

# Scottish Socialist VOICE

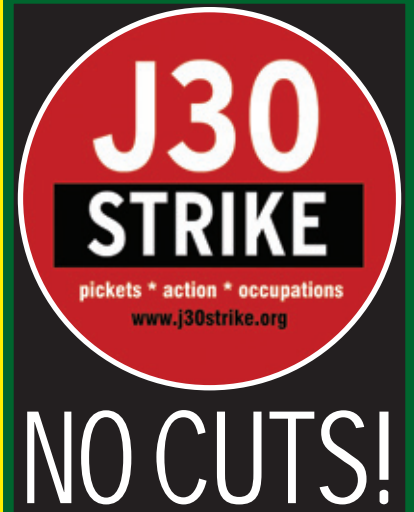


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# STRIKE A BLOW AGAINST THE TORY



# CUTS!

AS thousands of workers take strike action to protect their pensions the stinking reality behind Premier Cameron's claim that "we are all in it together" is revealed.

Research by Hemsworth Labour MP Jon Trickett has blown a hole in the sugary spin and government smokescreens to show that Cameron's "package" is worth up to £1 million a year.

Old Etonian millionaire Cameron has pledged to freeze his official salary at £142,500 after a 5 per cent cut compared with the salary PM Gordon Brown.

However not mentioned is the fact that the Tory toff claimed around £100,000 in second home allowances before he entered Downing Street and sold his London house for £1,150,000 in 2006, making a

whopping profit.

His current "deal" includes use of staff and services, country house Chequers and the Downing Street flat and car.

This for a man who, with the other 21 millionaire axe men sitting around the cabinet table with him, wages war on claimants, sacks workers and slashes services.

All, of course, with much sanctimonious hand wringing,

in the public interest.

Unsurprisingly the rabid Tory tabloids who daily "expose" supposed gold plated pensions scroungers and idle workers ignored the story with only the small circulation Morning Star reporting it prominently,

If anybody still swallows the "all in it together" lie they better talk it over with their friend the Tooth Fairy.

# JOB CUTS AT ST ANDREWS

by Voice Reporter

**THE** carefully crafted image of St Andrews University as a Mills and Boon location for royal romance has been brutally shattered by warnings of large scale sackings at the ancient institution.

The row centres on provision of catering and IT services at the university with bosses admitting that proposed changes will mean what they claim will be “limited” sackings.

However manager’s claims that these moves are a response to demands uncovered by student surveys and staff demand for change are largely refuted as spin by campaigners.

In an open letter to St Andrews principal Louise Richardson unions UNITE,UCU and UNISON joined by the St Andrews Student Association set out their concerns saying:

“We are taking the unusual step of writing a joint open letter about the restructuring that is happening in various parts of the university,”

“We are doing this because of the damaging effects upon hundreds of people, including some of our lowest paid and most vulnerable members of staff.”

“Our staff are the most important asset of the university. Their loyalty and dedication are key to our success.”

The letter goes on to set out areas of concern.

“We feel that the current restructuring is having a corrosive effect, leading to a sense of uncertainty, unfairness, and fear.

“We do not accept that the case for restructuring has



been made convincingly or that staff and students have been properly involved in the decision-making processes.”

Union officials claim a lack of information from management has had a devastating impact on morale, insisting there has been “no clear information” regarding the changes.

“Snippets have come out in dribs and drabs,” they say, adding, “Sometimes contradictory information has come from different sources.

“In certain cases people have heard informally about changes that would, if implemented, have profound effects upon them.

“This breakdown of communication has increased anxiety throughout the university community, creating a climate where rumour thrives and where people don’t know quite what to believe.”

The letter calls for the principal to personally investigate the issue as a matter of urgency.

“At the root of these anxieties is the fear that terms and conditions for many staff will be adversely affected by the changes even if they do not actually lose their jobs,” it continues.

“For some this may mean being transferred to jobs on lower grades.

“We call on you to give a commitment that, whatever changes are made, they will not be to the detriment of the terms, conditions and income of staff currently in post,” they add.

This letter is the latest sign that even the ancient St Andrews University which is marking its 600th anniversary will feel the impact of cuts and the fight against them.

A local campaign group STAND has already organised a number of actions highlighting the case against cuts to the wider public while the recent Student’s Association elections saw several anti cutscandidates including Association President Patrick O’hare elected.

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# THE GREAT PENSIONS RIP-OFF!

by *Raphie de Santos*

**PUBLIC** pensions face a two pronged attack from the financial markets.

The attack consists of, as Danny Alexander has so publicly said, making us pay more towards our pension, wait longer for the pension and not have it linked to our final salary, but to a gamble on the financial markets.

He omitted to mention that pensions in future will be linked to the consumer index - rather the retail price index - which would be an effective 17 per cent cut over the life of a twenty year pension.

It is essentially part of a way of turning the reckless losses incurred by the financial system - bank losses; public money supporting the embattled economy; lost tax receipts and increased welfare payments from the deepest recession since the 1930s depression - into public debt and reducing this debt by cutting services and

pensions while increasing taxes.

