

The Line of March

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130th Durham Miners Gala



***Defeat the Fraudulent Austerity Programme!
Organise for the Working Class to Adopt its Own
Independent Political Agenda! Long May the
Durham Miners Gala and Big Meeting Continue!***

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130TH DURHAM MINERS GALA

Defeat the Fraudulent Austerity Programme! Organise for the Working Class to Adopt its Own Independent Political Agenda!

Call of the Northern Region of RCPB(ML), July 12, 2014

This year's Durham Miners Gala comes at a time when the working class movement is stepping up its organised resistance to the government's fraudulent "austerity" programme with demonstrations and co-ordinated strikes. At the same time, the Durham Miners Association is engaged in a struggle alongside the rest of the working class movement in the northern region to safeguard the future of the Gala and Big Meeting as a political rallying point in the fight for their alternative political, social and economic outlook and values. In this respect, our Party recognises the significance of these days as one of the immediate fight to defeat this fraudulent "austerity" programme and the necessity for the working class to fight for the alternative. It recognises also the necessity for the working class to build its own modern communist party to clear the path so that the working class can adopt its own independent political agenda to take the lead in the nations of Britain so as to vest sovereignty in the people and effect a new direction for society.

Over the last four and a half years the government has continued apace the aim of previous governments to ensure that society first pays tribute to the interests of the financial oligarchy and their banks and monopolies. The plan of this minority is to plunder the resources of society with their drive for maximum profit in a jobless "growth" economy. An economy serving working people who are the producers of wealth is put in the last place. The Coalition government has been systematically wrecking any semblance of a pro-social national economy, with manufacturing and public services that meet the needs of working people, the young, senior citizens, the disabled and the unemployed. This has been done in the name of "austerity", with the outcome of destabilising society and threatening its very future.

To turn this situation around requires that the whole movement continues to build its unity in action to defeat this fraudulent "austerity" programme which labels the interests of the people as a "cost" and the interests of the powers-that-be and their monopolies, with their chaos, violence and war, as sacrosanct. As RCPB(ML) pointed out in its call to the working class on



May Day, 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 any decision-making power. By summing up their experience, the people involved in struggle are becoming very clear that the fight must be to challenge this dictate of the pow-

ers-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.

We give the call to all participants in the Gala to ensure that they keep the initiative in their own hands and organise their own political agenda, recognising that the worship of the power of capital in the big party consensus has been causing the working people to lose their bearings. However, it is also the case that where the fight against 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.

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, and for the working class to bring forward its own worker politicians.

By the time of the 131st Durham Miners Gala, a general election will have taken place. The Northern Region of RCPB(ML) takes this opportunity to call on the whole working class movement to go all out in this intervening period to ensure that the fraudulent, anti-worker and anti-social “austerity” programme of the Con-Dem government is defeated, and that candidates who oppose the agenda of austerity are elected. The working class must rely on its own outlook and the strength of its organisation and numbers to ensure that a path is opened for its own independent programme. The working class and people will prevail if they set their sights on becoming the decision-makers and persist in their struggles with this outlook.

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! Long May the Durham Miners Gala and Big Meeting Continue!

THE BATTLE FOR THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE NHS

No Solutions Given to the Anti-Social Direction of the NHS

The statements of newly-appointed NHS England CEO Simon Stevens on his plans and vision for the NHS reveal that the root cause of the anti-social direction of the NHS is not being addressed. The anti-social direction is one of the privatisation of health care delivery under whatever pretext it is presented. Its reversal to a pro-social direction would involve the recognition by government and the Chief Executive that health care is a right, and that the funding of health care is the responsibility of a modern society. Such funding cannot be considered as a cost to the economy or to the Treasury. Nor can the demand that the NHS be properly funded be turned into a programme to enrich the private health monopolies. On the contrary, it is a necessary demand that the monopolies that make use of and benefit from a healthy work force in order to realise their profits should be the ones who fund this health care. The escalating control and delivery of health care privately or by the monopolies through the NHS is what must be challenged and reversed.

This is not how Simon Stevens sees the challenges. For example, on May 29 he said in an interview that “parts of the NHS must be completely reinvented”. While the spin that was put on

this was that he wanted a return to “cottage hospitals” and that closing “smaller community hospitals was wrong”, it is necessary to be vigilant about his proposal. It has been pointed out that Stevens’ proposals are a close fit with a new business model promoted by global management consultancy companies like Ernst and Young and the Coalition government’s new Office for Life Sciences. Another source made the point that “while the sites might remain, Mr Stevens clearly envisages quite dramatic change in the way they are working or, in his words, complete reinvention. That’s not the same as preservation.”

The fact is that community hospitals are continuing to be closed, or stripped of their services, and even bigger hospitals are being threatened and subject to “special measures” and taken over by the private sector management, or the biggest NHS Trusts. Clinical commissioners and management are imposing cuts in the name of health care and imposing diktats on health workers with the continued refusal of government to increase investments to meet the needs of a modern health service in Britain.

As another commentator wrote, in his speeches, such as the

one delivered to the NHS Confederation Annual Conference in Liverpool on June 4, Simon Stevens “praises managers lavishly ... urging them to promote community, diversity and a listening culture. He favours ‘local solutions’ in which commissioners involve health and wellbeing boards ... in stress testing better care fund plans. But local plans ‘must be grounded in the context of strategic five-year reviews’, he also told his audiences. So local, but not too local.”

Whatever the platitudes, the reality is that the NHS is entering an unprecedented government-created crisis in investment which is seeing vital acute and community services budgets being wrecked at an alarming rate. The fight for survival is taking precedence over the claim that this is all being run for the needs of patients according to some well worked out plan for the NHS. Simon Stevens has no intention of actually addressing the real issues facing the NHS in order to safeguard its future. For example, in South West London it was reported that the health service regulators are complaining that they cannot cut half a billion pounds from the south London health services budget and that it is “unachievable”. Across the whole of England, NHS Trusts and Clinical Commissioning Groups are “reconfiguring” and “transforming” NHS by drastically cutting the number of beds and closing acute hospitals and cutting back on mental and health beds and social services in very similar ways to achieve the massive budget cuts demanded by the government.

