

The Line of March

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MAY DAY 2014

Celebrate May Day!

**All Out for May Day, Day of Unity in Struggle of
the Working Class, Oppressed and Insurgent
Peoples of All Lands!**



No to Austerity!

**For a New Direction for Society! Organise
for the Working Class to Fulfil its Historic
Mission and Vest Sovereignty in the People!**

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MAY DAY 2014:

Celebrate May Day: Day of Unity in Struggle of Working Class, Oppressed and Insurgent Peoples of All Lands!

RCPB(ML) sends its warmest revolutionary May Day greetings to the working class of England, Scotland and Wales on May Day 2014. We salute all those who have taken a stand in defence of the rights of all, who are fighting the so-called “austerity” agenda of the anti-social offensive, who are strengthening their organisation to fight for a human-centred society wherever they may be.

The past year has seen an intensification of the struggle between the old and the new. The new is represented by all those who are striving to build the alternative, to leave behind the old society with its capital-centred thinking, and to open the door to the progress of society which is being blocked.

At the centre of this struggle is the working class, whose day this is. Those in power in society would even like to deny the existence of the working class, and certainly to refuse to recognise its rights. In opposition, the workers are constantly affirming the dignity of labour, are constantly having to oppose the influence within the working class movement and all sections of society of capital-centred thinking and the agenda which favours the monopolies and the ruling elite.

The working class produces all material wealth and provides all services in the society. Justice demands that this wealth be applied for the public good, that the claims of all working people on society be met. The assertion by the monopoly capitalists and their representatives that these claims are a cost to society, a drain on the public treasury and on the national economy, are a fraud and a falsification.

The working class cannot accept this assault on its rights, its dignity and on the public good. It is one class with one programme representing the future of society. Through developing the independent politics of the working class politics this future can take shape, and the working people as a whole oppose the dictate which is depriving them of decision-making power.

For the people to have control over their lives means that wherever they live and work they must be empowered to participate in decision-making. The struggles over the past year at the points of production, in public services, in health and education,

for the rights of the various collectives in society – these struggles have shown that the powers-that-be are intent on depriving the working class and people of this decision-making power. By summing up their experience, it is becoming very clear to the people involved in struggle that the fight must be to challenge this dictate of the powers-that-be. Experience shows that incoherence, violence, chaos and actual war are all that the ruling elite has to offer. This experience can be generalised to draw the conclusion that all over the world, the workers are the only social force capable of saving the day.

Summation shows that marginalisation from decision-making is a fundamental problem facing the working class and people. Those that worship the power of capital are intent on intensifying this situation, and causing the working people to lose their bearings. But where the fight against this marginalisation has been taken up, the fight to roll back the prevailing ethos of dictate, then the working people have been more than capable of setting their own agenda for the well-being of society and its members.

On this May Day, our Party gives the call to the working class and all working people to unite in action. The goal is to deprive the owners of capital and their representatives of the power to disempower the people from being the decision-makers.

This is a profoundly political struggle, a school of the working class and people for running a modern economy, a modern society. The task in the coming year is to become still more powerful and effective in challenging the marginalisation of the people from economic, political and social affairs.

The advanced forces can also unite to build the political party of the working class, a mass communist party, whose outlook is modern communism, in the midst of the intensifying struggles of the working class and people.

The fight for the alternative remains the overall task at hand. May First is an occasion to reaffirm this struggle in the context of the present concrete conditions. The working class and people will prevail if they set their sights on becoming the decision-makers and persist in their struggles.

No to Austerity! For a New Direction for Society! Organise for the Working Class to Fulfil its Historic Mission and Vest Sovereignty in the People!

THE BATTLE FOR THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE NHS:

Unison Health Conference Backs Action over Pay

At the recent Unison health conference, the largest health union representing over 400,000 members voted to start preparations for a ballot of members to take action against the government's very provocative and derisory pay offer of 1% to only those on the top of their pay band. Christine McAnea, Unison head of health, said that the recommended 1% is "unfair and deliberately provocative" after "years of below-inflation pay awards", but for staff in England, Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt "has restricted the 1% offer to those at the top of their pay bands" and it will come as a cash sum. Christine McAnea said, "We have to get the message out to members." She concluded: "Don't do this just for yourself. Do this for patients and for your service as well." This is a crucial point, highlighting the context of the ballot.

Over a third of non-medical NHS staff are paid below £21,000 and most health service staff have had their pay cut by 8-12% between 2010 and 2013 in real terms. Clare Williams, Unison Regional Convener, said: "Who is being asked to live in austerity? It's not the growing number of millionaires, which includes most of the cabinet. It's not the bankers and hedge fund owners and venture capitalists. It is us!"

Over the coming weeks the government and an obedient media will do their best to discredit the NHS staff and their unions

over the ballot and days of action. It is important to recognise that the government has carried out this pay provocation as an attack on the very people who are standing up for the NHS against the government's dictate on cuts to our hospitals, privatisation and wrecking of its services. This is why Hunt and Co. are attacking health workers in such a vindictive and divisive way. In taking a stand for their interests, health workers will be standing up for the general interests of society and for the future of the health service in particular. All should unite around their struggle as part of the fight to safeguard the interests of health workers and the future of the NHS. The main points of the motion are given below.

Conference agrees a strike ballot as part of a campaign to:

- create an effective protest against despicable treatment of health staff in 2014;
- seek a commitment from the Westminster government to reinstate full funding of the NHS;
- commit current and future health ministers in all four governments of the UK to reinstate the value of pay lost since 2010; reinstate UK-wide pay scales and reinstate national bargaining structures and Agenda for Change.

Health Care Is a Right!

Save Lewisham Hospital! Save the NHS!