This UK public debt has doubled mainly because of these reckless losses to over 1,000billion (one billion is 1,000million) over the last three years having taken 10 years prior to that to double.

This is part of the reason for the attack on public pensions.

The coalition is covering up this real reason for the cuts in public pensions by saying they are too generous and the country cannot afford them any longer.

Where the reality is that they are making those in society who had no responsibility for the financial crash and the recession it caused pay for it.

The second attack from the financial market is the way that the system has attempted to fund our retirement.

Our pensions are in effect deferred wages that are set aside to provide for us when we retire.

Rather than set aside sufficient funds to meet our

retirement needs successive governments and public authorities have invested a smaller amount of money in stock and bond markets in the expectation that the money would grow to meet the funds that are required when we retire.

The balance between the "sufficient funds" and "the smaller amount of money" has been given away over the last 25 years to the rich, wealthy and corporations through tax cuts.

This strategy has proved a disaster with the real value of UK stock market investments falling by over 40 per cent in real terms between 1999 and 2009.

Bond valuations have fallen to as interest rates have been kept at an all-time low to deal with the dot come crash and then 2007's credit crunch.

This has meant that the gap between the value of assets held in our pension funds and the value of what the government have guaranteed to pay us is huge.

Estimates range from £875billion to £1,000billion and this deficit is adding more each year to the public debt. In other words the government and public authorities have gambled our pensions on the financial markets and lost. Now they want us to pick up the bill!

We are right to oppose these attacks on our pensions; there is plenty of wealth in the banks, rich, wealthy and corporations to pay the bill for the crisis of their system that they have benefited from. But it also gives an opportunity to look at a different way of providing for our retirement that does not depend on a gamble on the financial markets.

One where society as a whole takes a collective responsibility for ensuring that we all enjoy a retirement free of financial worry where all our basic needs are met free of charge.

■ *The views expressed as solely the author's.*

## Labour MP accuses SNP of Neo-Fascism

by *Ken Ferguson*

**THE** depth of visceral loathing felt by some Labour politicians for their SNP opponents has been dramatically spotlighted by the highly sectarian outburst from Glasgow South West Labour MP Ian Davidson branding the SNP as "neo fascist".

Davidson levelled his charge during debate on the Scotland Bill in the House of Commons and in doing so lifted the lid on the ugly stew of resentment boiling up in Scottish Labour following their recent Holyrood election drubbing.

It also implicitly snubbed those tens of thousands of Scots voters who just a month ago voted for the party he so stupidly labelled and who he presumably wants to

woo back to the so called Peoples Party.

The truth is that whilst Davidson's over the top jibe is at the extreme end of Labour/SNP in fighting it reflects a much wider resentment and disbelief among his comrades over the loss of many of their bedrock seats and thousands of votes to their SNP rivals.

As such it forms part of the emerging unionist tale that somehow because they won the election with an overall majority the SNP are pulling on their tartan jackboots which neatly avoids the fact that all of them have lived happily with Westminster regimes elected on minority votes for decades.

However aside from the party sniping the more important issue is the devaluation of

the term "neo fascist" from the description of a real danger to a term of casual abuse.

The reality is that fascist parties and groups do exist, they do mount racist thuggery and they do want to suppress free speech and attack individuals and communities on grounds of race.

But whatever differences they may have with Labour these fascist ideas are not being peddled by the SNP but by organisations such as the misnamed Scottish Defence League and the BNP.

To use neo fascist as cheap jibe devalues the hard and often dangerous work to combat fascism by countless campaigners and activists across the UK and beyond.

Using it as Mr Davidson did is a strange mixture of the offensive and just plain stupid,

# NUCLEAR POWER NO THANKS!

by Roz Paterson

WHEN the nuclear reactors at Fukushima went into a series of meltdowns following the earthquake that shattered Japan earlier this year, the world held its breath.

Believe it or not, we still are holding our breath.

The massive heat generated by this nuclear catastrophe has still not been contained, nor have the radioactive particles, which are being picked up as far as 70 km away.

Nor have the full effects been quantified. They may never be.

We do know that hundreds of thousands of gallons of water are now too contaminated to ever be used again by anyone, for anything, that hundreds of square miles of land may become a no-man's land, that hundreds, thousands, who knows, may die suddenly or prematurely, from cancers that found their source in a nuclear power station built, against advice, in a known earthquake zone.

Italy is not a known earthquake zone, nor is Germany, but now both these highly industrialised nations are saying no to nuclear power, as a direct result of events in Japan.

In Germany, the centre-right coalition government had to make a major U-turn on a major U-turn, having



insisted, on coming to power, that they would ditch their predecessors' plan to phase out the nukes by 2021.

Now, they can't shelve them fast enough.

The seven oldest reactors in Germany were taken off-line in the immediate wake of the Fukushima disaster, and will never function again. The remaining ten will go off-line within ten to 11 years.

There will, says Norbert Rottgen, Germany's environment minister, "be no clause for revision."

Germany is the largest industrial power in Europe to go nuclear-free, and as nuclear power currently supplies 23 per cent of its electricity, it will be interesting, and perhaps heartening, to see how this net exporter of energy makes up the shortfall.