Andy Burnham, speaking to the same NHS Confederation conference the following day, criticised the way the government was “integrating” health and social care with the “better care fund”. However, on the issue of funding he went on to say, “I can understand why a growing number of people are calling for [more money for the NHS] but I don’t see that can be the first response that we make in the public arsenal.” He said that before more money could be put into the NHS, a Labour government would “have to be able to assure patients that the health service was making the best use of its existing allocation” and then claimed that this was “something he said the NHS was not doing”.

The speeches of both Simon Stevens and Andy Burnham are based on the logic, in Stevens’ words, that there is a “backdrop of multiple fundamental, long-range, health challenges”. These “challenges” are those of a “growing population”, an “aging population”, such issues as “obesity, dementia, multimorbidity”, and “more expansive and more expensive treatments”.

This is fundamentally an anti-human way of posing the issues, that people are not an asset, that their well-being is an unwelcome problem for society, that working people themselves have no part in producing value, and that investments in social programmes are a drain on the economy. Simon Stevens’ answers, in short, require the application of so-called business models, and capital-centred programmes.

Taking the “Commissioning” of the NHS Services Further in an Anti-Social Direction

Simon Stevens also had set out plans to invite Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) to apply to co-commission the primary care of GP practices and their services with area teams of NHS England when previously this was the role of NHS England and its area teams under the Health Social Care Act, 2012. Almost immediately, Jeremy Hunt, Secretary of State for

Health, endorsed this announcement. Jeremy Hunt said that he backed the plans and this would set CCGs free to be the “guiding lights” to “craft the entire out-of-hospital plans” in their areas and that this was “even bigger and more ambitious” than the creation of CCGs a year ago.

It is hard on the face of it to see from the scope of these changes what they mean in practice and what difference this will make to the present performance of CCGs, who now commission health services locally. The fact is that they generally operate behind closed doors, consulting neither health staff nor the public in the name of “working with patients and the public” as do the “area teams” of NHS England which was the sole national commissioner of GP services prior to this announcement. For example, NHS England is already involving CCGs in dissolving Personal Medical Services of GPs (PMS). This means, in other words, that they are already wrecking publicly provided and paid GP services and breaking them up and handing them over to either independent GP services, or even bigger private companies providing GP services. So they are already as Simon Stevens and the government admits involved in those decisions now.

Ruth Robertson on the King’s Fund blog drew the conclusion from this letter to CCGs as such: “First, co-commissioning is optional: CCGs that are interested in an extended role must submit an expression of interest – either alone or as a group – by 20 June. Second, this is not a one-size fits all approach: CCGs can choose from a spectrum of commissioning arrangements that include fully delegated functions, joint decision-making or simply increased involvement in the current decision-making process. Third, not all primary care commissioning is up for grabs: community pharmacy, dental services and eye care will stay with NHS England; as will registration, revalidation and the appraisal of GPs. However, all other areas of primary care commissioning are open to joint arrangements.” She further points out: “CCGs can elect to take on responsibility for developing their local primary care strategy; negotiating, managing and enforcing local contracts (e.g., Alternative Provider Medical Services (APMS), Personal Medical Services (PMS)); financial management; and taking decisions on new local providers and practice mergers.”

Whilst private companies are on the one hand reluctant at present to take over many acute services because of the associated costs affecting their profits, on the other hand primary care services require less investment are far more lucrative in securing returns for these companies.

These changes give even greater scope to those interests that want to open up the NHS to further private contracts and now will include all independent GP services in those decisions and place them firmly at risk of mergers and influx of big players in the health market. Far from ending the commissioner/provider split which is at the heart of the anti-social direction, fragmentation, wrecking and privatisation of the NHS, the new Chief Executive and the government who appointed him are hell bent on taking the “commissioning” of the NHS services even further and faster in this anti-social direction.

It Must Not Pass!

Only by increasing investments in the NHS, and ending the market in the NHS and its privatisation can the wrecking of the health service be reversed. A human-centred solution requires that health care be recognised as a right and guaranteed.

Save Our Surgeries Action on the 66th Anniversary of the Birth of the NHS

As actions took place across the country to celebrate the 66th anniversary of the birth of the NHS on Saturday, July 5, a coalition of East London campaign groups also marched to highlight government cuts, which threaten the closure of 22 East London GP surgeries. Newham Save our NHS, Tower Hamlets KONP (Keep Our NHS Public) and Hackney KONP organised local feeder marches and a main “Save Our Surgeries” rally in Altab Ali Park. The rally followed a smaller successful march last month and a protest out-side Whitehall on July 4, when a Save Our Surgeries petition with over 13,000 signatures was delivered to Jeremy Hunt at the Department of Health.

This government is reducing funding to some GP practices which will mean that Newham practices will have to make cuts in services and in some cases, even close completely. The Newham Save Our Surgeries campaign held a rally with speeches on July 5 starting at Stratford rail station before moving off on an open top bus to mobilise the community to participate in the campaign.

Elected mayor of Tower Hamlets Lutfur Rahman told the crowd at Altab Ali Park, a local symbol of unity and resistance, that the campaign could force ministers to intervene to save surgeries. Mr Rahman called on the government to find the money to keep practices open. “We need to open more surgeries,” he said, and promised to continue to “squeeze” property developers for section 106 planning funding for GP premises.

