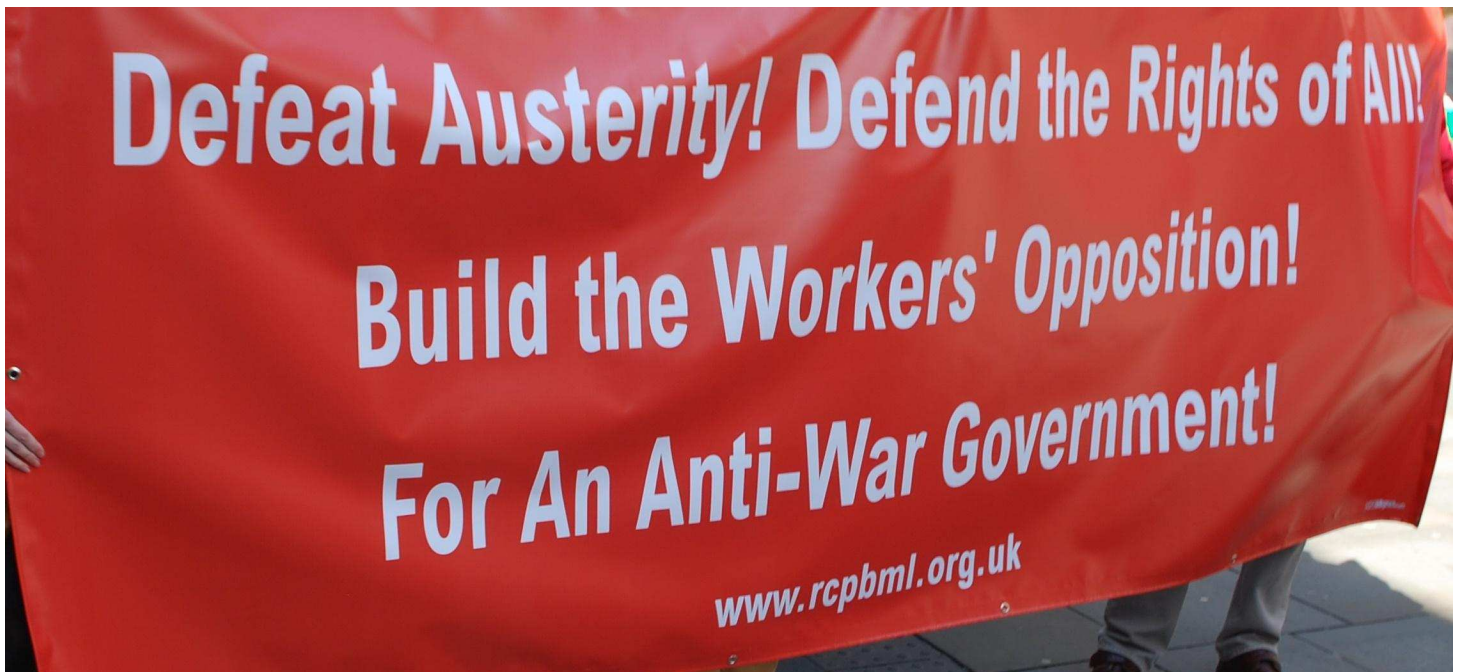


# The Line of March

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## BUILD THE STRUGGLE AGAINST AUSTERITY



**No to the Austerity Agenda! Defend the  
Rights of All! For a New Direction for Society!  
For an Anti-War Government!**

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## ***BUILDING THE STRUGGLE AGAINST AUSTERITY***

# **Carry Forward the Struggle against the Austerity Agenda! End Austerity Now!**

**T**he struggle against the Cameron government's austerity agenda is building. We call on all concerned to block this austerity agenda to participate in the demonstrations in London and Glasgow on June 20. Take a stand against austerity! End austerity now!

What the victory of the Conservatives shows is not only that the struggle against the austerity agenda must be intensified. It also shows that a collective consciousness must be built on the necessity to turn things around, to reverse the direction in which the Conservatives are taking society. The victory of Cameron is a hollow victory, in that the Conservatives have no mandate to carry out the austerity agenda. The almost clean sweep of the SNP in Scotland in the Westminster election has demonstrated that the flag of opposition to austerity and the neo-liberal agenda is the flag round which the people are prepared to rally. It must be carried forward!

What are the goals to aim at in carrying forward our resistance to austerity and neo-liberalism? In our opinion, political renewal, empowerment of the people and a new direction for the economy and society are the goals. These are the alternatives to austerity, attacks on the rights of the people, and neo-liberal globalisation.

The Conservatives' legislative programme needs serious organising work to build effective opposition. On every front, the struggle is to block and reverse the direction in which the Cameron government is taking society. This struggle must be taken forward on the basis of involving working people in participating in the fight. The government is not only ensuring every aspect of society is geared to paying the rich, and causing fundamental economic and social crisis as a result. It is working to try and ensure that working people are excluded from decision-making at every level. This agenda of dictate from the government downwards is one which it is crucial to challenge and organise against.

The Conservative neo-liberal agenda is also one of attempting to negate the collectives of the people from exercising their rights. The people have set their sights on the right to participate in governance, and they cherish the right to have control of their own lives. The austerity agenda promotes fatalism, hopelessness and passivity on these fronts. But the people are getting further organised to actively participate in asserting these rights. In the struggle to reverse the direction in which the government is taking the health service, for example, it is being affirmed that health care is a right. The agenda of privatisation, financial constraints, fragmentation and closures is first and foremost an assault on this basic right and the right of health workers and the



**Demonstration "No to Austerity", Newcastle June 6**

community to decide on the direction of the health service. The same is true in the field of education where the people are affirming that education is a right, not a privilege. Similarly in the struggle to realise the principles that a livelihood is a right, that the people have a right to housing, to food, and to building a new society. The government's legislative programme is a challenge to all these rights.

Equally of concern is the government's agenda to impose the tenets of neo-liberalism and national chauvinism as "British values". This is of concern to all sections of society. We are supposed to think of affirming the right to conscience as "extremism", and that to uphold principles of international justice and human rights is "un-British". It is crucial that working people in opposition uphold the banner of defence of the rights of all. The unity of the people and the exercise of their rights and dignity can only be forged in such a struggle to defend the rights of all.