Certainly, its renewables sector is in good shape, and moves to hugely improve energy efficiency are

encouraging.

In Italy, the rejection of nuclear power came from the bottom up, rather than the top down, not that the German move isn't popular.

The Italians went to referendum on this and two other matters, to vote yes or no to the privatisation of water, and whether to prosecute the criminal behaviours of politicians.

They had to achieve a turnout of 50 per cent +1, or the results were void. It seemed impossible, given Silvio Berlusconi's ability to make anything political feel

like something you'd want to wash off with strong soap, but it was done.

How?

Through mass actions, critical mass cycling events, street demonstrations, rallies, stickers on buses, banners from balconies, and then, as the votes crept up and slowly up, through text messages, phone calls, door to door canvassing, lifts to the polling stations, whatever it took to get people out and voting.

In the end, there was a turnout of 57 per cent, and 95 per cent of those said no to nuclear power.

Italians, and Germans, don't just not want nuclear catastrophe, they do want a sustainable, renewable energy sector, one that won't poison the future and leave their children with no options.

Both countries are rich in sun and wind, resources that could, with ingenuity and technological development, power their needs and even most of their wants.

Sustainable energy sources can also provide hundreds of thousands of jobs, something much needed in the current global recession.

If Italy and Germany can solve the energy shortfall without recourse to coal-fired power stations or a U-turn back to nuclear, then so can we in Scotland.

Just don't forget Fukushima, where the worst nuclear disaster on record is still going on, and will continue to do so, for many years to come.

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# REMEMBERING KILSYTH'S SPANISH CIVIL WAR VETERANS

**BETWEEN** 1936 -39 thousands of working class people volunteered to fight the evils of fascism during the Spanish Civil War.

The war began when the democratically elected Spanish government was attacked by General Franco's army whose aim was to establish a fascist dictatorship like Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany.

Backed by these fascist regimes, Franco unleashed brutal attacks on the ordinary people of Spain who were seeking to build a more democratic and socially just society.

Inspired by their resistance thousands of working people made their way to Spain to make a stand against the evils of fascism and racism.



Amongst their number, we know of at least two from Kilsyth.

One was the miner Robert Burns, who fought for 14 months before being wounded and returning home.

George Burleigh was one

of the first Scots in Spain as an ambulance man who eventually served with the Spanish Medical Aid Committee's International Brigade team.

There may well be others and it would be great if any people in the Kilsyth area

know any more details about Robert and George or about any other Kilsyth volunteers who fought fascism in Spain.

Sadly the evil of fascism and economic inequality on which it feeds remains.

At a time of savage cuts the extreme right continues to scapegoat religious and ethnic minorities for the ills of a society that values profit more than people.

We commemorate those who fought in Spain to remember that the fight against fascism and for a fairer society continues to this day.

If you have any more information or would like to find out more about our campaign e-mail us on [spanishcivilwarveterans@live.co.uk](mailto:spanishcivilwarveterans@live.co.uk)

## Having a guid auld blether

### WOMEN'S VOICE

by Denise Morton

**WHEN** I was a wee girl I was always being told I was a blether.

At school, I was belted every day for blethering. Either that or daydreaming.

On Sunday a daydream came true.

I was going to attend a blether.

A women only blether and although it had not been decided beforehand what we would blether about, I had every confidence that there would be plenty to keep our tongues busy.

We had four hours and we never stopped except for when we munched our way through an incredible array of fantastic home made baking.

It took place in the Heatherington building and a big thank you is extended to everyone who has struggled to keep the place open and has made it such a welcoming space.

I hope you enjoyed the cakes we could not devour.

When I arrived at the Heatherington, and was directed to the room where the blether was to take place I had no idea how many women would be there, I only hoped that it would be well attended.

I needn't have worried.

There was 28 or so women. Some I knew already, others I had never met.

After we had all introduced ourselves it became clear that there were many seasoned feminists present but also some women who were only recently acquainted with the idea that feminism has something to say about our society.

One of the good things about the blether was that no one claimed that the feminism which fitted them best would fit every woman. Some were socialist and feminist, some made no claim to have a political viewpoint.

So, what did we blether about?

Well we broke up into small groups of five and we talked about what it means to us as individuals to have a safe space, a womans only space to talk, to exchange experiences, ideas etc.

What it is that makes us feel safe, or feel threatened.

In the group I was in, we referred to family, employment, language, in fact any area of our lives which would illustrate what for us made us feel unsafe.

Other groups talked about activism and the cuts in public spending.

One thing I think we all agreed on was that whatever our differences we would approach each other with respect and I was impressed with the goodwill which was palpable. It was so good to hear so many women laughing, and so often.

Did we decide anything? Only that we would meet again and that we will allow the group to develop as it will.

Our four hours of blethering was over before we knew it but what a good day it was and it left me feeling very upbeat and optimistic.

STOP THE CUTS!