The AGM of the Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign (SLHC) took place on April 15. It was attended by nearly 160 people from the Lewisham community, including patients, buggy mums and dads, members of Lewisham Pensioners Forum, community organisations, faith group members, Lewisham Environment Team workers, GPs, Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust doctors, nurses and staff, and members of

political groups and parties.

It was another landmark for the campaign, which famously won its judicial review against the government. That was an important battle on the legal front. It was a battle which also had the merit of exposing the dictatorial character of the Coalition government, and the Westminster system of "representative democracy" as a whole. Exposure after exposure has followed,

demonstrating that the government's programme for the NHS as a whole is one of wholesale privatisation and hospital closures going under the name of combating "unsustainable" Trusts and of improving the "quality of care".

Such a victory for the SLHC was made possible through its stand of self-reliance. It relied on the working people of Lewisham and other areas which supported the campaign, for finance, for mass actions, and for the single-minded passion which imbued the campaign. As part of this, importantly the clinicians within Lewisham took a stand, and demonstrated a broad-minded and dedicated commitment to health care in Lewisham and neighbouring parts of south London.

The battle at Lewisham is continuing, now covering the Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust, as the campaign stands shoulder to shoulder with other campaigns throughout London and other regions of England. The SLHC is aware that, at the same time as the fight to save the National Health Service is a national campaign, it is still a fight in the local area also.

The strength of the SLHC remains in its ability to define itself, rather than being a group to put pressure on, or take its lead from, some other force. This remains true of its vision of a health service in Lewisham, and now Greenwich also, which serves the needs of the people as a whole for the highest quality of health care, locally accessible, and able to provide A&E care, maternity care and acute care for children and the elderly, as of right. It is then able to fight against all attempts to negate and oppose this vision, a fight in which all progressive and pro-social forces can participate and are participating in, and can continue to sum up



Dr Louise Irvine outlining the forward strategy of the SLHC for the next six months

its experience.

The SLHC has been working out, in the course of its campaigning activity, the demands which reflect the sentiments of the people. These have included the stands against Section 75 of the Health and Social Care Act, an Act which should be repealed in its entirety and its very essence, and against Clause 119 of the Care Bill. The SLHC takes a stand against all privatisation measures, including the disastrous financial effects of the PFI. A film by Stuart Monro, which was shown at the beginning of the meeting, brought out lessons and highlights of the campaign, and was highly acclaimed as very uplifting, and as pointing the way forward. A forward strategy for the campaign for the next six months was carried overwhelmingly.

The AGM was important for combating cuts and privatisation, as well as taking as a stand in defence of the quality of care which the Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust is dedicated to providing.

Making the European Elections a Referendum on the Future of the NHS

The National Health Action Party (NHA) has taken a decision to participate in the elections to the European Parliament on May 22. It is doing so in order to take the stand of safeguarding the future of the health service as an electoral issue at this crucial juncture of the government's all-out attack on the provision of health care as a right, publicly provided and guaranteed.

Louise Irvine, Chidi Ejimofe and Jessica Ormerod of the Save Lewisham Hospital campaign are among the slate of eight candidates in the London region.

The spirit of calling for a vote for the NHA in these European elections is to make them a referendum on the future of the NHS. The NHA reflects the sentiment of the people in opposing the closures of hospitals and down-grading of services, which is amounting to the same thing. It reflects the sentiment of opposing the privatisation of the health service and the private delivery of health care.

The Line of March wishes the NHA well in the elections, along with all the other forces who are fighting to safeguard the future of the NHS.

Health and Social Care Is a Right!

The Government's Funding Scam in Health and Social Care

NHs England, the government's national NHS commissioning body, has admitted, according a report in the Health Service Journal (HSJ) ¹, that £650 million of provisions made by Primary Care Trusts last year to pay for "historic continuing health claims" has been "returned to the Treasury and used to reduce the national budget deficit".

Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) have been superseded by Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) under the provisions of the Health and Social Care Act as the commissioning bodies for health care. According to the HSJ, "During 2012-13 PCTs made provisions totalling £800m to pay for financial liabilities expected to arise in future years. Of that, £650m related to retrospective continuing healthcare claims. However, it has now emerged that CCGs will not be able to access any provisions set aside by their predecessors, meaning future continuing healthcare payouts will be funded from CCG allocations." The HSJ reports, "NHS England has admitted that £650m of provisions made by primary care trusts last year to pay for historic continuing healthcare claims will not be available to clinical commissioning groups. Commissioners are now asking why their predecessor organisations were required to set aside the huge sum – which was intended to ensure CCGs did not come into being with inherited 'legacy debts' – if it was not going to be available in future years."

The HSJ report continues, "The provisions were set aside by PCTs after promises by former health secretary Andrew Lansley that CCGs would have no 'legacy debts' inherited from their predecessor organisations." NHS Clinical Commissioners co-chair Steve Kell said, according to the same report, "We should ask why PCTs were asked to make provisions in 2012-13 if the money couldn't be used in future years under Treasury accounting rules."

It is already been estimated that in 2014-15 £250m will be topsliced from CCG budgets to cover anticipated costs of settling the backdated care claims this year. In 2013-14, NHS England has paid out £88m for retrospective continuing healthcare claims on behalf of CCGs. The HSJ article reveals that an accountancy trick was used by the government, in the form of the treasury rules, to appropriate the money. A letter from NHS England's director for commissioning development, Ros Roughton, to CCGs' representative body NHS Clinical Commissioners of March 18 said, "Under Treasury accounting regulations the payment of legacy provisions count against the NHS budget only when they are actually paid."

