

RESISTANCE

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Pensions- well I never, Trade Union Leaders have done the Dirty



The leadership of the public sector unions UNISON and GMB decided on 12th January to start negotiating with the government over pensions. Meanwhile TUC leader Brendan Barber pontificated that "We have reached a stage where the emphasis in most cases is in giving active consideration to the new proposals that have emerged rather than considering the prospect of further industrial action." The

smaller civil service and teaching unions Prospect, ATL, NAHT, etc. swung in behind this.

But these new proposals are exactly the same as before with workers having to pay more in contributions, about 50% more or 3% of our gross pay, having to work longer, at 67 for those under 51 years old and 68 from those under 34.

Continued on page 2

So once again the union leaders are trying to pull the shell game on us by trying to make us accept the same lousy deal the government was already pushing, and that after a day when hundreds of thousands went out on strike, losing a day's pay in the process. On top of this, we have had to swallow a two year pay freeze and a further two years of so-called pay rises limited to 1%. Having a laugh?

The union leaders are scared that further strike action threatens their position as mediators and cops over

the working class.

Meanwhile the leaders of UNITE and PCS unions are attempting to appear more militant whilst continuing to play the game with cabinet secretary Francis Maude.

Now is the time to ignore these so called leaders, now is the time to organise our own actions and not wait on ballots and bureaucrats. That means action at the base, that means joint action between workers in both the public and private sector, that means total rejection of the attacks on pensions this government is

trying to force through.

The boss class is trying to make us pay for their crisis whether this is voiced though the Coalition government or through the Labour Party with Balls and Milliband arguing that cuts are necessary.

This doesn't have to be the case. We are many, and we showed that on November 30th when we came out in vast numbers. We can stop the bosses and the government in their tracks.

Revolt in Wukan

Villagers of Wukan in south east China became suspicious in September that the local government was preparing to sell common farming land to Country Garden - a company which builds residences for the rich. Hundreds of villagers gathered at nearby Communist Party offices, to protest against the sale. The crowds grew, roads were blockaded and buildings in an industrial park were attacked. Protesters began blocking roads and attacking buildings in an industrial park. As a result three villagers were arrested and the next day hundreds laid siege to the police

the government then appeared to be ready to negotiate, saying that villagers should elect delegates so that talks could take place. This appears to have been a trick to spot the "ringleaders. As a result one of these died in police custody, apparently killed by the cops. The state news agency claimed he died of a heart attack, but the injuries seen on his body by his son in law go against this.

The villagers then gathered in huge numbers and drove the police and Communist officials out of town. De-

The government was wary about outright repression, fearing the unrest would spread through the region. At the same time they blockaded the area, although people from other villages managed to bring food in. There was also wealth redistribution from better off villagers to the poorer, so that everyone would survive the blockade.

The government eventually had to make a deal. The local government agreed to buy back land it had taken for Country Garden and to allow villagers to collectivise it. Those arrested were released and an investigation into the suspicious death has been announced, although how much of a whitewash this will be remains undecided. The central government is concerned that workers faced with attacks on wages, jobs and conditions as a result of recession on a world scale might launch strikes and are afraid that revolts in the countryside would link up with this. That is why they are prepared to negotiate, at least for the moment.



station, demanding their release. Police and mercenaries viciously attacked the crowd, beating many. The police were then withdrawn and

spite the internet block throughout China, some news did get out and the villagers set up their own press office.

The odds are that unrest in both cities and countryside are due to escalate in China. Watch this space.

Pressure Rises in Fracking Dispute

Attempts to halt the controversial gas extraction technique known as 'fracking' continued to gather pace throughout autumn on both local and national levels, after an studies found probable links between gas extraction activities and earth tremors in west Lancashire. The study, funded by Cuadrilla Resources, the company behind shale gas extraction in Lancashire, found that it was 'highly probable' that fracking had caused tremors near Blackpool in spring 2011, before adding a convenient caveat that this was due to a combination of unusual geological factors rather than any direct consequence of drilling. The news was quickly followed by direct action protests co-ordinated between Frack Off!, a national action group focusing on gas extraction, as well as local residents concerned for their safety, who occupied drilling rigs at Banks, a village located between Southport and Preston. At the same time, groups in London picketed and disrupted meetings at the Shale Gas Environmental Summit, a conference organised by the fracking industry.