# BUILD BIGGER, BROADER ACTION

by *Richie Venton, SSP national workplace organiser*

**WHATEVER** the weather, the 30th June will be the hottest day the ConDem coalition has ever seen. Nearly three quarters of a million public sector workers, including civil servants, teachers and lecturers, will walk out in angry, principled protest at a government that can't stop kicking the public sector.

Cameron may be cheered on by his millionaire cabinet, but the roaring tide of popular fury, professionals' outrage and even fellow politicians' disquiet, is deafening.

Public sector workers voted overwhelmingly to strike, and the mood is spreading...expect to see thousands of other workers, students, pensioners, community activists and socialists pouring into Glasgow's city centre next Friday in support of the industrial action, and in opposition to the forced diet of cuts that none of us can stomach.

Even members of the Scottish Prison Officers Association, banned from taking strike action, are mounting lunchtime protests in every prison.

## From bonfires to forest fires

These bonfires of fury have been ignited by relentless cuts to desperately-needed benefits, to well-earned wages, well-deserved pensions, essential jobs and lifeline services.

By summer's end, we will surely see a forest fire of resistance to the incineration of all we depend on and



work for, the glue that holds our communities together, and the safety net that catches us when we slip through the cracks.

The ConDem coalition of millionaire butchers, aided by their spineless acolytes and meek servants at every level of government, wants a further £83billion wiped from the public sector budget, including £18billion from benefits to the sick, vulnerable and disabled.

Apparently, the government's bloated business buddies need the money more. Or, to put it another way, this is just another savage smash'n'grab, an inexcusable, unjustified, ideologically-driven onslaught on public services for the greater profit of the (very) few.

Outfits like ATOS Origin, who shouldn't be trusted with a packet of plasters, amass vast profits by driving thousands of sick people off the marginally higher benefits.

Equally callous is the planned slashing of housing benefits for people aged 25-34.

Government ministers, with more homes than most people have rooms in theirs, want to drive 7500 Scots from one-bedroom accommodation into multi-occupancy, by robbing them of £50 a week in housing benefits...despite confessing they "have no idea" whether sufficient stock of such housing will be available!

Here's a tip, minister – it won't be.

In the case of North

Lanarkshire, 390 people are to be forced from one-bedroom houses, but only 25 'appropriate' smaller housing is available to rent.

## Pay Ice Age

The Westminster Butchers aren't just carving up benefits – they're going in for the kill on public sector pay, pensions and jobs.

The years of pay freeze for these workers has become a full-blown Ice Age, with inflation letting rip; profiteering privatised energy companies hiking the cost of heating and eating by at least 20 per cent; and new reports proving that those on lower incomes are hit twice as hard by price rises as those on the highest incomes, because inflation on daily essentials of life is far higher than the 5.5 per cent average.

## Great Pensions Robbery

And if this isn't criminal enough for you, consider the Great Pensions Robbery, complete with barefaced lies about 'gold-plated' public sector pensions, and a blatant attempt to incite division between public and private sector workers.

There's a good reason why DWP workers and firefighters never feature on the Rich List, and that's because, unlike David Cameron and his 500 closest friends, they don't have gold-plated pensions, and wouldn't have pensions at all if the present government had their way.

With retirement age stretched to 66 by 2020, the Tories' wee timorous messenger boy Danny Alexander trots out their line that "we are all living longer", so we have to work longer.

Improved health and longevity is now officially a problem in this mad capitalist world, rather than a source of celebration.

Come to think of it, their line that "we are all living longer" is almost on a par with "we're all in this together"!

No, we are not! Life expectancy for the poorest sections of the working class is a good ten or eleven years less than for rich enclaves in the same area of the country.

Plus there is as little excuse for increasing workers' pension contributions by 50-200 per cent, for pensions that will be 20-50 per cent cut, as there is for expanding class sizes from 18 to 33 whilst only one in five new teachers get a permanent job, or for shutting DWP offices in unemployment black-spots, or for slashing the numbers of tax collectors when the millionaires and big business avoid, evade or

simply don't pay £120 billion in taxes a year.

## No cuts – tax the rich!

The cuts are unwanted, and unnecessary.

We need a massive information offensive calling for taxes on the rich, not attacks on the rest of us.

The STUC could spearhead a demand that the new SNP government insists on power over Corporation Tax – not to halve it to a paltry 12 per cent as the SNP wish, but to double it to pre-Thatcher levels, as both the Scottish Socialist Party and PCS union call for.

Even a modest 10 per cent wealth tax on the richest 100 parasites in Scotland alone would raise £1.6 billion this year – far in excess of the £1.3 billion chopped off the Scottish budget by Westminster, and spinelessly passed on by the SNP in Holyrood.

## Broaden the strike action

The mass strike and rallies on 30th are the opening salvo in a war in defence of jobs, conditions and public services.

Some of the big trade unions – like UNISON and GMB – did not join the strike because their leaders deluded themselves into thinking they could negotiate their way out of a crisis with the ConDem cutters.

Likewise, the EIS leadership sold their members 'a pup', caving in to the £45m cuts package, rather than stand up and be counted alongside PCS members in broadening the anti-cuts front.