The Cameron government pushes that Britain must assert its role in the world, by which it means interference, aggression, and being a willing participant in the contention and collusion of the imperialist system of states. The ruling elite has not given up its programme to "make Britain great again". In opposition, the people have the duty to organise from the base against war and in defence of the sovereignty of nations and peoples. Their goal is for an anti-war government on the soil of Britain, and an end to all the blocs such as NATO and the EU which threaten peace, sovereignty and the fraternal unity of peoples who are fighting to be in control of their own destiny.

These are the challenges facing the movement to bring an end to austerity, bring about a new direction for society, effect democratic renewal and empower the people. Let us meet this challenge!



# CARRY FORWARD THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE CAMERON GOVERNMENT

## No to the Austerity Agenda! Defend the Rights of All!

General disbelief followed the result of the General Election that the Conservative Party had won an overall majority in the Commons. The resolve of those forces who are pledged to oppose and defeat the austerity agenda has, however, been strengthened. It is recognised that the ruling elite had been set on ensuring that Cameron remained in Downing Street. The last-minute tornado of fear-mongering from the Conservatives could be seen to amount to a coup carried out against the electorate.

The disinformation about the result has been that it has amounted to a famous victory for the Conservatives and a horrendous loss for Labour. From this, it has been a short step to concluding that the electorate returned a Conservative majority representing the centre-ground, while Labour lost because it had turned too far to the left, was in hock to the unions, and rejected the values of New Labour. The reflection of this in the workers' movement is the pressure to blame the electorate for the Tory majority, and express despondency about the outcome or, what amounts to the same thing, develop a hysteria about fighting harder.

But the issue does not pose itself primarily about moving left or right. The issue was and continues to be to say no to the austerity programme and defend the rights of all. The electorate did not embrace the austerity agenda. Far from it. It is clear that the SNP inspired the Scottish people to reject austerity in as much as it was represented by Scottish Labour. And they pledge to take this fight to Westminster also. A party such as the National Health Action party inspired people through its principles, its stand and its organising work to challenge the status quo.

The facts show that the Conservative Party barely secured one-third



of the vote. It only increased its share of the vote by 0.8% from 2010. With a turnout of 66.1%, only a quarter of eligible voters turned out to support a Conservative candidate.

What was particularly noticeable was the rejection of the Lib Dems. This shows a rejection of the Lib Dems as the party that betrayed the electorate by ditching its promises and its manifesto in 2010 and allowing the Conservatives to rule. Of the seats the Lib Dems lost on May 7, two-thirds went to the Tories and only one-third to Labour. Overall the share of the vote by the old Coalition parties plummeted by 15%. Parties such as the Greens increased their share of the vote, and Caroline Lucas was elected in Brighton with a substantially increased majority.

The conclusion can be drawn that Labour was unable to prevent the Conservatives from reaching a majority because it conciliated at best with the austerity agenda and did not present an alternative to the programme of austerity. At best, Labour apologetically refused to fight austerity, and indeed actually focused on how it would continue this programme. It did not affirm it would defend the rights of human beings, but on the contrary it capitulated to the agenda of the rich which blames the people and not the state for the ills of society. One had the spectacle of Labour swearing that its main priority would be to balance the books by reducing investment in the future of society, while the



Conservatives presented themselves as the party of working people. It can be confidently said that behind this scenario lies the agenda of the rich and powerful who wish to keep the people disempowered and to exercise their dictate over society.

The spectacular success of the SNP not only reflects their opposition to austerity but to upholding the principle that the Scottish people should exercise their sovereignty. Support had been increasing by leaps and bounds since the Westminster parties united in opposition to Scotland as an independent country in which the people are sovereign, and hence paid the price. The success of the SNP also reflected the opposition of the people to militarisation and the threat of nuclear weapons.

The election of the Conservatives with a majority poses the danger to the people of an extremist and dictatorial government, which does not recognise the right of human beings and their collectives and the importance of a modern government basing itself on a culture of rights, and which in particular is singling out the right to conscience for attack. It goes without saying that it is fundamentally opposed to the right of the people to be the decision-makers, a right which has taken root with the Scottish people.

The scene is set, not for a consensus parliament, but one in which pro-austerity and anti-austerity agendas will come into clash. How far this develops remains to be seen. The Fixed-Term Parliaments Act would seem to guarantee a government that can rule out a vote of no-confidence for a term of five years. However, the Tories have a very slender majority, and are set for a growing opposition to their term in office, perhaps within the Commons but certainly through the working class and people's movements.

In these circumstances, it is vital that these movements put high on their agenda the issue of building a Workers' Opposition. The people



ardently desire a change in the direction of the economy and of society, and are opposed to austerity, privatisation, paying the rich, and the imposition of an agenda which consolidates the rule of the monopolies and criminalises the right to conscience on the spurious grounds of combating extremism. The election has demonstrated that the more the ruling elite talk of "One Nation" and "British values", the more they impose neo-liberalism and criminalise dissent and opposition to the neo-liberal agenda. Their whole system is counterfeit in this respect.

The task presents itself of carrying forward the struggle against Cameron, the Conservatives, and this neo-liberal austerity agenda that they represent. The task presents itself of developing resistance and giving this resistance organisational form. The task presents itself of defending the rights of all. We call on everyone to fully participate in taking up these tasks and turning the situation around.

## Conservatives' electoral coup:

# The Need Is for All-Sided Democratic Renewal

The election showed that the modus operandi remains the staging of electoral coups through campaigns of disinformation, and increasingly, of fear. However, this began to run into difficulty in the previous election in 2010, which failed to resolve a champion. Out of the Westminster cartel emerged a coalition, which at first tried to present itself as a kind of champion under the banner of what they called "freedom, fairness and responsibility". In the present election, things became yet more complicated. All pretence was gone. Cameron, openly and arrogantly the champion of nothing but further austerity, preferred to remain in the background.

Especially apparent in the present election was the difficulty in predicting its outcome, with the predictions based on opinion polls bearing little resemblance to the result. Voting behaviour, the choices people make and their reasoning have started to drift significantly away from

prevailing assumptions.

