

Newspaper of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)

University Occupations in Support of Palestine Grow in Number

A wave of university occupations has been sweeping across the country, focused on unity with the Palestinian people resisting Israeli aggression

and occupation.

Buildings have been occupied over the past two and a half weeks in 22 universities and colleges so far, demanding: scholarships be provided for

Palestinian students; material support for Palestinian universities; universities and colleges officially condemn the Israeli attacks; and divestment from Israel and companies that

supply Israel with arms. Most occupations have declared victory on their demands. *Workers' Weekly* Youth Group is at one with the students in

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THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE CRISIS!



Demonstration against pro-war, anti-social Labour government, Manchester, September 20, 2008

Gordon Brown last month announced a new set of measures to bail-out the banks, which he said would tackle the withdrawal of credit by the banks from businesses and families. The bottom line was to boost the balance sheet of the banks, and

rescue the banking sector from the failure of the risk-taking based on sucking wealth from the socialised economy and parcelling up debts as assets. The Prime Minister's measures were supposed to insure the banks against future losses on their existing debts.

But the banks wanted the bail-out to counteract the write-downs forced on them by their crisis of their parasitism. Despite the protestations of the government for a year and more that public funds were being made available to the banks from Northern Rock

to the Royal Bank of Scotland in order to reverse the current economic and financial crisis, no such reverse has occurred. Nor can it occur when the government simply

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Commentary

Workers Take Action in Defence of their Livelihoods:

The Oil Refinery Workers and the Economic Crisis

IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS and the need for workers to take action to combat it and set the agenda for society, the so-called "wave of wildcat strikes" broke out, sparked at the Lindsey Oil Refinery, owned by Total Oil.

These actions have raised very serious issues, not least the role of the workers as a political force in their own right. In the course of these actions over a number of days, the workers have come under almost unprecedented pressure to abandon their experience as workers and their class instincts. It is to the credit of the workers

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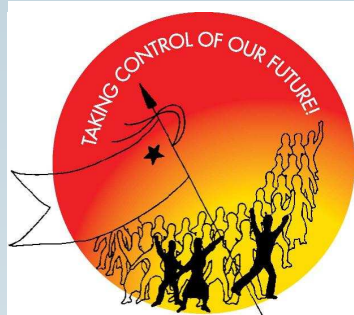
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YOUTH+ STUDENT

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occupation and their determination to win further success in their actions.

We are posting the following press release from the occupation at the University of Manchester that has been sent to WWYG. Students at the University of Manchester, currently occupying the Simon Building, called a second Emergency General Meeting in response to the situation in Gaza on February 11. The occupiers put forward a Gaza Crisis motion that called on the Union to support the occupiers and the demands they are placing on the University. For more information on the occupation, see their frequently updated blog at <http://manunioccupation.wordpress.com> or contact manuni@actionpalestine.org.

The University of Manchester Occupation in Solidarity with Gaza

Plaques for
martyred
students.
CREDIT: SHAHEED



Over 150 University of Manchester students have occupied the main university administration building in a demand for a stronger and more proactive position from the university on the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The students have proposed a set of demands on the university's Vice Chancellor Alan Gilbert, including a boycott of Israeli goods on campus, support for a day of fundraising with proceeds to the DEC fund, and that the university end research into manufacturing arms.

Students at other universities have taken similar actions over the last three weeks and have been successful in their demands.

The conflict has killed over 1,300 Palestinians and injured thousands. Tens of thousands of civilians have been left homeless. Head of the UN Palestinian refugee agency in Gaza, John Ging, is now joining international calls for an investigation into the war crimes of the recent action, wherein Israel stands accused of using banned weapons such as white phosphorus and cluster bombs, attacking medical facilities, including the killing of 12 ambulance men in marked vehicles, and killing large numbers of policemen who had no military role.

Over 500 students attended an emergency general meeting of the students union to discuss a motion

on the issue of the crisis in Gaza, whereby the students marched on University administration headquarters, the John Owens Building, to draw up a list of demands.