In both these cases, the ConDem razor gang and the COSLA axe-men viewed union leaders' weakness as an invitation to aggression.

Exponentially greater cuts to education have now been

announced in Scotland, and Westminster has launched such savage attacks on pensions that even the GMB leaders now say "it is impossible to negotiate", and UNISON's Dave Prentis has warned of "the biggest wave of continuous industrial action since the 1926 general strike".

Fine, inspiring words; provided union members and activists hold these leaders to their words and turn them into deeds.

## Build for an autumn strike

Those who bravely strike on 30th must not be left standing alone.

Those who join their Rally, led by the STUC and public sector unions, should make immediate, concrete plans to escalate the action.

For starters, they could link them up with other local public and private sector workplaces, to systematically leaflet them, organise meetings with the workforces, explode the lies peddled about public sector pensions, and appeal for support for much broader united days of strike action in the autumn.

The STUC should be encouraged and lobbied to call a mass Scottish demo in October, to outstrip even the one last October – as part of preparation for a strike of the entire public sector that month.

## Hammer the governments

Imagine the hammer blow to the Westminster Coalition if 600,000 Scottish workers – civil servants, council staff, teachers and lecturers, posties, NHS staff, railworkers and countless others – all walked out simultaneously, demanding "No cuts – tax the rich".

Imagine also the impact on the recently elected SNP

government, if such a force, augmented by students, pensioners and local communities, demanded that they defy Westminster, refuse a single penny in cuts to jobs, pay or services, and fight to win back the stolen £billions from Westminster.

## This is not impossible. In fact, it's imperative.

People are scared witless, and moved to outrage, at the brutality of the cuts. Meanwhile, the world's richest get richer, living lives that bear no relation to the ordinary people forced to pay, and pay, and pay, for a crisis triggered, not by civil servants taking tea-breaks, but by the obscene greed, and short-sighted stupidity, of bankers and capitalists.

## Call STUC Demo and October one-day strike

The leaders of the two biggest unions, UNITE and UNISON, have openly talked of co-ordinated strike action in the autumn.

The Scottish Socialist Party will combine with other workers, communities and students to build such action, all the while broadcasting the case for taxation of the rich and democratic public ownership of services, banks, industries and energy sources, to use Scotland's fabulous wealth to benefit the people of Scotland.

We will campaign for a Scotland independent of the Westminster butchers, independent of wars and weapons of mass destruction, independent of searing poverty and inequality. For an independent socialist Scotland, where this land is our land, the energy sources are the people's energy, the wealth we create is the wealth we share.

# VOICES FROM THE FRONT LINE

## Richie Venton spoke to some of the workers fighting the cuts.

“**THIS** is the most important action public sector unions have been involved in. The government haven’t just drawn these battle lines on pensions. This is about whether we have a public sector and welfare state based on need – or the private sector doing that work for profit. The government, who have no mandate for these cuts and they know if they break the welfare state no mainstream political party will rebuild it.

“The 30th is the first time unions can show their opposition to cuts which will rip apart the very social fabric that underpins our very fragile society.”

*John Jamieson, PCS national executive committee*

“**IT’S** essential that we show people our strength, and 30th should be followed by a public sector workers’ strike, which hopefully will be agreed at UNISON conference.

“Far from being gold-plated, council workers’ pensions are rock bottom. The average for women is about £3,000 a year – because a lot work part time, take breaks in employment for family care, and end up living in poverty on retirement.

“When UNISON’s Dave Prentis talks about general strike action, I hope he puts his money where his mouth is and delivers this.

“It would mean a lot of ground work, face-to-face

meetings with members, because some people swallow the hype in the gutter press.

“So long as strike action is coordinated it would give the public the clear message that public sector pensions are not to be trifled with, and would help get across the realities of what level of pensions we

get. We are not all 65-year-old men who have been senior managers for the past 30 years! A carer who has worked for 25 years would retire on £3,000, that’s fact.”

*Elaine Wishart, City of Edinburgh UNISON member*

“**THIS** is the first major test the trade union movement has faced under the new government. So getting nearly a million workers out on strike on 30th is absolutely pivotal – but as the start of a process, not the end.

“UNITE is right behind those striking, and our leadership around Len McLuskey are ready to join united action later on.

“The 30th is not an end in itself, just as the TUC demo on 26 March wasn’t an end in itself. We now need to get the arguments out into private sector workplaces. Hopefully council workers, civil servants and others already understand the issues, but there needs to be a basic information campaign to challenge the myths about ‘gold-plated’ public sector pensions, for instance, to

broaden the understanding of the issues.

“For example, pensions in the banking sector are still much better than those in the public sector – at least for those older staff who still enjoy Final Salary Pensions, which are being phased out for new entrants.”

*Mike Dyer, UNITE Scottish regional committee (personal capacity)*

“**WE** have got to challenge this additional taxation of public sector workers and take strike action. The government is increasing our pension contributions by up to 50 per cent – so as to pay for the bail-out of the bankers’ reckless greed.

“The life expectancy of the working class is much less than that of the affluent middle class – yet they expect us to pay more, receive less, and work longer.