Certainly a factor here has been the rising influence of smaller parties. The central issue of this election was the battle over austerity and the widespread sentiment was to eject the coalition. In this context, the involvement of the smaller parties who took a stand against austerity, both in their battle for inclusion in the televised debates, and the fronts they formed together in local campaigns, in various ways exposed the cartel party system. This threw into relief the role of the Labour Party as a non-opposition, and how it capitulated on each crucial issue. The Liberals had already been exposed by being part of the coalition; the election saw them dumped like ballast to keep the Conservatives afloat.

The smaller parties started taking the agenda away from how the establishment, the ruling circles, big parties and media acting in their service, wanted it to be set. It was these smaller parties that voiced the opposition to austerity during the election campaign.



## Venn diagrams for our times

An added factor generating unpredictability was the massive publicity and promotion given to UKIP, itself a small party, but one chosen to play a role as part of the cartel party system, as another means to attempt to set the reactionary agenda and manipulate the population.

Unpredictability can lead to desperation, arbitrariness and exceptional measures. If the monopolies are unable to force their agenda through electoral coups, then other kinds of coups are on the table. The final days of the election period in particular were filled with speculation of constitutional crisis in the event of a close result, for example.

The Conservatives managed to steal a majority out of this situation, a result that cannot in any way be said to represent the popular will. It will have only sharpened further their crisis of legitimacy and the crisis of representative democracy in general.

What can people do about an electoral system that does not represent the popular will?

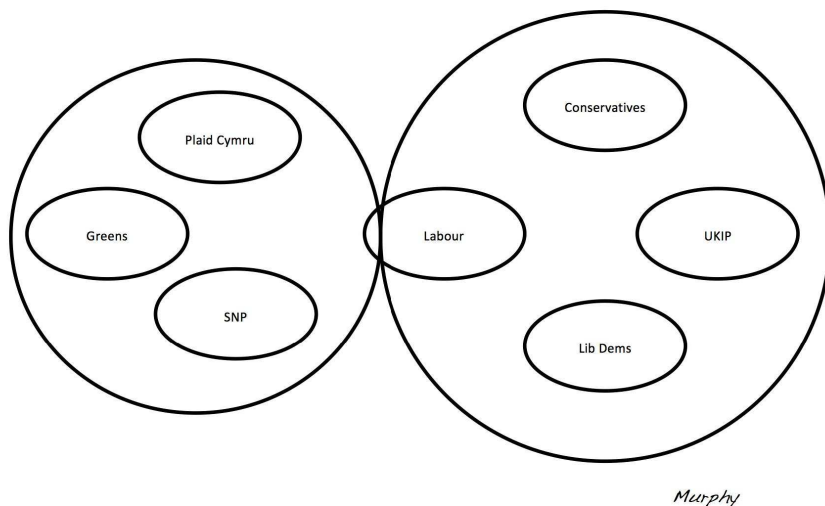
The theory that a party in power and party in opposition accommodate different views and social bases, and that therefore the legislature represents the electorate as a whole and the government represents a legitimate majority, no longer applies. Instead, it has developed into a cartel party system, which acts as a block to political power and as a bloc representing monopoly interests. These parties of the establishment have become part of the state apparatus itself rather than linking the state with civil society.

Related to this is the issue of accountability. The cartel party system has removed the basis of a link between their candidates and their constituents, and between these parties and the people on a general level. Increasingly the big parties act with arrogance and effectively rule by decree once in power. The mechanisms of accountability that are supposed to exist are now fundamentally broken.

Progress can only be made when people start making material demands about what kind of democracy is needed, from their own standpoint. Democracy is not an abstract concept: it has a content and must represent their interests. Its forms must reflect the aim of representing the popular will, an aim that is not even recognised at present. It has to be constitutionally based on the sovereignty of the people, with the executive held subordinate to the legislature and the legislature subordinate to the people as a whole. With this aim and constitutional basis, the role of political parties needs to be addressed.

In this context, the mechanisms through which people can exercise their right to elect and be elected need to be examined. The experience of the smaller parties during the election was that the odds were stacked against them. Despite some highly successful campaigns fought by various candidates of these parties, it was very difficult for this to materialise into actual seats won. This lack of a level playing field is a key feature of the cartel party system. Equality has to be actively ensured regarding the right to elect and be elected. This includes access to resources, air time, and so on, without prejudice in favour of incumbents or candidates of the big parties.

Furthermore, the power versus opposition model is itself no longer a guarantee of democracy and is actually a block to empowerment. Instead, political parties have to be blocked from coming to power. Governments should be selected by and remain subordinate to the legislature, rather than selected by the party in power and holding dominance over parliament as is currently the case.



The notion of parties coming to power with a "mandate" no longer holds any water. On the basis of the current election, the Conservatives are claiming a mandate for even further austerity than we have seen so far under the coalition; on no basis can it be claimed that they have legitimacy for such a mandate.

Rather than vying for power, the role of political parties should actually be one of politicising the population. This is a big battle in itself – a truly engaging battle that will draw in the whole population over all key issues of the day – that can take place over what politics the population takes up, what stands it takes, what the agenda for the election should be.

The needs for a level playing field and for ending the domination by parties in general, and in particular by the big parties, means that the state funding of political parties should come to an end. Instead, with the aim of strengthening the right to elect and be elected, and for a result that reflects the popular will, it is the mechanisms of election, the electoral process, that need to be funded.

Further, in order to ensure that the agenda itself, the terms of the debate, is not dictated, the people need a role in setting the agenda. The kind of debate and discussion mechanisms that exist need to be renovated to that end. Related to both points – ending party-domination and democratising the setting of the agenda – is that electoral candidates should not be imposed on the electorate.

The nub of the matter is the right of the electorate to participate in governance. This right must be given constitutional force, and includes the rights to participate in formulating policy, to recall elected representatives and to initiate legislation. This goes far beyond the debate over what might be the best method of counting votes. Fundamentally, the principle must be that there can be:

No election without selection.

The choosing of candidates should not be the prerogative of the political parties. Candidates should instead be chosen, for example, in the workplaces and educational institutions as direct representatives of the rights and interests of objective collectives of the people. There need to be mechanisms to allow the electorate to participate in setting the policies and agenda that these candidates will represent. There need to be mechanisms in place so that the electorate can continually hold these representatives to account, and participate in continuing to set the political agenda. This is what is meant by all-sided democratic renewal of the political process.

