner completely at odds with the demands of its own citizens as well as the rest of the world.

The government of Britain and its allies must be condemned for threats and provocations against Syria and similar threats against Iran and the DPRK. It is the task of the workers and all democratic people to put an end to all such activities and create the conditions for an anti-war government. Condemn the British government for its hypocrisy and disinformation about the use of chemical weapons and for its attempts to bring about regime change! No to its warmongering and interference! Uphold Syria's sovereignty!



## FROM THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENTS

# In Memoriam: General Giap



*Vo Nguyen Giap*

*August 25, 1911 – October 4, 2013*

**L**egendary Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap passed away in Ha Noi on October 4. He was 103.

General Giap worked with President Ho Chi Minh throughout the period during which the Vietnamese people fought for and secured their liberation. Under Ho Chi Minh's leadership he made lasting contributions to his people and nation. Against the greatest odds, they built up their liberation army and tactics which defeated first the French colonial occupiers and then the US imperialist invaders despite their massive military power and all the crimes they committed.

General Giap was dearly loved and respected by his people and held in the highest regard by the international communist and workers' movement and the many friends of Viet Nam. To

this day General Giap's contributions to modern guerilla warfare are studied all over the world while his bravery and convictions and his dedication to the Communist Party and its leadership inspired generations of Vietnamese youth to take up the sacred cause of their homeland.

In recognition of his great contributions to the Party and country's revolutionary cause, the Gold Star Order, the Ho Chi Minh Order, the 70-year Party membership badge and other orders and medals of Vietnam and foreign countries and organisations were conferred on General Giap.

We express our deep sympathies to the Communist Party of Viet Nam and the Vietnamese people on their loss. The heroic example General Giap set in his life continues to inspire.

## 68th Anniversary of the WPK

**T**he Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) was founded on October 10, 1945, by President Kim Il Sung. Since its birth the WPK has led the Korean revolution and socialist construction, performing tremendous feats. Under the guidance of Kim Jong Un, the present respected leader of the Korean people, the WPK is now leading the drive to build a thriving and impregnable socialist country.

Although the roots of the WPK were in the Down With Imperialism Union, founded by Kim Il Sung in 1926 when he was still a young schoolboy, it was nevertheless not founded as a centralised mass communist party until 1945, which is why October 10 is its 68th anniversary. This meant that the Party was built at the base in the course of the over-riding struggle of the Korean people, which was to free the Korean Peninsula from the occupation by Japanese imperialism.

The Workers' Party of Korea led the Korean people to victory in the 1950-1953 Korean War, known as the Fatherland Liberation War. Contrary to the disinformation propagated by the monopoly-controlled media and put forward as official ideology by the Westminster government and its educational system, this war was carefully planned and instigated by the United States administration. There is existing film and documentary records that amply prove that this was a war the US imperialists calculated would end quickly with the sweeping away of the legitimate government north of the 38th parallel – a veritable plan for regime change by force. But instead it led to the downfall and defeat of the US-led forces, not before US imperialism had effected the most terrible damage to the Korean people and their

land.

Of great importance has been building the material and technological basis for national defence under the leadership of the WPK, simultaneously carrying out economic construction. By virtue of the importance given to the Songun (military-first) policy, the DPRK has successfully averted the catastrophe of war through imperialist aggression, defended its sovereignty and carried forward its socialist nation-building project.

Furthermore, it has provided the principles and benchmarks for Korea's reunification and encouraged all Koreans in the north and the south of Korea, as well as abroad, to cherish their aspiration to see the Korean Peninsula and the Korean nation once again reunified.

In sum, the Workers' Party of Korea has led the Korean people to solve the problems they face step-by-step, and it has enabled the people to unite with one will with their leadership in order to set an aim for the development of the country and remain faithful to that aim.

To celebrate the WPK's 68th anniversary, the Friends of Korea held a meeting at the John Buckle Centre in London, at which Thae Yong Ho, minister at the embassy of the DPRK in London, spoke on October 5. The following day the Northern Region of the Society for Friendship with Korea hosted Thae Yong Ho at a meeting in Newcastle, where the minister spoke at length and answered questions. Both meetings were extremely successful in learning first-hand the facts not only of the situation in the DPRK, but the views of the Korean people and their leadership on the complex and dangerous world situation.



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The title *The Line of March* is taken from the programmatic document of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist), "The Line of March to a New Society". It signifies that the goal of the movements of the working class and people and their struggles is indeed a new society, a society that puts human beings and their rights at the centre of all considerations. It signifies that the movements of the working class and people are aimed at removing the obstacles which are placed on the progress of this line of march.

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