Continuing health care claims are claims which resulted from the deadline that the government set in 2012 for anyone

wanting to claim backdated NHS continuing health care for care received in private nursing, or care homes between 2004 and 2011. This resulted in 60,000 claims mainly for elderly patients in private nursing homes who had to pay for their health care out of their savings, by selling their homes and all their assets, if their savings were above £23,250 (currently).

At the end of the 1980s, at the time NHS elderly care hospitals were closed and private care homes opened, the government ended the right to "social care" for anyone requiring long term care, forcing thousands of people and their families to sell their homes and give up their savings to pay for their long-term social care. It also in effect ended their right to health care which was supposed to be funded by government. This was one of the most inhuman anti-social measures taken by post-Thatcher governments over the last 30 years. Since that time, many families have challenged this decision on behalf of their elderly relatives in the courts and some of the successful cases have been reported, such as the Coughlan case in 1999 and the Grogan case in 2006, which upheld the ruling that costs due specifically to the "health care" element should have been funded by government. But this did not completely overturn the "social care" costs still paid for out of savings.

In 2010, the then Labour government instead of taking responsibility to restore the right to social and health care for all set up an "independent commission" on care costs. In 2011 this independent commission, led by the economist Andrew Dilnot, recommended a cap on all social care costs that should be between £25,000 and £50,000 and specifically recommended that figure be £35,000. The present government's Care Bill currently going through Parliament has increased that cap to £72,000 but it will not be introduced until April 2016.

With regard to the retrospective claims, the present Coalition government has turned the issue into only allowing people eligible to make retrospective claims for "health care costs" before defined cut-off dates in 2012 and 2013, which were different for England, Scotland, and Wales. In the north of Ireland, they gave no right for these retrospective claims. These are the "historic continuing health care claims" that have been estimated at £650 million. But this estimate is not necessarily the amount that will be paid to elderly residents or their families. On the contrary, only patients and their families who knew that they may be entitled to claim lodged their claims in time mainly through no-win no-fee solicitors. Yet the government has been paid for the full amount of the estimated claim that it should have, and could have, refunded as of right. Add to this the estimated £20 billion and rising funds that the government is taking from the NHS

budget to fund the rich financial oligarchy and monopolies over the interests of the people and their health in the name of “austerity”. It is also robbing the income of health care workers by refusing to fund even inflation rises over several years.

Such a direction highlights that the agenda of the NHS is one of appropriating wealth in favour of private monopoly interests under the fraudulent guise of “reducing the deficit”. It underlines that the working class and people themselves must be empowered to set the agenda. This is a struggle which health workers are taking up to resist being excluded from decision-making.

The fight is to recognise the right to health and social care for all. The anti-social direction for the NHS represented by the Health and Social Care Act, the Care Bill and indeed preceding legislation must be changed to a pro-social direction.

1 Treasury claims £650m legacy debt
pot - 27 March, 2014 | By David Williams
HSJ - <http://www.hsj.co.uk/news/finance/treasury-claims-650m-legacy-debt-pot/5069300.article>

***No to the Government Funding Scams Designed to Pay the Rich!
Fight for a Pro-Social Direction to the Health Service!***

YES TO A MODERN SOVEREIGN STATE OF SCOTLAND!

The Official No Campaign: Attempting To Organise a Counter-Coup by Wrecking Public Opinion

It is noticeable how the official No campaign in the lead-up to the Scottish independence referendum has had to change its tactics since the belligerent stand taken by the British government over the currency issue. In general, the stridency of the anti-independence campaign has been proving counter-productive, and has not been having the effect desired by the establishment. On the contrary, it seems that the Yes campaign has been picking up momentum, with a recent poll by Panelbase producing the narrowest gap so far. The No side has been seen to shift, with campaign leader Alistair Darling suggesting that a Sterling zone might be put to a referendum in the rest of Britain.

These developments are representative of how people are being presented with all kinds of diversions, the central theme of which is to reduce the debate to the level of pragmatism, to what “works”: whether Scotland is “better off in or out”. This is to divert from the actual issues at stake over sovereignty and the right to decide. In fact, the conduct of the government, big parties and sections of the media is the direct opposite of how a democratic campaign should be carried out. People should be presented with all of the facts to enable them to make up their own minds, rather than raising passions and dividing the population over the issue.

The attempt to ensure a No vote through the wrecking of public opinion is reminiscent of the way in which the parliamentary system operates. The system of representative democracy is

dominated by a set of big parties, which form part of the state arrangements themselves and act together to block people from political power. Elections nowadays take the form of coups, such as the coming to power of Tony Blair’s New Labour in 1997 or the imposition of the present Coalition, which deprive the electorate of the power to decide. Rather, they ensure that the anti-social offensive and the subordination of public to monopoly right continue unabated.

Similarly, the British establishment’s No campaign is attempting to organise what could be called a counter-coup against the Scottish people, along with the working class and broad sections of the people of Britain and the north of Ireland as a whole. Through the whipping up of fear, hysteria and division, the attempt is to prevent the people from developing their political initiatives and bringing about a renewal of democracy where the people are the sovereign power.

Recently, hysteria has begun to be created around the idea that a vote for independence would create a constitutional crisis and jeopardise next year’s general election. Alan Boyle, professor of international law at Edinburgh University, in a memorandum for the House of Lords, outlined two alternatives for the general election in the event of a vote for independence: either exclude Scotland from the election altogether, or remove Scottish MPs when Scotland becomes independent a year after the

election. This was followed by a defeated motion proposed by John Stevenson, Conservative MP for Carlisle, to prevent Scottish MPs from being elected to the British parliament following a Yes vote.