## Queen's Speech 2015:

# No to the Conservatives' Counterfeit and Sinister Programme!

The tone of the Queen's Speech was set in its opening lines. This is a tone where everything has a double meaning, as a cover for a deeply antisocial and even sinister legislative programme.

"My government will legislate in the interests of everyone in our country. It will adopt a one nation approach, helping working people get on, supporting aspiration, giving new opportunities to the most disadvantaged and bringing different parts of our country together."

Every word is loaded, each phrase represents an attack. But the Conservative government will be judged by its deeds. Past experience, its present programme and its future actions reveal the meaning of its words.

The Speech followed by declaring that so-called austerity will continue:

"My government will continue with its long-term plan to provide economic stability and security at every stage of life. They will continue the work of bringing the public finances under control and reducing the deficit, so Britain lives within its means. Measures will be introduced to raise the productive potential of the economy and increase living standards."

The irony of the monarch speaking about living within our means is not lost.

In this vein, the Full Employment and Welfare Benefits Bill will make £1.5bn of welfare cuts, with the aim of further rolling back the welfare state, punishing the unemployed and vulnerable and those with health problems and forcing people into low-paid work. This is the tip of iceberg, with £12bn of welfare cuts per year promised. In particular, the Bill would freeze working-age benefits, tax credits and Child Benefit for two years from 2016-17, and will lower the benefit cap to £23,000 for a non-working family. Further it would create a new Youth Allowance for 18-21 year-olds conditional on taking apprenticeships, training or community work placements and remove the automatic entitlement to housing support for this age group.

In an attempt at distraction, the Conservatives made various last-minute promises on tax in the run-up to the election. The National Insurance Contributions Bill/Finance Bill will therefore legislate that there will be no income tax, VAT or national insurance rises over the next five years. Lost in this promise is that the rich are the ones who will benefit the most from this legislation. Separate measures will ensure that those earning the minimum wage for 30 hours per week will not pay income tax, and will raise the income tax threshold to £12,500. The tone is that the government is being generous and also incentivising those who are prepared to work long hours for little pay. It would indeed be an additional scandal if those whose income is under £12.5k



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had to further suffer the indignity of the government claiming a share of the value which these minimally paid workers create.

Aside from being a pre-election bribe, the claim is that these Bills will "reward those who work hard and do the right thing". This is a recurring theme of the legislative programme, a theme of increasingly forced labour and cutting of welfare benefits. These tax measures are therefore actually a part of the austerity agenda, part of a carrot and stick approach in this context. Similarly, the Childcare Bill, which will "help hard-working families with the costs of childcare and support parents in work" by increasing free childcare entitlement to 30 hours a week for eligible working parents of young children, is a Bill of this kind.

In terms of social programmes, the government is set to continue the offensive against the NHS started when in coalition, under the smoke-screen of integrating health and social care and creating a 7-day health service. There is no legislation to reverse the direction of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 which might have conferred any meaning on these promised measures. Rather, under the guise of introducing measures to ensure the health service meets the needs of the people, the government is entrenching the fragmentation, under-funding, cutting-back and privatisation of the health service, while absolving itself of the responsibility for the functioning of the NHS. At the same time, the agenda and its direction comes from the government, and the whole structure of NHS management and organisation which is causing so much suffering, stress and marginalisation to health workers who bear the brunt of the anti-social direction of the NHS, is consolidated.

The Education and Adoption Bill will increase the government's powers of intervention in so-called failing and yet-to-be-defined "coasting" schools. Regional Schools Commissioners will be given new powers to bring in leadership support. The aim is convert as many



schools as possible to Academies under the slightest pretext. The government also plans to greatly expand the setting-up of Free Schools. The aim is increased private involvement in the school system.

The Bill will also increase the scale at which adoption services are delivered, by introducing regional adoption agencies.

Under the banner of helping small businesses and cutting so-called “red tape”, the Enterprise Bill is aimed at deregulation. The premise of the Bill is the capital-centred outlook that workers’ concerns and well-being is an impediment to the functioning of business. This itself is a fraud, while the manufacturing base is not considered fundamental to a self-reliant economy, and the monopolies continue to dominate the direction of the economy. The Bill will also introduce a cap on exit payments made to public sector workers. Small businesses, both through their obtaining of funds and their typical path into being bought up by big businesses, form a reserve for the monopolies, through which they make inroads into markets and sectors. The details remain to be seen, but in this context, it involves the deregulation of private businesses alongside constraining the operations of public sector institutions.

The Housing Bill will do nothing to guarantee the right to housing and shelter. Instead, it will extend the so-called Right to Buy, which is not a right at all, introduced to undermine Council Housing in the 1980s, to housing association tenants. It will also require local authorities to sell off highly-valued empty council houses. In a bid to promote private and individual house building, it will take forward the “Right to Build”, along with other measures.

The Energy Bill will establish an Oil and Gas Authority, for oversight of domestic oil and gas recovery. The Bill will also devolve powers to consent to planning applications for onshore wind farms to local planning authorities. The talk is of energy security; the aim appears to be to keep shale oil and gas extraction (fracking) on the agenda along with new nuclear power.



The so-called Extremism Bill is particularly sinister, introduced as “promoting social cohesion”, which is claimed will “stop extremists promoting views and behaviour that undermine British values”. On the back of creating an image of an enemy within and “home-grown terrorism”, allegedly created through a process of “radicalisation” by “extremist ideologies”, the Bill will further restrict the right to conscience through new measures including:

- Disruption orders to limit “harmful activities” such as airing certain views in public, particularly on university campuses;

- New powers to close premises, including mosques;

- Increased immigration restrictions for anyone believed to be preaching “extremist” views;

- New powers for the communications watchdog Ofcom to act against channels that air “extremist” content.

This is backed up by the Investigatory Powers Bill, which resurrects the previously-blocked and widely-opposed “snooper’s charter” on tracking individual internet use, and goes even further to cover the bulk interception of communications by the security services.