Jubilee Street practice partner and campaign leader Dr Naomi Beer said all political parties had failed general practice over the years, but that the 2012 Health and Social Care Act failed the people of the country. She condemned inaction by the “ineffectual quango, NHS England”, and the failure to listen and act by ministers. Dr Beer called on government immediately to reinstate MPIG and reverse the “disastrous effects” of the Health and Social Care Act.

Retired Newham GP and chairman of the Unite doctors’ section Dr Ron Singer said, “GPs have taken a magnificent lead in starting this fightback. We say restore the funding to practices and restore quality to practices by giving them adequate funding to do their job properly.” Dr Singer said campaigners were drafting a pledge to ask general election candidates to commit to supporting expanded and adequately funded general practice and the repeal of the Health and Social Care Act.

MPIG Cuts

Due to Government changes in the way General Practice is funded, some inner-city and rural practices in England will suffer big budget cuts from April 2014. Minimum Practice Income Guarantee (MPIG) payments were introduced in 2004 to ensure that practices in deprived areas with a high turnover of patients,

and practices in sparsely populated areas, had enough money to deliver high quality General Practice services. Now the government plans to phase out these payments over the next seven years.

All the evidence shows that one of the biggest factors affecting health is poverty. Phasing MPIG out means that East London and other inner-city areas will lose out, even though high levels of poverty mean that more people have serious long-term illnesses at a much younger age. The cuts also affect people in rural areas. It is a just demand that all surgeries be properly funded.

The Save Our Surgeries campaign is raising the slogan: “A threat to one practice is a threat to all practices!” As many as 98 General Practices are already feeling the strain. If practices are forced to cut back or close there will be more pressure on the rest, risking collapse of the whole system. If that happens, it opens the way to GP services being taken over by private providers such as Virgin or Care UK. At the same time, there are huge cuts to the whole of NHS funding with privatisation of NHS services.

Health secretary Jeremy Hunt’s decision to strip MPIG funding from GP practices and redistribute it through the global sum formula will have a catastrophic effect on the ability to function of those worst hit – and it is far from just a tiny minority who will struggle. Accountants suggest that as many as one in five GMS practices could become unsustainable under the MPIG reforms.

Funding swings threaten a fifth of GMS practices in England. One in five GMS practices could become unsustainable as MPIG funding is redistributed over the coming seven years. Practices hit hardest will lose up to three times the amount gained by those faring best from the redistribution, according to GP magazine. Data from more than 200 GP practices assessed by specialist medical accountants Ramsay Brown & Partners show that practices will lose up to £32 per patient from annual income by 2021.

(acknowledgements to SaveOurNHS-EastLondon and the Save Our Surgeries campaign: See more at: <http://saveournhs-el.org.uk>)



East Londoners Oppose Cuts

Fighting to Safeguard the Future of the NHS

The 66th anniversary of the coming into being of the National Health Service on July 5, 1948, has seen broad sections of the people in struggle to safeguard the future of the NHS, to reverse the drive towards privatisation and to uphold the principle that health care is a right which governments must guarantee.

There has been a constant battle over the years to safeguard the future of the health service. In 1948, the NHS as a component part of the social welfare state came into being in the context of the victory of the world's people against Nazi fascism. The ruling circles at that time were compelled in this context of the progressive movements of the working class and people to ensure that elements of their vision of a new society would be established. Without, however, the establishing of the people as sovereign and enshrining their rights as fundamental in the running of society, the stage was set for an ongoing battle over the future and principles of the NHS. This contradiction has continued to be exacerbated as the all-round crisis of society, with its basis in the private ownership of the means of production, has intensified.

It is well known how Margaret Thatcher put privatisation of public services and the programme of neo-liberalism in the first place. The crisis of post-war monopoly capitalism was met by putting the interests of the monopolies as the priority, and developed into the headlong pursuit of turning every aspect of society into a mechanism to pay the rich.

The fact that today wherever one looks in the country there

are struggles to stop the dismantling of the health service, to oppose its privatisation and to save hospitals and guarantee health and social care is indicative of how compromised the right to health care has become.

As Workers' Weekly Health Group pointed out last year: "Today, the fight to safeguard the future of the NHS, which our Party took up as its call fourteen years ago under a Labour government, has now taken a centre place in the political demand of the Workers' Opposition and resistance of the people in fighting for the alternative. Such an alternative is not just a call for a change of policy ... but must become a recognition by broad sections of society and especially by its organised forces of health workers and the working class movement that a new direction for society is needed."

The fight to safeguard the future of the NHS is one of the most crucial battles in which the working class and people are uniting in action and are giving substance to their vision of a new society.

Safeguard the Future of the NHS! Health Care Is A Right!



Save Withybush Hospital

On June 18, up to 1,000 protesters gathered outside the Senedd, Cardiff, to oppose planned Welsh government changes to services at Withybush Hospital in Pembrokeshire.

The Save Withybush Action Team (SWAT) and other protesters travelled to Cardiff in an attempt to get Health Minister Mark Drakeford to listen to growing fears that lives will be lost if health service changes go ahead.

Plans to move consultant obstetrics, full paediatric cover and the special care baby unit from Withybush and replacing them with a three bed midwife led unit have met with opposition from

clinicians, residents and opposition politicians. A Judicial Review is currently underway.

Politicians and speakers were united in their opposition to these plans. One speaker pointed out that the changes being imposed on Withybush is part of a wider agenda which aims at decimation and privatisation of the NHS as a whole. While it is excellent that the political parties are united in their opposition, it is only the growing strength of the people themselves that can guarantee victory. Bringing a message of solidarity from the Lewisham campaign, the same speaker led the rousing cheer: "The NHS is Our NHS! Save the NHS!"

THE AUSTERITY AGENDA CAN BE DEFEATED!