The former option would require the transfer of powers to the Scottish Parliament before formal independence, without which, Scottish MPs would legally be entitled to remain in Westminster until that time. The latter option is being said to threaten to bring down the next government by shifting the balance of power in parliament. Seizing on the issue, one Cabinet minister was reported in the Telegraph as saying: "Britain would be plunged into a constitutional crisis. You couldn't possibly hold a General Election in 2015 which elects Scottish MPs for five years when they won't even be the same country." Either way, it is being suggested that the remainder of Britain might see a permanent Conservative majority, given that Labour relies on Scotland for a significant proportion of its MPs. Such talk of crisis both covers over the fact that Britain is already in constitutional crisis, currently manifested in the deep disaffection with representative democracy, as well as revealing the profound inability of the current arrangements to deal with any of the issues.

It is a positive step that a referendum on Scottish independ-

ence is actually taking place, both reflecting and further contributing to the space that is opening up over the question of where sovereignty lies. It is now up to the working class to take the lead on this issue. The Party has put forward in its Draft Programme for the Working Class that the workers should call for modern sovereign states of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland and a free and equal union between them if they so desire. This raises the questions of what is meant by sovereignty and where sovereign power should lie in a modern society.

The referendum therefore presents an opportunity for the working class in Britain and Ireland to take up all of these questions from its own standpoint. This means starting to discuss and begin to build the new mechanisms required to renew democracy on the basis of the sovereignty of the people, breaking the stranglehold of the big parties on politics.

The official No campaign seeks to preserve the status quo whereby sovereignty lies with the anachronistic "crown-in-parliament". This is not acceptable. Sovereignty must lie with the people. Therefore the challenge for the working class is instead to constitute itself the nation in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland and vest sovereignty in the people, creating the conditions for unity on a new basis.

NO TO THE EUROPE OF THE MONOPOLIES! YES TO SOVEREIGNTY!

The Situation in Ukraine and the Reactionary Role of Britain and the EU

In the referendum of March 16, citizens of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and of the city of Sevastopol voted to secede from Ukraine and join the Russian Federation.

While the right to self-determination is a principle, the same cannot be said of "territorial integrity". The "responsibility to protect" is also a fiction concocted by the big powers for self-serving reasons.

David Cameron has been mouthing worthless platitudes about defending the sovereignty of Ukraine. If Cameron were defending the sovereignty of any country, the very least would be to end all interference. Instead, Britain, along with other EU countries and in contention with the US itself, whose President felt it necessary to come to Europe to address the European leaders, have been interfering up to the hilt.

It is not for nothing that prior to the referendum, slogans such as "stop fascism" were prominent. The fascists and neo-Nazis had been used to foment violence and have taken up key positions of state.

In the Ukraine, post-Soviet Russia and US-led imperialism confront each other. The US-led camp, which includes the old European colonialism, is on the rampage. Inter-monopoly contradictions over the access to and control over energy resources are at play. For the peoples of the region, the burning issue has once again surfaced as to how the equality and sovereign rights of nations and peoples, irrespective of their ethnic makeup, can be established or re-established with a guarantee that is meaningful under current conditions.

The working people of Britain must condemn the Coalition government for their stand on the Ukraine and the referendum in the Crimea which, with all its sabre-rattling against Russia, has been very self-serving. Despite high-sound words, there has been no issue of principle involved for David Cameron. It should also be mentioned that there are remnants of the Thatcherite line within the British establishment that appears to be "pro-British" and "anti-EU", but is either concerned to ally with the interests of the US, or represents the interests of other sections of British

finance capital.

The financiers of the European Union and the IMF now wish to push ahead with bringing the Ukraine into the orbit of those states who can be declared bankrupt and “austerity measures” imposed, which are both against the interests of the people and also arouse their resistance.

Despite the fact that the people of the Ukraine as a whole are against joining NATO, the United States refers to the “right” of Ukraine to be a member of that warmongering US-led alliance. The fact is that such a “right” only makes sense if the right of the Ukrainian people to say No! to NATO is taken into account. The US is already using the Baltic states as bases for its jet fighters, for instance, and is ready to deploy NATO troops into Poland, as well as to Romania. Nevertheless, the situation in the Ukraine has revived in Germany the Nazi dream of expan-

sion eastwards, as well as the German ambitions to consolidate its domination of the EU.

What the Ukrainian people desire, as do any people, is a stable sovereign state representing their will, and a government able and competent to make decisions without outside interference. Only the movement of the Ukrainian people can restore relations of equality and mutual benefit with their neighbours the Russian people. The big powers of the EU and the US are determined to ensure that this does not happen, that the people are kept at loggerheads with present-day Nazis in power, whom the big powers rely on to incite passions and serve their interests. In this situation, it is important that the democratic forces in Britain take a stand in defence of the sovereignty of nations and countries and hold the Coalition government to account for its interference in the sovereign affairs of other countries.

Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP): EC Holds Sham Consultations over Investment Protection

Public consultations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), a so-called free trade agreement between the EU and the US, have been taking place for the past month, focusing specifically on what it calls “investment protection” and Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS). The consultations began on March 27, following their announcement by EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht earlier this year on January 21.

The aim of this agreement is to remove restrictions on the monopolies against the interests of the people, through new regulatory arrangements that suit their narrow interests, including the liberalisation of state-run services and the direct and indirect privatisation of social programmes. The agreement is a reflection of the ever-growing demand of the monopolies that their assumed rights be the only determining factor. The section on ISDS in particular is to set up international arrangements where monopolies can challenge states. It would allow US companies investing in the EU to directly challenge EU governments at private international tribunals, and vice-versa. Originally shrouded in secrecy, this proposal has been described as a corporate bill of rights.