Further, though it did not make it into the Speech due to the level of mass opposition and divisions within the Conservative Party, the abolition of the Human Rights Act is on the agenda. Dressed as a proposal for a British Bill of Rights, the aim is to replace this post-war arrangement that, though tainted by the context of the Cold War, came out of the defeat of fascism and the subsequent developments of the time such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Instead, the aim is to pragmatically redefine “rights and responsibilities” (in their words, “restore common sense”) to fit with the logic of the Extremism, Investigatory Powers and other Bills and future legislation in the context of all being subordinate to the rights of the monopolies.

Workers’ rights will be further eroded by the Trade Unions Bill, which will “ensure hard-working people are not disrupted by little-supported strike action”. This Bill will raise the voting thresholds for strike action, which will be high still in certain public services (health, education, fire and transport). It will also introduce time limits after which a new ballot would have to be held. The Bill would also legislate on the political fund, requiring that this be an opt-in process. Again, the whole premise of the Bill is anti-worker, as well as being profoundly anti-social.

An Immigration Bill will “control immigration, making sure we put hard working British families first”. The introduction of a new criminal offence of illegal working has already been widely condemned, and includes draconian powers to seize the wages “illegally” paid. In addition, it will require banks take act against such migrants’ current accounts, while there will be a “clearer bar on access to services”. The Bill will require employment agencies that recruit from abroad to also advertise the jobs in Britain. The government openly declares it will apply a guideline of “deport first, appeal later”. Further, all “foreign offenders” released on bail will be electronically tagged.

The European Union Referendum Bill is also sinister. Anything but opposition to the Europe of the monopolies, it has the aim of infecting the debate with British chauvinism, in the context of competing empire-building programmes by sections of finance capital in the US, Britain and Europe. The working class will have to take the lead on this issue and make its own perspective the determining factor in the debate that this referendum will open up, and put defence of sovereignty and the creation of a progressive anti-austerity alternative at the centre of considerations.

British chauvinism was a big feature of the Speech, with the Queen



promising that the “government will continue to play a leading role in global affairs, using its presence all over the world to re-engage with and tackle the major international security, economic and humanitarian challenges”. Explicit reference was made to the Middle East, “a political settlement in Syria”, “support to the Iraqi government’s programme for political reform and national reconciliation”, “pressure on Russia” over Ukraine, and “an enhanced partnership with India and China”. As required historically, it will present an Armed Forces Bill. It also announced a full strategic defence and security review.

The government is attempting to head off the movement for Scottish, Welsh and Irish sovereignty and decision-making power in the Scotland

Bill, Wales Bill and Northern Ireland (Stormont House Agreement) Bill. It will continue to press ahead with the English Votes for English Laws (EVEL) proposals, via changes to the Standing Orders of the House of Commons rather than a Bill, as a further attempt to block Scotland’s say in political affairs.

The Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill will provide for the devolution of powers to cities with elected mayors. This is part of the above agenda of using devolution to manipulate the demand for a say, as well as recognition of the increasing class division between the north and south and the accelerated implementation of the privatisation agenda. The pipe-dream currently touted is for a “Northern Powerhouse”. Related to this, the High Speed Rail (London-West Midlands) Bill, carried over from the 2013-14 session of parliament, will empower the government to compulsorily acquire land required



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for HS2.

Other Bills include a Psychoactive Substances Bill, a Votes for Life Bill, and a Charities (Protection and Social Investment) Bill.

The speech therefore announced a programme that is thoroughly anti-social, anti-worker, national-chauvinist and opposed to the right to conscience; all in favour of bolstering monopoly right.

There are already signs that the programme is in difficulty, particularly given the government’s slim majority, even during the writing of the Speech itself. However, it is the people’s movements and the building of an organised Workers’ Opposition that are the decisive factor. No to the Conservatives’ counterfeit and sinister programme! The task presents itself, as underlined by this thoroughly reactionary Queen’s Speech, to carry forward the struggle against the austerity agenda and to defend the rights of all.

## Queen's Speech positions government against working people, says TUC

**R**esponding to the Queen’s Speech on May 27, TUC General Secretary Frances O’Grady said: “Working people will be worried by a Queen’s Speech that declares open season on so many of their rights and protections.

“A government that claimed to be on the side of working people now wants to tip the balance of power against them with draconian restrictions on the right to strike. The real agenda is stopping public sector workers from fighting back against the extreme cuts and pay freezes expected in George Osborne’s budget.

“David Cameron has positioned himself as the Prime Minister for bad bosses, ready to chip away at paid holidays, rest breaks and mater-

nity rights in EU negotiations. The TUC wants Britain to remain at the heart of a fair Europe for working people, but it won’t help people vote to stay if EU protections on decent pay and conditions are lost.

“The Queen’s Speech signals a new assault on the safety net any one of us might need one day if we lose our job or become ill. We need a restoration of job guarantees for young people, not a second class system of social security protection.

“Children account for three in every four people hit by the benefit cap, so lowering the cap will make child poverty worse. We should instead be dealing with root causes like the lack of affordable housing in London.”

## WORKERS' FORUM

Commentary:

# David Cameron's "7-day NHS safe in our hands" – A Case of Making Words Mean Anything You Want Them to Mean

On May 18, David Cameron gave his first speech following the election on the NHS at the Enki Medical Practice in Perry Parr, Birmingham. The practice describes itself as a "partnership" with Vitality, a company which claims to "provide a 5-star Health Insurance that rewards you for being healthy while providing access to the best possible medical care". With the logo of Vitality behind him, the Prime Minister praised the partnership's example of health care working, and spoke of "a 7-day NHS, safe in our hands – for every generation to come". The irony was not lost that while claiming he had no intention of privatisation, the Prime Minister was promoting a private health insurance company.

The Prime Minister said several times that he would not privatise the NHS. He said: "The NHS will always be free for everyone under a Conservative government." Rather giving the impression of protesting too much, he said that "my love of the NHS, my respect for the NHS, my commitment to the NHS runs through every sinew of my body. The NHS is safe in my hands. And don't let anyone ever tell you otherwise." However, whether it will be provided and funded publicly in the future he was carefully vague about, only commenting that it was right to involve the "independent" sector, referring to the Marie Curie cancer



service, which he calculated would be difficult for anyone to raise objections to.

On the cuts to the health service he said that "first of all today I want to put the record straight loud and clear.