Striking to Defend Standard of Living

Local government workers, teachers, civil servants and firefighters are among the sections of working people striking on July 10. Unions involved include the NUT, Unison, Unite, PCS, FBU and the GMB. Workers throughout England, Wales and the north of Ireland are taking part in a day-long protest over continuing public sector pay restraint and the government's brutal determination to ensure the burden of the economic crises falls onto the backs of working people.

Since the government took office, ministers have either frozen public sector pay or limited pay increases to well below the cost of living, leaving local government workers, NHS staff, teachers, firefighters, civil servants and other public servants on average £2,245 worse off in real terms, according to the TUC.

The TUC points out that council employees and workers across the public sector are angry and upset that the government is set to keep the lid on their pay – with the prospect of pay increases below the cost of living until at least 2018.

With over 450,000 workers in local government earning less than the living wage, many low-paid workers will have taken a difficult decision to lose a day's pay this week, says the TUC. But with ministers failing to listen to their concerns, they – and other public sector workers – feel that there is no other alternative open to them.

With the RPI measure of inflation currently 2.4 per cent – and likely to rise over the coming year – a combination of pay freezes and pay rises below the rate that prices are rising has left household budgets stretched to the limit, says the TUC.

The government's mean-spirited approach to public sector pay has had a huge impact on the spending power of almost six million households in England and Wales where at least one family member works in the public sector, according to recent research published by the TUC.

Having struggled to make ends meet for the past four years as their pay lagged behind prices, the news that workers in local government and elsewhere in the public sector may have to wait another four years before their pay prospects start to revive will hit morale hard, says the TUC. The NUT points out that the

teachers' strike in March this year forced the publication of the workload statistics which had been collected more than a year earlier. It also forced the government to produce guidance for head teachers about the evidence demands they place on teachers and on equalities issues in pay determination. A key strand of the teachers' campaign is to keep up the pressure on the Secretary of State is to communicate to politicians the concerns that teachers have.

Many unions have been campaigning for meaningful national negotiations on pay, jobs, and terms and conditions in the face of the Coalition government's dictate.

TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady said: "The economy may be picking up, but having paid the price in pay freezes and below inflation pay increases for several years there is to be no financial let up for town hall employees and other public sector workers. For them there are no shares to be had in the UK's economic recovery. Instead several more years of penny-pinching and frugal living lie ahead.

"In local government – and right across the public sector – workers believe that ministers neither care about nor understand the pressures on their already stretched household budgets.

"Meanwhile the government seems happy for the public purse to miss out on billions through income tax cuts for the wealthy and corporation tax reductions for big businesses, yet says there's no money to give a decent pay rise to struggling care assistants, nursery workers, dinner ladies and other local authority employees."

Frances O'Grady emphasised: "Spending cuts, attacks on their pay and pensions, thousands of posts lost through redundancies – all have taken their toll on a demoralised public sector workforce. Public servants have understandably had enough – now is the time for ministers to start listening and to realise that it was never going to be possible to keep the lid on the public sector forever."

For details of the July 10 march and rally see: <http://www.teachers.org.uk/strikerally>

Struggle against Austerity Programme

The *Line of March* salutes the many thousands of public sector and public service workers who are taking action on July 10 in defence of their standard of living and to demand that the government stops dictating and enters into mean-

ingful negotiations over pay, pensions, conditions and security of employment and security in retirement.

These striking workers are fighting for everyone, for all working people, for the public good. They are saying that enough

is enough. They are representative of a rising tide of struggle against the fraudulent “austerity” agenda pursued by the Coalition government.

The Cameron-Clegg government has been showing utter disregard for the concerns and conditions of the people. This is doubly insulting since not only does the government ride roughshod over the concerns of the people, but the ruling elite refuses to recognise that it is working people themselves, in manufacturing, in services, in the public sector, that are the creators of the wealth of the country. This wealth is being squandered to enrich the elite, not to invest in the national economy. Social programmes are being attacked, there is a non-stop ideological barrage against the poor and vulnerable, and public service workers are being made the scapegoats for the imposition of monopoly right over public right.

The striking workers on July 10 are saying No to the low-wage agenda and austerity programme of the Coalition. What is at stake is not just a fight for fairness at work. The way the whole

economy is structured is the embodiment of “unfairness” for that matter. No, the issue is whose interests hold sway, who is dictating to whom, whose rights are being recognised.

The issue at stake is the demand for a new direction for the economy based on the recognition of the rights of the working class, who, far from being a “cost” to society or to anyone else, are the social force who through their labour create the new value which is the key to a thriving economy. Instead of all-sided economic development, the government is presiding over an economy in which this new value, this wealth, is claimed by the monopolies, and the workers are forced to take action, to strike, and ultimately to assert that they are the ones who show responsibility for the fate of society.

The crucial issue that all workers in struggle must address and are addressing is that they themselves are more than capable of providing the solutions to the issues facing the economy and to public services. To turn things around, the “austerity” programme can and must be defeated.

Defeat the Austerity Agenda!

NO TO THE EUROPE OF THE MONOPOLIES

The Staging of the European Elections

There were two outstanding themes in the electorate's vote in the elections of May 22 to the European Parliament and to local councils: opposition to the austerity agenda of the ruling circles and the desire of people to end their marginalisation and gain control over their lives. For the ruling circles, the outstanding agendas were to organise an electoral coup and spread the maximum confusion. These came into a decisive clash and represented two realities, or two opposing ways at looking at the same reality.

The script for the elections had been written long before the polling stations opened. An “earthquake” was agreed as the appropriate description. Thus the people's voice was drowned out.

The results of the elections showed that parties representing an alternative to the big three Westminster cartel parties were widely supported. At the same time, with the turnout at 34.19%,



NHA Party candidates in the European elections

roughly two in three of the electorate did not vote in the European elections. The “United Kingdom” returns 73 members to the European Parliament, with an election every five years. The power, however, lies with the private monopoly interests and their representatives in the European Commission.