“For example a Band 6 nurse tells me she will be paying £80 a month more! People are beginning to take notice of the scale of attack, some are scared, so people need to come together.

“UNISON members in Glasgow are joining the strikers’ lunchtime rally in big numbers. So 30th should be just the start. Dave Prentis says there will be unprecedented levels of strike action in the autumn; UNISON should help bring everybody out, to stand up or face horrendous attacks on the whole public sector.”

*Mark Sands, City of Glasgow UNISON steward*

“**THE** EIS leadership’s recent acceptance of COSLA cuts will have severe and immediate impact. Supply staff are now second-class

teachers, with many facing a 47 per cent pay cut, and increasing casualisation.

“Probationers see their time for reflection and training slashed. Already, promises of new permanent posts ring hollow as teacher unemployment soars.

“If the union leadership thought this rotten deal would keep the wolf from the door, they were badly wrong. A leaked COSLA document states “the primary role of teachers is not to teach”!

“This signals an imminent and more vicious assault on our professionalism and conditions. It has no educational rationale; it is motivated purely by cuts.

There is no more room to appease these vandals. The 30th June is only the start of a mass movement to resist the cuts and defend pensions.

“EIS cannot duck out of the coming fight. The only place for Scottish teachers to stand is shoulder to shoulder with other public sector workers in struggle.

*An EIS school union rep*

“**PCS** members should back the call for action on June 30th as part of a massive fightback against the Twin Tory Toffs’ attempt to destroy public services and the public servants who deliver them.

“It is vital that the 750 000 civil servants, teachers and lecturers make the day a huge success to force dithering union leaders such as Dave Prentis of Unison to join the battle.

“The prospect of 4million workers taking action together in the autumn has the government terrified - and proves we can win.”

*John Davidson, PCS Revenue and Customs GEC (personal capacity)*

# NICARAGUA'S DEMOCRATIC GOOD WORKS

by Sam Gordon in  
Nicaragua

**TRYING** to keep tabs on the different players that come into elections in Nicaragua is never easy.

For starters, the governing Sandinista Front for National Liberation party gets labelled in different ways at times. It happens on radio and TV, in newspapers, in conversations people have in the street.

The short label reads FSLN, or "la Frente" – the Front. Sometimes it's "roje y negros" – the red and blacks, named after the party colours.

A man down my street calls party people sandias. That, sort of, rhymes with Sandinistas.

Translated into English it means water melons.

Nicaragua's Conservative Party doesn't change much. And electorally, on its own, doesn't count for much either. The liberal movement has split into different parties and usually goes by the initials of each party, PLC, PLI, etc.

Sometimes the conservatives and liberals, like in Britain, get their act together for a while. One such union travelled under the name Vamos con Eduardo.

Eduardo Montealegre was their leader of choice so the short lived movement became Let's go with Eduardo.

Can you imagine the Old Etonian heading up a clan of toffs called Let's go with David?

## The Democratic Tradition

Elections have been happening almost since the Nicaraguan state came into being 190 years ago. For



CARL GERSHMAN: President of NED (National Endowment for Democracy)

generations this was like a friendly Friday night poker game between the Conservatives and Liberals. Conservative, land-owning and farming elites plays the new money, export led Liberals.

The arrival of the Sandinistas in the middle of the 20th century put paid to that game. At least for a while.

But during the 1980s an invisible hand started to play for stakes in Nicaraguan elections. The hand belonged to NED, the National Endowment for Democracy.

It began dealing in Latin American affairs soon after it came to life as an Act of US Congress during the presidency of Ronald Reagan.

NED gets stake money from the US government. Then it disperses these funds to four different organisations. One is a babe of the Republican Party and

another is a Democratic Party offspring.

The other two players are reps from the bosses and unionised workers - US Chamber of Commerce and the AFL-CIO. The latter is similar to the British TUC.

Congress gets to hear about the funds dispersed to each of these four organisations. But after that it's blind trails and muddy waters.

Where the tax dollar ends up neither Congress nor the good people of the US ever know.

But one of NED's founding fathers did give us a sneak glimpse of the hand that NED holds. Quoted in the Washington Post in 1991 he said:

"A lot of what we [NED] do was done 25 years ago covertly by the CIA."

We know that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has been "covertly" working on democracy in Latin

America for a long time. There are the unmarked graves of thousands upon thousands of democrats and assorted innocents to prove it.

But times have changed, we are told. Bloodletting coups against democratically elected governments in Latin America are on the back burner for the moment.

Under the friendly guidance of NED individuals who oppose the likes of President Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua or any other of the growing number of left of centre governments in Latin America can apply for cuddly treatment.

## The Undemocratic Tradition

Besides the water melon man down my street I have another friend. She is young, a lawyer, works for a co-operative and calls herself a MRS Feminist.

The MRS split off from the FSLN some years back. And during the last elections its leaders got quite pally with the Liberals. It is still an articulate, if small, opposition which finds favour among some sections of the university educated classes.

A not much heard of organisation paid for my friend to join other Nicaraguans visiting the USA.