They said we would cut the NHS. We haven't and we won't." However, it seems he hasn't visited the real world in the last five years because the cuts to the budgets of the NHS Acute, Community and Mental Health Trusts over the last five years have led to the loss of thousands of NHS jobs and health services. One can give many examples. For instance, in the North East of England, one of the smallest Trusts in the country has been forced to cut around £40 million from its budget over the last five years, losing many beds, health services and health care jobs. Now these same NHS Trusts have to face a further £20 billion projected cuts. But Cameron faced this down with the election pledge to raise the revenue at "least an extra £8 billion a year by 2020". What does this mean? There was nothing in what he said as to whether this was a to be reduction in the cuts of £20 billion, or whether this was actual investment and where it was going exactly. *The Five Year Forward View* from NHS England envisages an £8 billion deficit per year by 2020. The Conservative manifesto speaks of £8 billion extra in total over the next five years. It is being challenged whether Cameron's figure means anything at all in terms of NHS funding by government. It is a case of obfuscation at best, a case of making the words mean any-





thing Cameron wants them to mean, making the world a matter of interpretation and definition, while in reality it is business as usual with the government in hock to the monopolies and driving their agenda for more cuts to the public sector, and privatisation with any investment serving their interests.

Cameron's speech made the grandiose claim that "just as we came together as a nation to create the National Health Service nearly 70 years ago, so I believe that together – by sticking to the plan – we can become the first country in the world to deliver a truly 7-day NHS". This is in line with the redusted mantra of "One Nation Conservatism", while the people as a whole see increasingly two worlds of privileged and unprivileged. Cameron's boast makes a mockery of the real world where the NHS already works 24/7, 7-days a week, like the health services in most developed countries, barring some department consultants, consultant clinics and GP services. But the real problem with this is that the ruling elite has created an internal market in the NHS, a market that has forced NHS bodies and GP surgeries to compete with one another and with the private sector; and the promise of "truly" delivering the 7-day NHS remains a pious policy objective without the funding, investment, recruitment, training, and overall responsibility for its delivery by government.

Cameron admitted in his speech that "one of the most significant achievements of the coalition government" was to make the NHS "more independent". So he now suggests that people should believe that, from the anarchy, chaos and fragmentation of all these "health providers" that this independent market has caused, his government can now seek to influence and harmonise a 24/7 7-day a week service where every service is integrated and co-operates with each other on a 24/7, 7-day basis. The government still has overall control over the pay



system of health workers in the NHS Trust employers. What is hidden in Cameron's promise is that 7-day working is in fact more about satisfying the demand of the competing employers and private health companies to cut health workers' pay, specifically at this time their weekend unsocial enhancements. This is why the trade unions reacted angrily that this was an attack on health workers' conditions. They opposed Cameron's statement knowing full well what this announcement means.

One can guarantee that David Cameron and his government, through smoke and mirrors, will claim to have delivered the world's first "truly 7-day NHS" at the next general election, should his government last that long. But this will not safeguard the future of the NHS and guarantee the right to health care. That is again up to the health workers and the whole working class and people to continue the fight to safeguard the future of the NHS and defend the right of all to health care.

# The Battle for the Future Direction of the NHS: Speaking Out in Defence of the NHS and Fighting to Safeguard Its Future

## Interview with Charlotte Monro

**WW: What was the climate behind your dismissal from Whipps Cross Hospital?**

At the time of my dismissal, Whipps Cross Hospital was part of a newly merged NHS Trust. The management seemed to have no accountability to our local population served by my hospital Whipps Cross, or our patient organisations and other "stakeholders". At the time, many people suspected an agenda to run down Whipps Cross hospital and centralise services in order to fund the massive PFI debt from the new buildings at the Royal London and Barts hospitals.

The disciplinary process was initiated against me two weeks ahead of the Trust's being placed into financial turnaround with management consultants brought in to address a £77.5m deficit. As a senior union rep I found myself suspended from attending the meetings at which

joint staff side union business was done with the Trust. A key plank for financial savings was the mass scale downbanding of nursing and other staff, and loss of posts, which has now proved so disastrous for the services at the hospital.

I was one of the senior union reps, from an active branch of UNISON, who would challenge issues with the Trust quite strongly and was vocal in raising concerns. I also had chaired the successful 2006-2008 campaign to save Whipps Cross Hospital.

**WW: What do you think is the significance of your fight for staff in the health service and for the workers' movement overall?**

I think one of the most significant things is that it will help health

workers and other trade union reps speak out. In my particular case, it was to speak out about cuts to health services that I knew were going on within the hospital and that were raised as concerns within the community. I spoke at a local council overview and scrutiny committee (OSC) for health about staff concerns about the impact of planned cuts to our stroke service in the hospital. That seems to have triggered the action against me which was started within six days. A key allegation was that I brought the Trust into disrepute by providing inaccurate information to the OSC, although they could not tell me what it was that was “inaccurate”. I had explained the concerns of the stroke specialist clinical staff. The local Save Our NHS campaign had asked me to address the councillors alongside them as a trade union rep involved with staff in the consultation. That was considered to be beyond the pale by my Trust. In the Tribunal, it became very clear through the evidence that I had given no inaccurate information, but rather I was simply giving a different opinion – the views and opinion of the staff as to the impact of the changes proposed.

I think this is a very important principle. I have often heard about campaigns at other hospitals where staff have been told that they are not allowed to talk to people or to campaigns from outside their trusts about what is going on in their hospital. I remember that last year when the 999 NHS march from Jarrow arrived in London, a number of midwives from Mid Staffs had planned to come and address the march, but, we heard, they were told by their Trust that they were not allowed to speak about the closure of their services at Mid Staffs. My case has clearly established that we have a right to speak about cuts to services and that is a matter of public interest. Barts NHS Health Trust eventually accepted in my case that my speaking at Scrutiny Committee amounted to a “protected disclosure”, and that speaking about cuts to health services would be in the public interest.