The consultation was announced following the exposure of and subsequent opposition to ISDS. This consultation is itself being carried out to further the disinformation and steer discussion away from the central issue. The European Commission stated on March 27 that it “felt it was necessary to launch this

particular public consultation as a response to the growing public debate... While the current public debate is very welcome and important, there have been a number of misconceptions and even misrepresentations as to the aims of ISDS within TTIP negotiations.”

In other words, the European Commission seeks to use the consultation to manage the public debate. Not only is the consultation to be used for public relations and to present the Commission as listening to the European public, but also to ensure the agenda of discussion is around their terms.

The European Commission explained at the time the consultation was first announced that the decision “reflects the Commissioner’s determination to secure the right balance between protecting European investment interests and upholding governments’ right to regulate in the public interest”.

To present such a dichotomy and argue that a “balance” must be found is an established neo-liberal method of dressing an attack on the rights and claims of the people as something necessary and reasonable. It hides the clash between conditions and authority. The argument here is reminiscent of the notorious argument used in Britain, the US and in Europe to push through so-called anti-terror legislation – that a balance or trade-off exists between civil liberties and security. The result in that case has been to deny the right to conscience and to criminalise dissent. In the present case, it is being used to divert attention from an encroaching of monopoly right over public right.

The consultation seeks to direct the debate around this line of balance, and so completely disorient the opposition. This notion must be rejected. Instead, people have to take a stand that monopoly right should be restricted and public right defended. The aim of the European Commission in holding its consultation is to ensure that its perspective holds sway. Rather, people have to organise for their own perspective to hold sway. They have to find ways of making sure that the debate takes place around the line of defending public right and restricting monopoly right.

The Coalition government has been a staunch supporter of TTIP, illustrated by the evident enthusiasm of Trade and Investment Minister Lord Livingston, who on March 21 said: “TTIP has the potential to be the biggest bilateral deal ever... Greater

co-operation on regulatory issues, better recognition of professional qualifications and simpler visa requirements are just some of the potential benefits of TTIP for British and US firms.”

Furthermore, when the TTIP was recently debated in parliament, it was met with almost unanimous approval from all three big parties, underlining the need for people to oppose the whole consensus that exists in parliament. To oppose this all-round commitment to monopoly right and to instead uphold public right, people must demand that the agreement be rejected in full. They must create their own mechanisms that develop discussion with their own perspective. This will facilitate them in putting forward an alternative to the Europe and North America of the monopolies.

NO TO THE EUROPE OF THE MONOPOLIES! YES TO SOVEREIGNTY!

British Imperialism and the First World War

In this year of the centenary of the start of the First World War, government ministers and even some historians, who should perhaps know better, have been intent on presenting the conflict as a noble and just cause. They assert the British government declared war in response to Germany’s invasion of Belgium and therefore “in defence of international law and a small state faced with aggression”. Some go even further declaring that the government of the day acted to end “warmongering and imperial aggression”. Today every effort is made to blame other countries for starting the bloody conflict, just as occurred a century ago, without any attempt to look at the underlying causes of the war, which include the “warmongering and imperial aggression” of all the big powers, including Britain.

It has to be recognised that Britain was one of the leading warmongers and imperialist powers and that it was the intense rivalry arising out of the imperialist system of states at that time which created the conditions for war. By 1900 the world had already been almost completely divided between the big powers that had already staked out colonial territories and spheres of influence. Nevertheless, contention continued with all the major powers seeking a re-division of a world in order to gain an advantage over their rivals.

Britain’s “entente” with France, for example, was a consequence of its evident international isolation following earlier imperial aggression in South Africa. Britain’s alliance with France then led the government to threaten Germany with war when the latter squabbled with France over which power should invade

and occupy Morocco. It is clear that in this case Britain did not defend the sovereignty of a small state faced with aggression. It was content to support the aggression of France against their common rival Germany, because France had agreed to accept Britain’s prior invasion and occupation of Egypt.

British imperialism chose to use Belgian “neutrality” as a justification for war against its rival Germany but did not seek to prevent the aggression of the Belgian monarch, Leopold, against the people of the Congo. In the thirty years preceding the First World War, Belgian imperial aggression led to the deaths of some 10 million Africans, probably half the Congolese population, without any intervention by any of the big powers. This is not surprising because all the major powers fought wars of aggression and conquest not only in Africa and Asia but wherever their predatory interests necessitated it. It needs to be remembered that Britain was the most aggressive and predatory of all the big powers at this time.

The British government’s warmongering and imperial aggression was also expressed in the rapid expansion of the navy and the secret naval agreement with France in 1912, both of which were directed against Germany. A new alliance with Russia in 1907, which opened a new chapter in what was then known as the “great game” of Anglo-Russian contention in Central Asia, was based on a joint agreement that denied Afghanistan and Persia their sovereignty and placed the resources of these countries at the disposal of banks and monopolies of Russia and Britain. Such alliances were clearly undertaken in the context of

British imperialism's predatory interests and in contention with Germany, its main rival in this period.

The division and re-division of the world did not only precipitate war and create the conditions for the international alliances that turned Europe into two camps of armed robbers. Secret negotiations and treaties also occurred during the war in order to sanction further re-division. In 1915, the British government reached a new secret agreement with Russia over the division of Persia, which it was decided would fall into Britain's hands, while Russia was compensated with rights over parts of the Ottoman empire, including its capital Constantinople; Britain and France would acquire other Ottoman territory. When Italy joined the Allied powers, the British government entered into a further secret treaty partitioning the Austro-Hungarian empire and allowing Italy to seize further territory in Africa, including Libya and in the Horn of Africa, thus violating the sovereignty of the Libyan, Somali and other peoples in that continent. Secret plans were also made for the dismemberment of Ethiopia. These secret agreements also paved the way for France to annexe Syria and Lebanon; Britain would take what is today Iraq. The secret treaties also paved the way for the British government's Zionist occupation of Palestine, which since that time denied the rights

and sovereignty of the Palestinian people.