In these circumstances, many of the parties which put for-

ward a genuine alternative to the rule of the monopolies and the dictate of their interests, whether through the Westminster or European bodies, used the elections as a referendum on a change of direction for the economy and society. They found it hard going, since there was a virtual blackout in the monopoly-controlled media to anyone but a chosen few.

Whereas the canvassing showed opposition to the anti-social agenda of the monopolies and their representatives, and to dictate from Brussels and from Westminster, nevertheless the ruling elite were set on defining this opposition as at one with their own agenda of pushing xenophobia, of attacking the rights of all, and of making this agenda respectable in the form of UKIP. Thus they were intent on turning back the clock, while the parties who represented an alternative were forward-looking, working to safeguard the future of society.

Among the results that were buried in the prevailing media hype were the following. The Green Party had the fourth highest number of votes, after UKIP, Labour and Conservative. They gained one seat, and now have three MEPs. The Scottish National Party was next in the number of votes polled, above the Lib Dems, and returned two MEPs. Plaid Cymru also maintained its share of the vote, and returned one MEP. The National Health Action Party, standing for the first time and only in London, polled 23,253 votes, a very positive testimony to both their hard work and their drive to uphold the NHS as serving the needs of the population and not the private monopoly interests. (Their summing up can be found [here](#)). No2EU polled 31,757 votes, also demonstrating the stand against the Europe of the monopolies. The vote of the British National Party decreased by over 5%, and they lost both their European seats, demonstrating that racism and chauvinism was not the main vote-winner for UKIP.

The results of the elections showed two things. One is the desire of working people to hold the establishment parties to account for their assault on the rights of all, and for depriving them of power over their lives. Second is the need for political renewal, for raising the level of political culture and to involve the people in decision-making, not just around the issue of “getting the message across”.

The renewal of the polity demands the equality of treatment and opportunity to all political parties. This is not so much a question of fighting for left against right, but of fighting for the agenda of people’s empowerment, and organising the working class to take up its independent leading role.

The crucial issue is what the ruling circles are preparing for the general election. In the less than 12 months before the general election, the people’s forces must be gathered into a tide to defeat the austerity agenda, and work to open the path to people’s empowerment and a human-centred agenda. It is necessary to expose the fraud of the capital-centred agenda, whether on workers or on social programmes, and consolidate the forces of the progressive movement, with conscious participation being the watchword. This is not so much the politics of hope as the politics of necessity and of defence of the rights of all.

It looks as though the ruling elite could be preparing for a pact between the Tories and UKIP. There is no-one who the rich and powerful see as being able to come to power as their champion or possibly one could say, as their decisive champion. They wish to cover all their bases, promote racism and chauvinism,



Dr Louise Irvine (right) and Dr Jacky Davis campaigning on behalf of the NHA Party at Whipps Cross hospital

and negate the forces who stand for the public good and for a new vision for society. They see the possibility of the Lib Dems being wiped out as a viable partner in a Coalition. Their ideology, for example around the centenary of the inter-imperialist First World War, is to glorify the interests of monopoly capital and “defence of the fatherland”. This is how far they wish to turn back the clock.

In actual fact, as well as representing this racism and chauvinism, UKIP stands firmly for the austerity agenda, a fact which was largely hidden in their promotion. The people want to assert their sovereignty, but membership of the EU stands in direct contradiction. The fact is that the domestic system gives them no chance to do so either.

The issue for the progressive forces in the period before the general election in May 2015 is to organise to defeat the austerity agenda, and to open a path for the independent politics of the working class. The people will not accept the austerity agenda, and how to block this agenda before May 7, 2015, is a central issue. The important thing is to step up the struggles and take a stand. This is the central issue, not a pledge of allegiance to one political party and to forget both the day-to-day struggles as well as the aim of these struggles.

The *Line of March* calls on everyone to raise the level of political debate, discuss in their factories and workplaces, educational institutions, hospitals and communities how to prepare effectively to contribute to the defeat of the Coalition and the fraudulent “austerity” agenda, and open the path to the independent politics of the working class.

European Parliament election 2014 results can be seen at: <http://www.ukpolitical.info/european-parliament-election-2014-results.htm>

BOOK REVIEW

Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism: The Communist International, Africa and Diaspora, 1919-1939* (Africa World Press, 2013)

by Workers' Weekly reviewer

This ground-breaking book, based on research undertaken in the archives of the Comintern in Moscow as well as archives in France, Britain, the US and West Africa, documents the activities of the Communist International in relation to Africa and the African diaspora. It focuses on a period when the world was in flux, with inter-imperialist rivalry at its height, when African and Caribbean countries, amongst others, were under colonial domination. Black people in Africa, the Caribbean and other western countries were officially considered inferior, had few rights and racism was at the level of open state policy from so-called "Jim Crow" laws and lynching in the US, to pass laws and segregation in South Africa and the colour bar in Britain.

In these circumstances many were inspired by the creation of the Soviet Union, following the October Revolution Russia in 1917, and the creation of the Communist International in 1919. From its founding under Lenin's leadership, the Comintern sought to inspire and support the oppressed black people throughout the world to organise and empower themselves and break the shackles of imperialism. The book points out that it was the Communists who were at the forefront of the struggle against colonial rule in this period.

The book plays an important role in chronicling the many African, Caribbean and African American Communists who took up the struggle at that time, in particular those connected with the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (ITUCNW), established in 1928 under the auspices of the Comintern. The ITUCNW acted to strengthen the work of the Communist Parties to take up for solution the question of how the liberation of Africa and the African diaspora might be achieved. The book points out that in that period many key activists gravitated towards or organised in unity with the international communist movement, including Lamine Senghor in France, Isaac Wallace-Johnson in West Africa, Elma Francois in Trinidad and Jacques Romain in Haiti. In this period the Communists were often in the forefront of major international struggles, for example, to oppose fascist Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 or to demand the release of the nine African American youth arrested in Scottsboro, Alabama in 1931.