The peaceful occupation is planned to continue for as long as it takes to achieve its demands, and promises to welcome high profile speakers during the week.

Demands

- 1) University of Manchester should issue a formal statement condemning Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip, acknowledging particularly the effects on educational institutions such as the bombing of the Gaza Islamic University and expressing concern about war crimes allegations.
- 2) Support a day of fundraising across campus with the proceeds going to the DEC Gaza appeal.
- 3) University to publicise DEC advert in any way possible (including banner on the website) and put pressure on the BBC and sky to show the DEC advert.
- 4) All furniture & surplus supplies from buildings that are being renovated to be sent to Gaza on the Viva Palestina convoy.
- 5) Join the BDS movement through stopping sales of Israeli goods on university premises, the University should also stop buying any campus supplies from Israeli companies.

6) That the university divests from all companies directly involved in the manufacture of weaponry. We also demand that the university takes the issue of transparency in their investment seriously.

7) That the university publicly supports its students' right to protest, such as occupations. That in line with this, the university will provide its facilities for a "Students for Palestine" conference, second week of April 09.

8) To send a public message of solidarity to the Islamic University in Gaza, whose campus has been virtually destroyed, and publish it on the university website and distribute it to the university wide e-mail addresses.

9) To give at least five scholarships for Palestinian students as well as providing at least five scholarships for Israelis who refuse to serve in the IDF.

10) That the university make a module on the history of Palestine available as an optional module for any University of Manchester student.

11) That home fees apply to Palestinians students wanting to study at the University of Manchester.

12) No victimisation for those taking part in the Occupation, and free movement in and out of the occupied spaced.

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Workers Take Action in Defence of their Livelihoods: The Oil Refinery Workers and the Economic Crisis

Unions demonstrating against anti-worker laws, Oct 18 2007



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that they have resisted this pressure, but the government and the media have done all they can to hide the actual issues under a barrage of divisive and diversionary propaganda.

Anti-worker New Labour

The workers involved were taking action in defence of their right to a livelihood, against the iniquitous system of contract labour which threatens not only their livelihoods but the communities where they live and the economy as a whole. They were taking a stand against the monopolies riding roughshod over their rights and interests, and were intent on drawing a line in the sand as more and more workers are being thrown out of their jobs as the economic crisis deepens.

The actions have underlined the hollow and self-serving character of the propaganda of Gordon Brown and his Business Secretary, Lord Mandelson. This government has been only too ready to bailout the banks with billions upon billions from the public treasury, while oozing fine words about safeguarding jobs, pensions and so on, and declaring that this massive exercise in paying the rich was necessary to oil the wheels of the economy. Mandelson himself was brought in to facilitate the programme of New Labour that favours big business and the monopolies, to entrench its anti-worker character and to strengthen the links with the Europe of the monopolies. This is a Europe that French and Italian workers themselves have been taking action against, particularly evident in the recent general strike in France.

Monopolies' domination

The issue is that in the course of dominating the whole of political and economic life, the monopolies like Total, a French monopoly, are calling the shots, and Brown and Mandelson are simply saying everything that will bolster and appease these monopolies. The government's declared aim to com-

bat the economic crisis is in fact a programme to serve and rescue monopoly capital and open the country up to ensure these owners of capital can prosper and expand their capital in the conditions of the crisis.

This is of a piece with the government's programme, now firmly identified with the Business Secretary, of the sell-off and privatisation of the Royal Mail, the opening up of public services to competition, the promotion of the fetish of competition above everything, and the complete domination of the social economy to pay the rich and enforce monopoly dictate at the expense of the public good. The monopolies are pursuing every means to return to the working class the minimum of the wealth which the workers produce by transforming raw materials into use-value, and to deny the application of the wealth the monopolies seize to social programmes, and to be invested in the social economy. This they do through the existence of the unequal relations of production, whereby the capitalists control and are the owners of the means of production in the socialised economy, and where the workers are being forced to appear on the scene merely as chattel-labour and hire out their labour power. This is the issue at the Lindsey Oil Refinery (LOR), where Total is setting out to expand its capital to the maximum as quickly as possible. It is doing so amongst many other means by contracting out work to other capitalist concerns, in this case an Italian firm, which in turn hires labour as it wishes and from where it wishes. The workers are not and cannot be reconciled to this state of affairs, and, as with the destruction of the manufacturing base as a whole, and the turning of social programmes into a reservoir of profit for the rich, are saying enough is enough.