The notion that the British government entered the First World War to uphold "civilised values" or for a "just cause" or to defend the rights of small nations is a dangerous fiction that has no basis in fact. It is advanced with the aim not just of spreading disinformation about the past but also of creating illusions about current warmongering, intervention and aggression and the growing contention between the other big powers in Africa, Central Asia and elsewhere. The conditions for the First World War grew out of the conditions of the imperialist system of states at that time, not least the intense rivalry between the big powers for markets, raw materials and spheres of influence, which could only be secured by a violent re-division of the world. A hundred years later, the economic and military contention between the big powers is again only too evident in Libya, Syria, Ukraine and elsewhere.

It is the task of the working class and all peace-loving people to stay the hands of the warmongers. We must learn the lessons of history and have no illusions that any of the Westminster parties are a factor for peace. The working class and people must take matters into their own hands and establish an anti-war government.

WW1 and the Betrayal of the Workers

In the period before 1914, the Labour Party, along with the other social-democratic parties of Europe, had pledged to oppose an inter-imperialist war between the big powers. It had adhered to the resolution, re-adopted at the Basle Congress of the Second International in 1912, that all such parties "should use every effort to prevent war by all the means which seem to them most appropriate". In the event of war, "it was their duty to intervene in favour of its speedy termination and with all their powers to utilise the political and economic crisis created by the war to arouse the people and thereby hasten the downfall of capitalist class rule". The Basle Congress placed particular emphasis on the actions of the workers of Britain, France and Germany to prevent the governments of these countries from launching an inter-imperialist war.

However, as soon as war was declared the Labour Party and TUC leaders declared "that an immediate effort be made to terminate all existing disputes...and, wherever new points of difficulty arise during the war a serious attempt should be made by all concerned to reach an amicable settlement..." They declared their support for the predatory war, supported mass recruitment, and created the conditions for the government to declare strikes and other trade union activities illegal in many industries for the duration of the war, and for the introduction of the draconian Defence of the Realm Act (DORA), which made active opposition to the war a criminal offence. In 1915, leading members

of the Labour Party joined the warmongering coalition government. European socialist parties of the Second International had sunk to the ignominious level of supporting their own imperialist powers in the slaughter of World War One.

Unity with the exploiters was justified as "defence of the fatherland," the need for national unity in the time of war and other chauvinistic phrases. The most far-sighted revolutionary thinkers of the time therefore concluded that such parties were no longer organisations that could advance the interests of the mass of the workers and posed the question as to what kind of party was required.

This experience of the First World War demonstrates the need also today to never be reconciled with the warmongering of the big powers, particularly that of the British ruling class which continues in its pursuit of its imperialist interests, no matter what "humanitarian" or even "revolutionary" phrases it cloaks them in. The experience of the First World War showed that the workers of Britain and other countries must organise themselves, based on their own independent programme in order to play a leading role in the anti-war movement. Such a programme necessitates the working class and people organising with the perspective of creating their own anti-war government. The Workers' Opposition must build the proletarian front to bring this about, settling scores with all pretexts for the betrayal of their interests in the course of this.

WHAT THE TIMES ARE CALLING FOR: BUILDING THE PARTY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Setting the Reference Point for Learning from the Experience of the Founding of RCPB(ML)

The Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) held a very successful seminar and celebration on March 16, marking the 35th anniversary of the Party. The seminar had the theme of learning from the example of John Buckle and the work to found the Party and lead the movements of the working class and people.

In the keynote speech, Michael Chant, General Secretary of RCPB(ML), said that the Party did not spring up from nothing. In terms of organisation, it had its precursor organisations. But it did not come from a split with any other force – it had its roots in dealing with the necessities of the times. Crucially it addressed the necessity in the 1970s of establishing a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary party, breaking with all the old prejudices of the past, or what can be called the old conscience of the society.

In assessing and celebrating the 35 years of the history of RCPB(ML) and its achievements and the work and sacrifices of all its comrades and its sympathisers, what is the reference point? It is based in the necessities of the present, not from controversies from the past. What we are arguing, our thesis of these 35th anniversary celebrations and discussions, is that it must be what the times are calling for today. We are arguing for the necessity of building the Party in the 21st century as decisive not just for the victory of some struggles of the working class and people, but specifically to break with all that is holding back the progress of society, to challenge the old culture and social forms based on property relations and the privileges based on the supremacy of the private ownership of the means of production, and the political processes and institutions that go with that economic organisation of society, which in the present times has become so criminal, parasitic, anti-human, incoherent and irre-



View of the seminar

sponsible.

The crux of the question that the seminar is addressing and inviting everyone to consider, discuss and elaborate, is what kind of Party is it that the times are calling to be built and strengthened in the 21st century, at this juncture of history. There is a revolutionary red spine and red thread running from the founding of the Party in 1979 and before, in its roots in the revolutionary and anti-imperialist movements of that time, to RCPB(ML) and its revolutionary activities and analysis today. It is essential, we hold, to look at the work that led to its founding and its revolutionary work of that period, from the perspective of the present. In particular we are calling for the study in an organised form of the example of John Buckle and the work of the Party which he led.