The book also examines several areas of controversy and disinformation about the role of the international communist movement in relation to African liberation. Significantly the information outlined in Dr Adi's book highlights that disinformation has often become accepted wisdom and part of continuing efforts to undermine the crucial role of Communists of African descent and of the Soviet Union itself in this period. Using his extensively researched material the writer outlines the facts about the

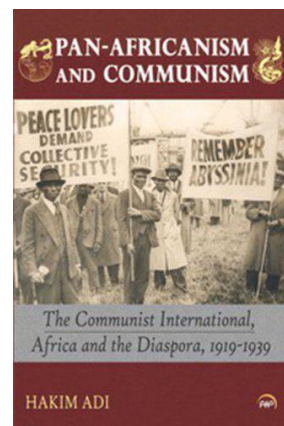
activity and demise of the ITUCNW, as well as the changing tactics and analysis of the Comintern in the period leading to the outbreak of World War II, and leaves the reader to make an independent judgement.

This book makes an important contribution to an area of African and Caribbean, as well as Communist history that has long been neglected and which many people are unaware of. Its focus on the activities of African, African American and Caribbean Communists in the period 1919-1939 is to be welcomed. It is an area about which there remains a great deal of confusion not only with regard to the facts but also concerning the lessons to be drawn from this experience.

Dr Adi focuses his attention on the efforts of ordinary African and Caribbean people who decided to take a stand and address the many problems that confronted them in their time. Problems such as Jim Crow in the USA, and racism and violation of human rights all over colonial Africa and the Caribbean disfigured the lives of millions of people. The Communists took up this struggle with the idea of finding a revolutionary solution to it and with an understanding that solving it would be bound up with the struggle of all oppressed people for their freedom. At great personal sacrifice, these activists made a significant contribution to the mass movements for African liberation which were to burst out in the 1950s and 1960s, such as the Civil Rights movement, the Black Power movement and the independence struggles in Africa and the Caribbean. The progress that has been achieved in the struggle for African liberation to date is due in no small part to the efforts of those individuals featured in this book. It shows what a significant impact we can have on changing the world in which we live when we take up the challenges facing us and try to find solutions to them.

This book has great significance for those who are today involved in trying to find a solution to the many problems that continue to confront Africans both on the continent and in the diaspora. The point is not that we should simply repeat what was done in 1919 – 39 when people were grappling with the problems of the world as it was then. Rather, it is that we should be inspired by their example to courageously take up the challenge of changing the world today and using the scientific approach which modern communism offers us.

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BUILDING THE PARTY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The Party of John Buckle

John Buckle was General Secretary of RCPB(ML) from 1979 to his untimely death in 1983. He was born on July 27, 1949. RCPB(ML) has designated 2014 as the year of the Party. It has taken up the study of the work of John Buckle and the Party which he led, in order to defeat the attempts of the ruling circles to use disinformation to bring down new tragedies onto the peoples, and uphold the necessity for the progressive forces at this time to come forward to provide solutions to the retrogression of the ruling elite and to channel the human power of the working class and people to bring the reactionary forces to heel. The Party organised its seminar on March 16, marking the 35th anniversary of RCPB(ML), with this objective and to emphasise and elaborate that the times are calling for building the mass communist party in the 21st century.

Comrade John was the embodiment of that red spine that consistently has run through the life of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) and its forerunner organisations stretching back to the days of the 1960s and forward to today. That steadfast vigorous revolutionary spirit is what characterised the life of Comrade John from his student days to the day of his tragically early death in an air crash on November

27, 1983, at the age of 34. It is what continues to inspire and imbue the Party and its militants to this day also, and to assist them in finding their bearings in all the constantly changing conditions and circumstances.

John Buckle came to prominence as a communist and anti-fascist leader in the 1970s when the forerunner organisations of RCPB(ML) had played a prominent role in the defeat by active mass action of the ruling elite's attempt to develop a mainstream fascist party to attack the workers' and progressive movement. He came forward to lead the reorganisation of these forerunner organisations with the founding of RCPB(ML) in March 1979.

As RCPB(ML)'s General Secretary, he led the work of the Party in this crucial period until his death in 1983. He was an outstanding proletarian internationalist, and everything he did was in the service of the Party and the working class.

Comrade John Buckle was a bright star in the firmament of Marxist-Leninist leaders, and the Party salutes his memory and his unquenchable communist spirit. It calls on all who are interested in bringing about a bright future for humanity to learn from his example and take up the work for the revolutionary transformation of society.

Joint seminar: On the Agenda for the Working Class

The seminar *On the Agenda for the Working Class*, held in the context of developing the unity of the communist movement, took place on June 7. It was jointly organised by the New Communist Party and the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist), and held in central London. Activists and supporters of both parties attended from many parts of the country.

Both parties had called for papers on crucial topics which, in the opinion of the organisers, need to be taken up for solution by the communist and workers' movement. And the first objective of the seminar was to facilitate discussion and expand the space for communism, with the aim of building ideological and political unity in the movement.

The four papers presented were: *Party Building to Lead the*

Proletarian Front; The United Front in the Modern Era; The Importance of the Anti-Fascist Struggle; and For a New Direction for the Economy and Society. It is planned to publish the edited papers in a new theoretical journal. Lively discussion followed the talks from NCP and RCPB(ML), giving rise to the desire to organise further space for discussion.

The joint seminar drew attention to the fact that *What type of Party?* is a question of vital importance for the success of the advance of society. The sentiment was expressed that it is necessary to build our two Parties together to give leadership to the proletarian front. In the opinion of the organisers, it is of significance that discussion on the agenda for the working class is taking place in the movement. This was also the assessment of those who participated in the seminar.