It is of course the case that British monopolies too are past masters at denying the right of the workers to a livelihood, at seeking to set worker against worker and cause disunity amongst the working class, at contracting out their

employment, and attempting to rubbish the watchword of the working class that an injury to one is an injury to all. In opposition the workers are constantly attempting to take up the responsibility of defending the unity of their class, and of taking up the responsibility of the working class to lead the way out of the crisis and to establish control over the direction of the economy, and capture that power needed to enforce this control for the public good and for a modern socialised economy.

Defending the rights of all

Workers have the duty not only to defend the rights of all and the dignity of labour. They have the duty to take up the task of organising to oppose and put a stop to the dictate of the monopolies, and the monopolies' wrecking of the social economy.

The workers in Britain are constantly having to contend with the chauvinism of the British ruling elite and its influence within the working class. There are solutions to the crisis of the economy, but they are not to be found in the slogans of "British jobs for British workers" which have their origin in the chauvinism of the ruling class. The ruling class promotes this chauvinism, while itself wrecking the national economy, and inviting in foreign monopolies to devastate the social economy. Workers have to put forward their own solutions, elaborating the programme of stopping paying the rich and increasing investments in social programmes. In opposition to British chauvinism, the workers are affirming that "foreign" workers are workers also. They are affirming that these "foreign" workers are being brought to this country to undermine the livelihoods and working conditions of *all* workers. That the media propaganda and focus has been on promoting the concept of "British jobs for British workers" can be considered a reactionary plot against the workers, and to get them begging to be exploited. The LOR workers are resisting the attempts to label them as racist, and "xenophobic", which

has been the latest tactic of the Lord Mandelson.

The context of these portrayals of the workers is that of an attempt to stop the working class and people from going on the offensive, at a time when society is crying out for solutions to be put forward, when the people are rising in defence of the rights of all, and for the people to be the decision-makers everywhere.

Effective political force

For the government and the monopolies which operate in Britain, it makes no odds whether they declare "British jobs for British workers" or "British jobs for European workers". It is directed at facilitating the amassing of capital, and denying the experience of the workers that their interests are not identified with those of the owners of big capital. It can be said that this spin on the workers' actions is also part and parcel of a move towards warmongering and a redivision of the world, at a time when the financial and economic crisis is causing devastation for the workers here and the oppressed people throughout the world. The reactionary forces are stepping up their plans to re-order the world, where their system has been shown to be in crisis from top to bottom, and where both the Europe of the monopolies and the Anglo-US imperialists are trying to compete on a world-scale with emerging economies, such as China. In this scenario, the British ruling elite has its own filthy interests, serving its own monopolies, and furthering its geo-political interests as part of the EU and as part of the Anglo-American alliance.

It is totally hypocritical of Lord Mandelson to speak of the "national interest", and condemning the workers of damaging this interest by demanding harsher controls on

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THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE CRISIS!

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sees no way forward but to bolster the owners of big capital and conjure up yet more pay-the-rich schemes. Indeed, the magnitude of these schemes, far from solving the crisis, is threatening to boost the already deepening depression, destabilise the country's fiscal policies completely, and unleash out of control an increasing budget deficit, to be underwritten at taxpayers' expense.

Criminal parasites

In this context, the major players in this crisis have all been intent on trying to blame each other for this terrible fiasco and deflect the anger of the working class and people. The CEOs of the big banks have said sorry for not seeing the iceberg soon enough as they sailed at full-speed into it, but have taken no responsibility for the conduct of the ship. However, the concern of the banks, the government and the financial regulators has been to rescue the credibility of the banking system, and not to take the measures necessary to safeguard the social economy, put an end to public spending accelerating towards all being channelled to the rich and put the needs of the people in the first place.