Why do we hold that this is necessary? It is not from nostalgia or to say that the Party was more revolutionary in those days. We do recognise the outstanding qualities of John Buckle, and that is why so much emphasis is being given to his example and inspiration. But it is also to recognise that these outstanding qualities were put in the service of the work of the Party, and to lead the struggles of the working class and people in the form which was necessary at that time. In fact, it can be said

that the work of that time took place in the context of the imperialist machinations of the Cold War, of the bipolar division of the world, of anti-communist rhetoric, slander and historical falsification. The task now is not to keep fighting those old battles which that period has settled. But the issue which presents itself is that the rich and powerful of the imperialist system of states today and the media which they control or which are their mouthpieces rehash and intensify Cold War propaganda against the revolutionaries, Marxist-Leninists, and generally against all the progressive movements of those times. The state attacked and denigrated them as violent and extremists then, and it is doing so now.

The task as it presents itself today in the context of the focus of our celebrations is to recognise this legacy objectively and to hold it high and carry it forward. In a few words, it is to ensure that the legacy lives on today in the work to renew all the arrangements at the base of society, provide society with a new economic direction that serves the public good and empowers the working class and people, and ensure that all the political and social institutions are human centred, not capital centred and serving the interests of the monopolies and the financial oligarchy as at present. The task in defending and carrying forward this legacy is also to show in theory and practice what is Marxism-Leninism, as the caricatures, distortions and disinformation, as well as its dogmatic rendering, serve only to, and have the intention of, disorientating those forces who are today seeking serious solutions to serious problems. Today, for instance, there is propaganda against and criminalisation of those engaged in political activity and fighting for rights and for social change. "Revolutionary communism" is linked with "Islamic fundamentalism" in order to create the impression that both are cults and extremism which should be targeted by the state and made the targets of the "war against terrorism". At the same time, provocateur activities are carried out both to entrap certain forces and also to attempt to discredit the Marxist-Leninists and social activists. At the height of the time John Buckle became active also, the US and British secret agencies were carrying out such activities as engaging in violent actions which they blamed the Marxist-Leninists for, as well as launching coups and horrible crimes against the people who were demanding democracy and human rights. Our Party and its forerunner organisations were no stranger to these state-organised attacks, the planting of explosives, the attacks by the police when it was the comrades who were branded as "violent". These days the powers-that-be carry out attempts to discredit and criminalise those who are fighting for rights and against the anti-social offensive. Their aim is to fragment and disorientate the political movements, sow doubt and distrust, and try and prevent the broad front uniting and growing against the so-called "austerity agenda".

The Party organises the people to be history-making. The Party always addresses the necessity to be on a par with the needs of the times, with the requirements of the movements of the working class and people, with the demands of history. At this time of the celebration of the Party's 35th anniversary, it is aware that there is a renewed interest in communism, in the necessity for organisation, consciousness and leadership as the way forward, and not only of the presentation of the ideology of communism, but how communism is linked with the solu-

tions of the problems that the sections of the people are facing in their daily lives. One reason for this interest is the realisation that these problems are linked with the organisation of society, its social and economic base and its class composition.

But there is an interest which goes beyond this realisation. It is that a crucial necessity of the times is to build a Party of modern communism, a mass communist party, itself as what the times are calling for at this juncture of the 21st century. We refer to a Party of modern communism meaning that this is a Party which is bringing communism on a par with addressing and solving the problems of the 21st century. If communism does not do this, what kind of communism would it be? It has to be consistent not only with the objective conditions but consistent with the tasks of the time to overcome them. This means that it fights that the working class should take up its own programme to chart a way out of the crisis, take the stands which are in its own interests and that of the society as a whole, and delineate the alternative. We refer to a mass communist party, meaning its quality of the participation in its democratic centralism. In other words, its members are duty bound to be conscious participants in arriving at decisions and be conscious participants in implementing them. But its implications are for the whole of the Party's organising work. Its method of work is to mobilise the people in the objective movements to themselves be active in setting the agenda, based on the interests of the movement, and themselves to follow the principles of conscious participation in arriving at decisions in order to be conscious participants in implementing them. Such a method of work is aimed at empowering the participants in the movements of the working class and people to work out how to take a stand which favours their interests within the situation they are addressing.

We think that this method of work is key to overcoming the old and facilitating the rise of the new. It is certainly key to the vitality of the Party and ensuring it rises to meet the challenge of the times. The Party's call for this 35th anniversary, to build such a Party in the 21st century, is a call for all who are actually in motion, who are looking to strengthen the organisation and resistance of the working class and people's movements. The issue is that the ruling circles have concentrated so much political and economic power in their hands that they have the potential to and are unleashing great tragedies not only abroad but also at home.

So our reference point is the work of the Party in the 21st century. The Party has its vision for a new society, which is neither a truism nor a utopia, but, like the solution of any scientific problem, involves the practical application of sound theory. To bring this about is political work.

Other papers presented to the seminar dealt with the Party's history of struggle and emphasised the strength of the Party's line in the present. The 35th anniversary event was pervaded with the spirit of the Party of John Buckle in the here and now. There was a sense that it was a stepping stone, a springboard, to something new, establishing the reference point from which to redouble the work.

This was also captured in the important film which was produced for the occasion, which all found very moving as well as informative.

Messages were received from Sandra Smith, First Secretary

of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), from the US Marxist-Leninist Organisation, from the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea and from the New Communist Party of Britain.

The concluding remarks of the seminar emphasised the role of the Party in uniting all the movements of the working class and people in the struggle for the empowerment of the working class and vesting sovereignty in the people. The call was given to join in the work to build RCPB(ML) as a mass communist party and as the decisive subjective factor in bringing about its vision for a new society, overcome all the old prejudices and contribute to building a bright future for humanity.

The celebrations in the evening engaged everyone in discus-

sion, and the evening was rounded off with a rousing cultural programme, and the second showing of the Party's film.