To join this group they key requirement is a proven record in opposing the FSLN and the outcome of the visit is unashamedly pro market.

Participants should return convinced that democracy and the free market go hand in hand. The people get to vote Republican or Democrat.

Private business interest groups guide your elected government.

# PRESSURE BUILDS AGAINST ISRAELI FARM PRODUCTS

by Voice Reporter

**AGREXCO** is Israel's largest fresh produce exporter and European markets account for the vast majority of their sales under the brand Carmel.

The Israeli government's 50 per cent stake in the company as well as their marketing of 60-70 per cent of the fruit and vegetables grown in illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank have made Agrexco a prime strategic target for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign.

Last week in Montpellier, France, over 100 activists from nine countries gathered for the first ever European Forum Against Agrexco.

Delegates from Italy, UK, Switzerland, Belgium, Netherlands, Spain, Germany and Palestine joined the French organizers for two full days of workshops aimed at strengthening the boycott campaign against the Israeli agricultural export giant.

Rafeef Ziadah, representative of the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC), recalled that the campaign against Agrexco includes all three components of BDS: boycott of Agrexco products, divestment via suspension of commercial agreements and sanctions through legal procedures.

Agrexco's is implicated in a broad range of human rights violations, profiting from crops grown on stolen land, irrigated with stolen water and worked with child labour.



The meeting focused on two parallel tracks with the objective of ridding European supermarkets of Agrexco products: boycott campaigns and court actions.

Activists presented a review of the campaigns and actions taking place in the various countries, including lobbying retail chains and co-op member meetings, actions at supermarkets and trade fairs, airport blockades and Italy's very first BDS flash mob.

In Belgium last May, over 400 people in twenty-two cities filed a complaint with the police citing Agrexco's complicity with violations of international law.

In France, the new Agrexco terminal at the port of Sète became a catalyst for the movement, with a mass demonstration of over 1,500 people.

Campaigns are also under way in Sweden and Norway, who were unable to send delegates to the forum. In

Sweden activists presented the national co-op with a dossier on Agrexco's activities who promised to investigate.

In Norway, the campaigning instead focuses on the local importer, who is consulting their attorneys on the question.

Michael Deas, European coordinator for the BNC, underlined the importance of boycotting Agrexco as a company and not just the products it exports from the illegal Israeli settlements.

Aside from problems of traceability – Agrexco has been caught on numerous occasions mislabeling products or mixing settlement produce with that from the Israeli side of the Green Line – purchasing any Agrexco products means supporting a company profiting from the occupation and apartheid policies of the Israeli government.

The involvement in the French campaign of farmers'

unions, Confédération paysanne and Via Campesina, keeps the issues of sustainable agriculture and food sovereignty at the forefront.

Michael Deas also underlined the role Palestinian farmers unions have and can play in the campaign against Agrexco. In fact, Palestinian farmers unions were crucial role in helping to expose a propaganda stunt organized by Agrexco in France, claiming that boycotts of Agrexco products damaged Palestinian farmers in Gaza.

The discussion on legal campaigns, with the presence of three Palestinian attorneys from the Palestinian Bar Association, concentrated on possible court actions against Agrexco.

While several countries – Belgium, UK, Italy – are currently exploring legal action, the French case has already produced an important result.

An agent of the court inspected customs documents for the Agrexco ships docking at Sète and found clear cases of fraud.

A 2010 decision of the European Court of Justice ruled that products from Israeli settlements are not eligible for preferential trade tariffs under the EU Israel Agreement. Yet here were invoices for dates from the Jordan Valley declared to be "Israel Preferential Origin."

This proof of fraud, from none other than a court official, will be vital to campaigns throughout Europe.

# STORM OF PROTEST SWEEPS EUROPE

by Bill Bonnar

AS I write this the following is happening. Greece is convulsed in a wave of strikes, protests and demonstrations against austerity measures imposed by the Greek Government in its desperate attempt to tackle the country's economic problems.

In Spain, protests by mainly young people are continuing throughout the country in response to catastrophic levels of youth unemployment.

In France the trade union movement is about to launch a summer of discontent as the Government there tries to implement further cuts in the social wage.

In Italy, the protests against Berlusconi are combining with wider protests around the social and economic problems engulfing millions of ordinary Italians.

While in Russia, there has been reported a marked increase in industrial actions in defence of jobs and living standards among significant numbers of workers hitherto beaten down and defeated by two decades of harsh capitalist rule.

In just about every country in Europe there are protests against cuts in social spending, rising prices and increasing unemployment.

The protesters come from a wide swathe of society from organised workers to young people to women to community based groups and single issue campaigners yet all the protests are essentially around the same issue.

They are protests against the impact of the continuing capitalist economic crisis on the lives of millions of working class people across the continent.



**GREECE: protestors march against austerity measures**

At the heart of this issue is a basic reality. The capitalist system can no longer afford the levels of public expenditure which have built up since the end of the Second World War.

The economic system needs to be restructured and this is presenting a stark choice. Either the restructuring will be carried out at the expense of the working class through cuts in public expenditure, higher prices, rising unemployment and a general lowering of living standards.