DISMANTLE NATO!

No to NATO! No New Wars!

**Protest 30 August - September 1
Demonstrate Saturday 30 August**

Wales could see its biggest protests in a generation as 60 world leaders meet at the Celtic Manor in Newport for the NATO summit on 4-5 September to plan their war on the world.

Previous summits in Chicago and Strasbourg saw thousands protest war, austerity and global inequality. From 30 August people will flock to South Wales for international actions including a weekend march and Counter Summit, week-long peace camp, and protests on the summit's opening day. NATO expansion has created a dangerous crisis in Ukraine which threatens a regional war.

NATO's nuclear armed alliance binds Europe to US foreign policy, a foreign policy post-Iraq increasingly unpopular around the world. It is also the military alliance currently occupying Afghanistan.

War is the enemy of the poor. At this year's summit the US will be pressuring Western powers to increase their already huge military budgets at a time when poverty and inequality are soaring. The world's 85 richest people have as much as poorest 3.5 billion. Money into war is money out of our communities.

In the UK, 500,000 people had to resort to food banks last year. None of the cuts would be necessary if the sums Britain spends on its military and armaments were invested in social need instead of the war machine.

This autumn the powerful will make their voices heard at the NATO summit. We must make sure that the voice of the millions around the world who need peace and justice is also heard.

Organised by Stop the War Coalition and CND

Saturday 30 August: Mass demonstration

March through central Newport. Assembles 1pm at the Civic Centre Car Park and marches around the town centre ending at Westgate Square for a rally.

Sunday 31 August: Counter Summit in Cardiff

County Hall, CF10 4UW View on map
Speakers include: Boris Kagarlitsky Russia • Joseph Gerson USA • Medea Benjamin Code Pink USA • Margaretta D'Arcy Ireland • Jeremy Corbyn MP • Lindsey German Stop the War Coalition.

Mon 1 September: Newport Alternative Summit

Pill Mill 10.00 – 5pm.

Topics: Drones • Women and War • Iraq • Afghanistan • Ukraine • Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty

Tue 2 and Wed 3 September

Various local events

Thur 4 September: First day of NATO Summit

Mass Action and March on the Celtic Manor
Gather at 12 Noon • Cenotaph • Clarence Place • Newport NP11 6DG

Friday 5 September

Final day of Summit. Direct Actions. Street Theatre.

JUNE 3 SYRIAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Syrian Elections and Imperialist Crisis of Legitimacy

Correspondent in Syria of Voice of Revolution, a publication of the US Marxist-Leninist Organisation

The Syrian Arab Republic held its presidential election on June 3, 2014. According to the U.S., a good election is one that lives up to imperialist expectations and desires.

Syria instead held true to the efforts of the people to take their stand against imperialist intervention and U.S.-style democracy, with the elections being one part of the on-going struggle of Syr-

ians to resist U.S. imperialism. The election also further revealed the crisis of legitimacy faced by the U.S., whose wars, occupations and unleashing of terrorists cannot stop resistance and the drive of the peoples to affirm their rights.

Imperial Legitimacy and Popular Legitimacy

According to the Supreme Constitutional Court, the legal body that oversaw the election process, 11,634,412 of the 15,845,575 eligible Syrian voters over the age of 18 voted - a 73.42% turnout. This included large segments of those who had been displaced internally or externally, the number of whom is estimated to account for about one-third of the population. Most of the 7 million displaced are internal refugees. The figures also included Syrian expatriates in countries where voting was not blocked (as occurred in the U.S. and Canada).

The elections were monitored by observers from 32 countries, including the U.S., Canada, Cuba, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Venezuela, India, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Russia, South Africa, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea (DPRK). They issued a joint statement affirming the elections as free, fair and valid.

Incumbent Bashar al-Assad won 88.7% of the vote, while the other two runners - Hassan Annouri and Maher Hajjar - received 4.3% and 3.2% respectively. Another 3.8% of the votes were invalid or blank.

Syrians outside the country got to vote first - at a total of 43 embassies across the world. Voters in neighboring Lebanon - where 1.1 million Syrian refugees live, turned up in huge numbers to take part in the elections. Their sheer number brought traffic on highways leading to the embassy compound in Beirut to a halt. Even the embassy staff were surprised and voting had to be extended. A similar situation was at hand at the Syrian Embassy in Amman, Jordan, where large numbers of Syrian refugees also live. Inside the country, voting was also extended late into the night due to the large turnout.

In many parts of the country people celebrated Election Day with rallies and dancing, but also with gunfire - a ritual common in many countries in the Levant but which has become more widespread since the Syrian crisis began.

Many people also posed for pictures proudly sporting the semi-permanent election ink on a finger or two. Some considered this election significant as it was the first multi-candidate election since 1953. However, even as one of the candidates put it, people recognized that the election was between Syria and its enemies, not between the candidates.

It can be said that for Western imperialist eyes, the sight of endless lines of voters waiting to cast their ballots in the Syrian elections must have been as unintelligible as medieval Indians using palm leaves as ballots to elect members of village assemblies in Tamil Nadu. If ancient Rome and Athens were and remain the model for pre-modern electoral practices, Western and Western-style elections must serve as a model in the present times. A "lineage of democracy" that defies interruption, or so the dominating narrative goes.

Imperialist Claim of Coercion

Despite the high turn-out, rallies and broad support publicly

expressed by the people, U.S. imperialism dismissed the Syrian election as "illegitimate," a "fraud," and a "disgrace." In making this claim, the U.S. is quite true to how it construes the question of legitimacy: not as essentially inherent to the principles of sovereignty and self-determination, but as something the imperialists bestow on those they decide merit it.