A key issue that was represented in the discussions of the Seminar to celebrate the 35th anniversary of RCPB(ML) was the necessity to strengthen the Party to advance in the present conditions. The papers presented in the second half of the seminar detailed key areas in which the Party organises the working class to take up its leading role and chart a way out of the crisis. They showed how the Party viewed this task 35 years ago under the leadership of John Buckle, and how the Party conducts its organising work in present conditions and circumstances. In so doing, they raised the issue of the authority of the Party in all these fronts of work.

The work to strengthen the Party and lead the movements of the working class and people

In his concluding remarks to the seminar, Michael Chant thanked everyone for participating and pointed out that the 35th anniversary is of special significance. RCPB(ML) is a Party which is dedicated to the establishment of the new society. All the struggles in the various fronts have their place within the overall task to organise the working class to take up its mission as the class which is going to settle scores with this imperialist elite. The struggles form one whole movement, the movement which has its root in achieving a society which is actually fit for human beings to live in. All of these struggles are part of the one struggle: they are reserves of the struggle of the working class to change society through revolutionary transformation and that is what the Party has been dedicated to since its founding. It has done so not from the point of view of trying to convert people like a catechism of Marxism-Leninism, but as all the comrades today have so amply proved, it has done it by coming out of the concrete conditions, analysing, fighting courageously wherever the comrades and friends have been and in unity with the international proletariat and the international communist movement throughout the world.

One of the crucial issues that faces the working class and people today is the issue of their empowerment, because it is true that once the people can analyse the situation, get together, develop their thinking – they can make inroads. It is a class struggle that is going on; it is a power struggle. We uphold that the Party's method of work is one of the keys to this, alongside its revolutionary theory and its political programme for the class, as the comrades have mentioned: the conscious participation in setting the agenda, working out what favours their interests within the situation. And ultimately it is a question of who has decision-making power in the country, whether it is the financial oligarchy, the ruling elite, whether the decisions are made by monopolies elsewhere in the world. What is essential is that the working class rallies all sections of the people around itself and settles scores with these bourgeois dictators. So it is necessary to



Michael Chant, General Secretary of RCPB(ML)

work out how to deprive those in power of that power to deprive us of power. The central issue in society is: who has decision-making power?

The Party's general line in the new circumstances was formulated in 1994-95 and it is this line of march which was consolidated at the Third Congress and which guides all our work today. One of the crucial questions is that of democratic renewal, renewal of the political processes and institutions, overcoming what has been called the crisis of working class representation, in fact a crisis of the whole system that goes by the name of representative democracy. The old method from Marx's day and in the 20th century of the party in power / party in opposition is finished. The struggles of the anti-war movement are staying the hand of the warmongers who are creating chaos and anarchy throughout the world, with a policy simply of destabilisation wherever they intervene.

This question of organising for power is crucial and in our view it is a political task guided by revolutionary theory to achieve this. We are calling on everyone to join in these practical politics and open a path to the progress of society. This is the significance of John Buckle and 35 years ago, the founding of the Party and the Party's traditions – that they are a vivid example of how the Party was in action in that period of flow of revolution and that the generation who is lifting up that banner today can take it forward. It is an enormous challenge for the working class and people, but the Party is there as the key subjective factor. So it is going to learn from and study John Buckle and 35 years ago in an organised way – it calls on all comrades and friends and all the people in the movement to look seriously at the challenges that are faced and have no illusions about the bestial, anti-human nature of the system ruled by greed in the interests of finance capital. But the issue is to release that human power which can change the situation, which first of all can limit the power of these monopolies and their political representatives, but can then turn the situation around, move forward to building their strength, accumulate forces and eventually organise the working class to become the leading force which vests sovereignty in the people; in other words, enables the people to have this decision-making power.

John Buckle's brother Graham paid a rousing tribute to John's memory, the kernel of which was to wish the comrades all power to continue his legacy and to fight and build the Party as John had done.

In his intervention, Chris Coleman, National Leader of RCPB(ML), pointed out, "John Buckle was an outstanding pro-



Michael Chant with Chris Coleman (right), National Leader of RCPB(ML), and between them Hyong Hak Bong, Ambassador of the DPRK in the UK

letarian internationalist, who throughout his life supported the struggles of all peoples worldwide, and saw the struggles of the working class and people in Britain as an integral part of those struggles." He continued, "At Sussex he joined The Internationalists, a youth and student movement founded in Canada by Hardial Bains in the early '60s. The essence of The Internationalists was later described by Comrade Bains as having its political objective, the cause of the working class, ideologically inspired by the desire for change guided by Marxism-Leninism, organised with both democracy and centralism, always on the basis of conscious work and as the enemy of any kind of blind faith." Chris Coleman emphasised that "all these achievements were made as part of a collective, under the authority of the collective, whether the Party or the international joint work. The collective made the man. Everything he did was in the service of the Party and the class."

Papers presented at the seminar included: "The fight against racism and fascism, then and now"; "In step with the times", dealing with the experience of the Party in organising the youth at every stage; "John Buckle and organising the workers"; "Who we were and today, who we are", on the need to utilise the depth of the Party's experience in solving the immediate problems and to give clear and strong and on the mark theoretical underpinning and direction; and, "Learning from the example of John Buckle to lead the anti-war work".

Congratulatory Message of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, (Translation), 15th March, 2014

To: Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)

The Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea would like to extend warm congratulations to the Central Committee of your Party and to all Party members on the occasion of the 35th anniversary of the founding of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist).

We take this opportunity to assure you that friendly and co-operative relations between our two Parties will be strengthened and developed further with the common idea of anti-imperialism and socialism and sincerely wish your Party greater successes in the activity of safeguarding the independent rights of the working masses.

Central Committee, Workers' Party of Korea
Pyongyang

Long Live the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)!



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