Or the working class can defeat the current onslaught and force the capitalists to pay for the crisis, defending jobs and public expenditure and pushing through measures such as taxing the rich, extending public ownership, ending the dominations of the finance capital and moving towards and economy based on sustainable growth, manufacturing and the development of new green and service industries.

The outcome of this struggle will have profound implications for both capitalism and the working class.

Running parallel to all this

is an interesting discussion. When Margaret Thatcher eventually dies should a monument be built in memory of her 'achievements'? The Right have already decided that such a monument should be built; the Left are still deciding what to throw at it.

However; what is the Right commemorating? For Mrs Thatcher and that entire generation of right wing leaders here and in the United States the end of the Second World War represented a terrible defeat for capitalism.

The system was undermined by the extension of public ownership, state funded health, education and social services and a commitment to full employment.

The Thatcherite revolution was about reversing this historic defeat and setting the system free. Modern day Thatcherites here and elsewhere see the current crisis as an opportunity to finally complete the revolution by not only smashing public services but also by smashing the expectation of public services.

For them the system is

struggling to provide services it shouldn't be providing anyway.

The strength and breadth of the protest movement and campaigns are impressive as are the way they link diverse sections of society and bring them into action.

They are also increasingly becoming international as the rise of one movement in one country inspires the rise of a similar movement in another.

However, the key question is this. These movements know what they are against but what are they for? If they aim simply to resist the attacks on social spending and living standards at best they will achieve a short term respite or perhaps modify some of the cuts programmes.

Instead they need to draw the connection between these austerity measures and the socio-economic system which is behind them.

The problem is not cuts but capitalism.

Here the socialists organisations have a crucial role to play. They need to immerse themselves in these movements but also show that an alternative, socialism, is both possible and needed.

The danger is that the socialists parties submerges their identities into broad left movements which are often more broad than Left and that the key message of socialism becomes lost.

In Greece, which is now on the front line of this titanic battle, this does not appear to be happening. The Left is increasingly coming to the fore in these struggles and the movement is all the stronger because of it. We have already had the Arab Spring. Maybe its now time for the European summer.

# THE CONDEMS CAN BE BEATEN

by Ken Ferguson

A little over a year since the butcher's coalition sealed their deal in the summer scents of the Downing Street rose garden a very different smell wafts on the breeze.

Behind the polished public school smiles of the millionaires' cabinet and the oily duo Cameron and Clegg fronting it, the aroma of fear is welling up.

Already the supposedly determined coalition 's message that 'there is no alternative' has hit the rocks as it is forced to U turn over issues as diverse as selling of public forests to sentencing rapists.

Even the well tried and tested ploy of launching a foreign wae - which worked so well for Thatcher - is rapidly bogging down in the Libyan sands.

Launched earlier this year in the clear assumption that defeating Gaddafi would take a few days and be followed by some suitable photo opportunities in Tripoli that opportunity now looks increasingly like a problem.

After thousands of air raids and strikes by ruinously expensive missiles the



fighting lines have barely moved and dark talk of choice between defeat and "boots on the ground" grows.

Then, like a shell burst in a night battle, the reality was illuminated when Head of the Royal Navy First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope and Air Chief Marshal Sir Simon Bryant, the RAF's second-in-command warned against a long war.

Long in this case is September before the summer leaves turn brown drawing a rattled response from a rattled Prime Minister.

This gathering foreign crisis is mirrored at home inspired by resistance across Europe, reported elsewhere in this *Voice*, unions shape up to launch some of the biggest

waves of industrial action for over 30 years.

Initially the issue at stake is the assault on public sector worker's pensions which will see tens of thousands on strike on 30 June with a range of follow up action thereafter.

Once again the ConDems miscalculated when the put up the fresh faced Inverness LibDem Danny Alexander to do the 'hard cop' routine and punt the no surrender pensions line to the unions.

Scenes reminiscent of those cartoon images following a Tom and Jerry explosion left a shaken, face blackened, Alexander rocked by the fury of the response.

Union leaders erupted, warned of walking out of talks and predicted even

tougher resistance to the Condem plans.

As prices and profits soar and wages are frozen or cut and jobs shed the ConDem lie of us being "all in this together" will be exposed for ever growing millions as the lie it is.

Against this gathering crisis workers looking for support from the party they generously fund with their membership dues New Labour played its time honoured role and sat firmly on the fence.

Under fire leader Ed Miliband is hugely hampered by the fact that his party accepts the majority of the ConDem cuts and quibbles only on how hard the axe should fall.

However even more hopeless was the response of Shadow Chancellor and supposed left Ed Balls who warned unions about being lured into strike action by those cunning ConDems and urged them not to strike.

All of which shows that the need for decisive action to defeat the ConDem attacks is vital now and work on building a genuine alternative to Labour backing that fight urgent.



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Fill in this form and send to: SSP, Suite 370, 4th Floor, 93 Hope St, Glasgow, G2 6LD

Or see our website:

[scottishsocialistparty.org](http://scottishsocialistparty.org)

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