The crisis is causing a leap in the number of people who are losing their jobs, a threat to spending on social programmes and the further destruction of the manufacturing base. Meanwhile the state is going to extraordinary lengths to

protect the owners of capital. Its ownership of the banks' share capital has purely this aim. Rather than drawing the conclusion that there is an urgent need for public not-for-profit, no-interest banking, together with its credit and insurance functions, the government is merely drawing attention to the need for more disinterested financial regulation and the end of the short-term bonus system.

The truth is that these chiefs of the big banks are criminals of the first order, who control and direct the direction of the economy. Their parasitic concerns are but a concentrated reflection of the old arrangements of the monopoly capitalist system. Not only are new arrangements called for, but these monopoly capitalist chieftains should be removed from all responsibility forthwith, and tried for crimes against the people. The private character of the whole appropriation of wealth is causing this massive crisis of the socialised economy and its public, organised character.

How much wealth has been siphoned off by these parasites? Two years ago, it was being reported that the big five banks made around £475 from every household in Britain. Just look, for example, at the Royal Bank of Scotland. Even its projected loss of £24.1 bn for the last financial year includes what is described as a £15-20 bn goodwill charge on past acquisitions. In other words, it has fraudulently overvalued past assets that it has acquired. Up to the last finan-

cial year, the RBS was proudly declaring ever increasing profits. Just taking the bank's own figures (from its financial reports), net operating profits before tax for the 11 years 1997-2007 are as follows: 1997 - £0.768 bn; 1998 - £1.001 bn; 1999 - £1.211 bn; 2000 - £3.373 bn; 2001 - £4.275 bn; 2002 - £4.763 bn; 2003 - £6.159 bn; 2004 - £6.917 bn; 2005 - £7.936 bn; 2006 - £9.186 bn; 2007 - £9.900 bn. Total £55.489 bn.

New arrangements needed

The conclusion can be drawn that a renewal of the financial sector of the socialised economy to restrict monopoly right is long overdue. The private banks and insurance monopolies must be taken within the public system. This is the sentiment of the working class and people, and the government should accede to this demand and rather than throwing money at the banks in an arms-length transaction should integrate them into a public-owned financial system serving the needs of all citi-



zens and investing in a self-reliant social economy.

Owners of monopoly capital want to be bailed out of a hole, but they are extremely antagonistic to the demand to renew the socialised economy because that threatens their very *raison d'être*. Only a government dedicated to setting the direction of the economy through financing social programmes and directing public enterprises that stand against monopoly right can change the situation. The old arrangements have once again been shown to institutionalise crisis. What is required are new arrangements put in place through the election of a pro-social government. To bring such a government into being is the immediate task of the working class and people.

There Is An Alternative to the Crisis!

Seminar

"There Is A Way Out of the Crisis"

On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) and the 15th anniversary of the launch of its general line for this period, "There Is A Way Out of the Crisis"

Saturday, March 14, 2009

This is a crucial time in the line of march of the united front of the working class and its allies, in the context of the national and international situation. This seminar addresses the general line of RCPB(ML) in a number of papers, in order to

facilitate discussion on the tasks facing the Party, the working class and the people, and on the way forward in participating in the political life of the country.

For further details and to receive an invitation email: office@rcpbml.org.uk

Workers Take Action in Defence of their Livelihoods: The Oil Refinery Workers and the Economic Crisis

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overseas companies operating in Britain. What is at stake is who should be at the centre of decision-making.

The way forward is for the workers to organise themselves as an effective political force to stay the hand of the monopolies and their ability to dictate, irrespective of the requirements of the national

economy and the human beings who live and produce the wealth here. In opposition, a human-centred society is what the working class and people are striving to attain.

Defend the Rights of All!

Defend the Dignity of Labour!

No to the Chauvinism of the Ruling Elite!

Whose Economy? Our Economy!

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