This effort to brand the election as illegitimate has been three-pronged. Firstly was the claim that the elections were illegitimate because the government tightly controlled them and people were coerced or intimidated into participating in the vote. The outpouring of voters in Lebanon, for instance, did not register with imperialist media outlets, which chose to either ignore the matter altogether or portray the masses lined up to cast their votes as part of a generalized frenzy where an individual's capacity to vote rationally was somehow prevented. The sheer impossibility of the Syrian state security apparatuses managing to coerce such a large majority of voters inside the country, let alone at the 43 embassies abroad, evidently also did not register.

That not everyone who voted was an Assad supporter was another aspect ignored. Many who turned up to take part in the elections were among the opposition in the earlier stages of the crisis and who came to reject how the whole affair transformed into an imperialist proxy war against the Syrian people and state in the name of "regime change." These voted to affirm that they stood for the sovereignty and independence of their country. It mattered more to vote in defiance of the many actions and threats by the U.S. and the violence of the terrorists backed by them, which included the shelling of polling stations.

In other words, people voted for the state against intervention by U.S. imperialism and its reactionary Arab footmen. The elections were branded "illegitimate" despite the large overall turnout of 73.42%. Compare this with figures from the Egyptian presidential election - 47.5%. The Obama regime and U.S. allies markedly applauded Egypt's election, while dismissing Syria's. The much prized discourse of democracy and human rights also need not apply where the Egyptian military is concerned.

Elections During War Time

Another layer of "illegitimacy" was holding the elections while the war raged on, which was echoed by the UN Secretary General himself. However, the 2005 Iraqi general elections and the 2004 Afghani presidential elections were held not only during fighting but also under colonial occupations. The U.S. regarded them as significant "benchmarks" on the road of enabling the natives to take matters into their own hands, to come of age democratically. This is a narrative reminiscent of backward and racist colonialist designations of the colonized as deficient and immature and "requiring" colonization.

In the language of the Obama Doctrine, "Syria had no right to hold elections amidst war" naturally translates into "Syria has no right to be sovereign." Countries like the U.S., Canada, France, Germany, Belgium, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates imposed this dictate by blocking Syrians from voting at Syrian embassies there.

The U.S., which has orchestrated and carried out coups, imposed unlawful and criminal sanctions and embargoes that strangle peoples and economies, denied and undermined African-American voting at home, and funded and backed campaigns

to destabilize and fragment countries the world over, is in no position to preach democracy to the world.

U.S. Effort to Brand Syrian Resistance as Illegitimate

The final aspect of “illegitimacy” is to deny that the Syrian people have stood their ground in the face of imperialist aggression and foiled the many attempts to strip away Syrian sovereignty, including through unleashing terrorists (such as those of the Wahabi type) all under the banner of “regime change” and “humanitarian interventionism.” For the U.S., resistance is “illegitimate,” and so is any nation-building project that seeks political and economic independence, whether in Africa, Latin America or the Middle East.

At the same time, U.S. actions make clear that funding and training extremists who commit heinous crimes against the people of Syria is “legitimate.” Recruiting “jihadists” from 87 countries to wreck the country is also “legitimate.” Equally “legitimate” is the systematic targeting of hospitals, power plants and substations, highways and infrastructure - all U.S. crimes.

Dismantling more than 10,000 factories in Aleppo, the industrial capital of Syria, and moving them into Turkey, a key member of the NATO military alliance, is “legitimate” too in the eyes of the humanity-loving imperialists. The European Union even partially lifted the sanctions imposed on Syria to enable the re-flow of oil from fields under the control of al-Qaida offshoots. This is a significant source of revenue that is said to have been used to expand and finance the carnage these terrorists have been carrying out in Syria, and now once again in Iraq.

According to current estimates, the Syrian economy has shrunk by more than 45% with unemployment impacting almost

half of the population. Close to 8 million Syrians have fallen into poverty with 4.4 million living in conditions of extreme poverty. According to the Syrian Center for Policy Research, the economic impact of the war against the people of Syria has been “tantamount to wholesale de-industrialization.” For the international imperialist oligarchies led by the U.S., all this systemic destruction of a nation is justifiable while resistance or anti-hegemonic projects the people advance are criminalized.

The “right to protect” - a staple in the Obama Doctrine, has aimed at displacing the right to sovereignty, which has been so integral to managing international relations since the end of WWII. Sovereignty and self-determination are internationally recognized collective rights, vested in member states by the UN Charter. Their enshrinement in law arose out of the defeat of Nazism and Fascism in World War II and the demand of the peoples to prevent more wars and expand and modernize democracy.

The imperialists, in their arrogance, are blind to the reality that sovereign and independent states hold elections not as an affair that satisfies others - as a performance for the imperialists - but rather, these states call on their populace to vote as an expression of the right to self-determination and defense of sovereignty. The U.S. is acting to end such defiance, and, as examples worldwide show, does not hesitate to try and decimate peoples using sectarian and ethnic lines, proxy warfare and outright colonization and destruction.

The Syrian people are rejecting Obama’s plans for more chaos, devastation and war. The right to self-determination and the right to sovereignty is the platform of the struggle of the Syrian people today against imperialist intervention and aggression. And casting a ballot in the recent presidential elections was one of the many facets of this on-going struggle.

Friends of Korea Social Meeting

A meeting of remembrance to mark the 20th anniversary of the passing of President Kim Il Sung was held on July 8 at the John Buckle Centre. The guest of honour was Hyon Hak Bong, Ambassador at the Embassy of the DPRK in London. The meeting and social heard tributes honouring the memory of President Kim Il Sung, following which Ambassador Hyon made a presentation on the lasting significance of this great leader. In questions and discussion, it became clear that the progressive movement in Britain can only be strengthened by being acquainted with the facts about the DPRK and its leadership. The atmosphere of the meeting was one of close unity and friendship between the working class and people of Britain and the DPRK. The event was hosted by the Co-ordinating Committee of Friends of Korea.





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