Behind that principle is that the health service is everybody’s business. I think it is very significant that I have been re-instated into my job because that is a very rare thing to happen. I have been told that out of 40,000 cases in a year only about five to ten people actually achieve re-instatement. In the recent Francis review “Freedom to speak up” in the NHS, which specifically dealt with problems of raising concerns, and the treatment of staff who have, one of the recommendations is that people dismissed where whistleblowing is involved should be re-instated if practical, i.e. if the person is capable of doing their job. It could be said therefore that my case is in a sense an early positive example and could set a precedent for others to follow as there are still many, many people whose lives have been destroyed by the attacks against them for having raised concerns about their health service. Those injustices need to be addressed from the point of view of whistleblowing and also from the point of view of health unions and health staff wanting to save services.

Another significant issue in my case was the attack on trade union rights. All of the allegations but one were related to my trade union work. The Trust was very aware that to dismiss an employee for trade union activity was illegal. So the Trust in making these allegations simply asserted that it was not about my trade union activities but that I was acting in a personal capacity. That a Trust, or other employer for that matter, can simply assert that what you are doing in your trade union



work is not trade union activity but being carried out as an individual employee rides roughshod over the collective rights we have fought to establish as trade unions and the right to organise and represent the voice of staff without suffering a detriment as an individual for doing that. This is another issue that has been really important to have established in my case, and that came out clearly during the Tribunal. Another lesson coming from this is to use the legal fight. The trade union and employment rights that have been won must not be lost de facto through employers taking no notice of them and this going unchallenged.

I hope this case will be a block to this steam-roller climate of diktat that is going on throughout the public services and the NHS in particular, where employers think that if someone stands in the way of some agenda they can just remove them.

**WW: Did Barts want to pre-empt the judgment of the Tribunal do you think?**

We can only speculate. What is a fact is that the decision to invite me to return to work came after the hearing was concluded. As the evidence came out in the hearing, from the discussions between the judge and the barristers during their closing submissions on the final day, and the questions the judge was putting and points he was making, it seemed pretty clear to all present that any judgment was likely to be highly critical of the Trust.

That is one factor. But another is that on the penultimate day of my tribunal hearing the Care Quality Commission issued a damning report into my hospital Whipps Cross, and Barts NHS Health Trust itself was put into special measures. The report highlighted bullying against staff, and low staff morale as key findings, alongside shortage of staff, over-reliance on agency workers, and loss of experienced staff. These are key problems that have to be addressed in order to prepare and protect our services within the hospital. In the statement the Trust issued on my return to work, which had been jointly agreed, they did acknowledge that I am an energetic campaigner for patient issues and anticipated I would make a contribution to the improvement work now embarked on at Whipps Cross.

Through the campaigns calling for my reinstatement, articles in the press, the statement from my union general secretary, and so many letters from individuals and organisations, the issues were brought out into the light of day. Public opinion was strong that such unjust action against a health worker and union rep, the growing diktat it reflects, and



attempt to create a climate of fear, this is incompatible with health care. I don't think that can be underestimated.

***WW: What do you think are the lessons for the way forward in safeguarding the future of the health service?***

One of the lessons is that of standing up for the right to health care and the rights of health workers and not to back down but to see things through. Don't just believe they have the all-embracing power to push through things that are wrong. Since I have been back at Whipps Cross after being re-instated, people have repeatedly said to me that it is so good that you saw it through. It is tough but if you know you are right it is so important to take this stand because that is the only way you are going to get change.

When people speak out in the interest of patient care, or in the interest of staff organising in their defence through trade unions, this is in fact everyone's concern because it is everyone's health service. It is also about a democratic environment and how decisions should be made as well as about our rights as human beings. The point is that it should not suddenly be a matter for the individual when it has an impact on the whole community and on society. There is a drive to prevent health workers and health reps talking to communities about potential changes and the potential impact of those changes because health workers have far more of a grasp of the reality of those changes which is different from the glossy picture that may be presented by those that are trying to justify the changes to services. The community health campaign in Waltham Forest actually wrote a letter and got signatures of over 1,000 people and local organisations that went to the Trust to oppose my dismissal for standing up for the health services that they

were concerned about.

The decisive question here is that the community and hospital staff stood together. Whenever that happens it is far, far easier to achieve success in safeguarding our health service. This campaign, the Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign, as well as campaigns in the past at Whipps Cross, are good examples. This was certainly very much the case in my campaign. It was a fight for what is just and by relying on a collective this outcome was possible.

***WW: Could you sum up the significance of the victory to the fight to get organised and turn things around?***

What I found is that there is a strength of common values amongst people of different walks of life and opinions. There is a very, very strong sense that what happened to me was totally unjust, reflects the experience of many others, and that we must take a stand on it and these values of the people who are committed to the health service and the right to health care should be cherished. What happened to me and the support I have had reflected and strengthened people's beliefs in these values and since I have been back so many staff have come up to me made it clear just how important my case has been to them saying that it reflected everything that went wrong, which was the general devastation of the staff, their de-stabilisation, de-valuing of the contribution that they had made, not listening. What happened to me was a symptom and an expression of what happened to everybody and the whole hospital, and similarly people felt the fact that I succeeded has become a vital step in beginning to try and turn things around. In this way it shows people can be empowered and organised to fight to defend their health service and speak out for what they need to safeguard its future.

## ***THE LIBERATION OF EUROPE FROM NAZI FASCISM***

# **70th Anniversary of the Victory against Fascism**

Commemorative events took place across Britain from May 8-10 to mark the 70th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day. The three days were in stark contrast to the four-year period the government has set aside for the commemoration of the First World War. Moreover, it was evident that the events organised by the government were not intended to commemorate the fact that the conclusion of the Second World War was a decisive victory over fascism. Everything has been done to obscure the nature of the war and its significance and the fact that the victory over fascism in Europe was led by the Soviet Union, which bore the brunt of the fighting. In fact the Soviet Union contributed nearly 50% of all allied expenditure on the war and, of the five major belligerents, suffered nearly 60% of all economic damage caused by the war. Above all it contributed the lives of some 27 million of its population. As if to add insult to injury the government, and many of its wartime allies headed by the US, boycotted the official Victory Day commemorative

events in Moscow, allegedly in response to Russia's intervention in Ukraine. These events were however attended by leaders of many countries including Brazil, India, China, South Africa and Cuba, as well as the UN General Secretary Ban Ki-moon.

The re-writing and falsification of the history of the Second World War has been ongoing for at least seventy years. It is not by coincidence that in Britain and several other countries VE Day is commemorated on May 8 rather than May 9, which was the date of the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany at Karlhorst, a suburb of Berlin, and is often symbolised by the photo of the Soviet flag being flown from the Reichstag building. The different dates not only reflect differences between the wartime allies, the Anglo-Americans and the Soviet Union, as to where and when the surrender should be signed but also the fact that towards the end of the war the Anglo-Americans had on several occasions made separate armistice agreements with Nazi Germany, which allowed the latter to hurl the full weight of its armed forces against the Soviet Union. The Anglo-American strategy of

allowing the armies of Germany and the Soviet Union to annihilate each other was implemented throughout the war and led to the delay of the opening of a second front in western Europe. The 1944 D-Day landings did not take place to relieve the onslaught on the Soviet Union as its government had demanded since 1941. At that time the policy of the Anglo-Americans was perhaps best summed up by the future US president, Harry Truman who wrote: "If we see that Germany is winning, we should help Russia, and if Russia is winning, we should help Germany, so that as many as possible perish on both sides." Instead the Anglo-Americans waited until after the decisive battle of Stalingrad, the turning point of the war in Europe in 1943, when they became concerned that the victorious Red Army might not only defeat Nazi Germany single-handed but also liberate the whole of western Europe. Such fears also help to explain the war crimes carried out by the Anglo-Americans by the bombing of Dresden and other German cities that had no military significance during the war.

The people of Britain and its colonies, as well as the people of many other countries, gave their lives to rid the world of the Nazi menace and scored a historic victory in 1945. However, it cannot be forgotten that fascism in general and Nazi Germany in particular were financed, encouraged and appeased by the government and ruling circles of Britain and its closest allies. As is well known, the government of Britain completely betrayed the people of Czechoslovakia in 1938, just as it betrayed the people of Ethiopia and Spain in previous years.



**The Soviet Red Army flies the Victory Banner over the Reichstag, Berlin, May 1, 1945**

Everything was done to encourage fascist aggression and in particular the expansion of Nazi Germany eastwards, so as to fulfil the wish of Churchill and others that communism might be "strangled in its cradle".

However, communism was not strangled. Indeed it was the Soviet Union in Stalin's time that demanded a policy of "collective security" against fascism, that time and again sought alliances with Britain and other countries in Europe against the menace of fascism, advances that were always rejected. In the same period it was the communist parties organised in the Communist International that called for a united front of the workers and all democratic people, irrespective of party affiliation, against fascism, a call initially rejected by the leaders of the Labour Party in Britain and its sister parties. Nevertheless the call of the Communists for unity in action against fascism, not only in Europe but internationally, was put into practice during the Second World War and was the basis for the victories of 1945.

The Second World War was a great tragedy in which over 60 million people lost their lives. However, it was successfully fought to prevent an even greater tragedy and fascism was defeated. The victory over fascism created the conditions for the liberation of many nations in Africa and Asia and for the working people to



**Stalingrad memorial**



advance their cause for progress and social emancipation. The few years after the victory over Nazi fascism were a time of great momentum, profound changes and the creation of the socialist camp. In 1945, for example, for the first time in history the trade union centres of all countries came together to found the World Federation of Trade Unions and there was even the expectation that the workers of the world, who had sacrificed so much, would be represented in the highest bodies of the United Nations. However, history shows that these advances were not welcomed by all. They were opposed by those that had nurtured,

appeased and financed fascism before the war. Once the victory over fascism seemed assured, the struggle against communism and to prevent the peoples empowering themselves recommenced.



VE Day London

## WORKING FOR PEACE ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA

# 15th Anniversary of Historic June 15 North-South Declaration

June 15, 2015, marked the 15th anniversary of the signing of the historic North-South Joint Declaration between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Republic of Korea (south Korea). This important anniversary is being marked by the Korean people and their friends the world over with the aim of stepping up the work for peace and reunification.

The DPRK government on the day of the anniversary released a statement which pointed out that the publication of the June 15 Joint Declaration made it possible for the north and the south of Korea to defuse the distrust and confrontation which has lasted for more than half century and greet a new era advancing toward reconciliation, unity and reunification by the concerted efforts of the Koreans themselves.

In fact, great strides had been made towards reunification from 2000 to 2007 guided by the spirit of genuine openness and co-operation codified in the June 15 Joint Declaration. The Declaration had the effect of rebuilding trust between Koreans in the north and south. This trust has been seriously undermined because of the domination of the US in south Korea, including the launching of the Korean War from 1950-53 to keep Korea divided, and the ongoing anti-communist disinformation campaign and annual military exercises to rehearse invasions of the DPRK.

When the pro-US Lee Myung Bak government took office in south Korea in 2007, the US introduced a hostile spirit into north-south relations which set back the work for reunification. This hostile attitude has been carried forward by the present government of President Park Geun Hye which came to power in February 2013. The DPRK, on the other hand, continues to take the initiative in de-escalating the tensions between north and south.

In its June 15 statement, the government of the DPRK affirmed that the reunification issue must be solved by the concerted efforts of the Korean nation itself. Furthermore, recognising that different social systems have existed in the north and south for the past seven decades, the statement emphasised that reunification cannot be achieved under one social system, and any attempt to do so would only bring distrust and



DPRK leader Kim Jong Il (left) welcoming south Korean President Kim Dae-jung to Pyongyang for the historic Inter-Korean Summit, June 15 2000

confrontation. The DPRK government emphasised that the US and south Korea must halt their annual war games such as Key Resolve and Foal Eagle. Pointing out that it is necessary to create a climate for repairing north-south relations, the DPRK government called for practical measures to implement the north-south Joint Declaration.

It is high time that the US signed a peace treaty with the DPRK as mandated by the Armistice Agreement of 1953. A peace treaty would reduce tensions on the Korean peninsula and pave the way for the people of Korea to advance on the road to the peaceful reunification of their country, free from outside interference, which is their right as a people. The continued division of Korea by the US is the biggest violation of human rights against the Korean people and all justice- and peace-loving people demand an end to it.

Despite the challenges facing them, the Korean people are relying on the justice of their cause and on their own political unity and peaceful efforts to hold high the banner of national reunification and carry it forward. *The Line of March* expresses confidence that in the near future they will succeed in ousting the US military presence in the south of their country and achieve reunification.



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