The West Lancashire and Fylde coastal plains have been the centre of Cuadrilla's UK drilling activity in the last few years, and while the availability of the gas has long been

known, the continuing worldwide rise in the price of dwindling fossil fuel resources has meant that fracking has only recently become financially viable. This method of extraction involves pumping a mix of chemicals and water in to shale rock underground, in order to to crack the rock and force out the gas contained within. Fracking activity in North America has seen contaminated water supplies, confirming concerns that gas or the chemicals used to force gas to the surface could be damaged underground water tables.



Groups such as the aforementioned Frack Off! have been effective in raising awareness of the issue. Groups have organised film nights, question-and-answer sessions and demonstrations, arguing that the willingness of companies to conduct feasibility studies in to fracking is a sign of the earth's stagnating fos-

sil fuel supply. One demonstrator, during the occupation of the drilling rigs, stated that "Conventional fossil fuels have begun to run out and the system is moving towards more extreme forms of energy like fracking, tar sands, and deep water drilling." In reply, Cuadrilla have not been slow in mobilising their spokesmen and publicity advisers, claiming, against all other evidence, that fracking is a safe method of retrieving resources that does not cause tremors, but rather finds extractable gas in areas where tremors are likely. This is despite British Geological Survey evidence confirming that tremors have sky-rocketed since fracking began.

Cuadrilla stopped drilling near Singleton and Preesall on the Fylde after a national outcry earlier this year following tremors, but it continues to drill just a few miles across the Ribble estuary at Hesketh Bank and Banks. Moreover, the legacy of mountain-top removal to extract coal beneath the Appalachian mountains of Virginia, or the destruction of tar sands in Alberta, suggest that such high-cost methods of resource extraction will cost as much again to the people and environment of West Lancashire.

Venezuelan Prisons Protest

At the beginning of January several of Venezuela's notorious jails were occupied by families of prisoners. The relatives refused to leave after being allowed to visit overnight during the New Year holiday. The protests were against cramped conditions, the routine and severe brutality used by prison guards, long delays in court proceedings and the judicial system. Almost 1000 relatives occupied the Yare prison near Caracas. More occupations by

families also happened at the Rodeo I, Rodeo II, La Planta, Los Teques prisons in the north of the country and at the Vista Hermosa prison in the south. Families of inmates have been allowed overnight visits since 2008 and can also bring in clothes and food. According to the organisation Venezuelan Prisons Observatory (OVP) from January 1st to October 30th last year, 487 prisoners died in Venezuelan jails and detention centres. Currently, there are around

45,000 prisoners in cells designed for a maximum of 14,000 prisoners. Bizarrely, Iris Varela, the Venezuelan minister of prisons, said the inmates' family members have "kidnapped themselves". For more news and information on prisons look up The Campaign Against Prison Slavery (CAPS) <http://www.againstprisonslavery.org/>

Bangin On

On New Year's Eve solidarity noise demonstrations were held outside prisons in Europe, Britain, USA and Argentina.

Cardiff

After 10:00pm on New Year's Eve over 20 people gathered outside Cardiff prison and created a din using megaphones, whistles, and other instruments. A large banner reading 'For a New Year Without Prisons: Freedom for All' was displayed from a multi-story car park facing the cell windows. Prisoners banged on windows, shouted out to the demonstrators, chanted, and dropped flaming objects from windows. The cops arrived at about 11:20pm and threatened to make arrests if the demo continued but the spirits of the demonstrators were lifted by the sound of anti-police slogans shouted from the cells. The demo moved around the prison perimeter causing a right racket. The activists had to disperse briefly to avoid arrest but returned at midnight to blast out their messages of solidarity to those in the jail.

Gatwick

In Gatwick about 30 activists gathered outside both the Brook House and Tinsley House detention centres. For 2 hours they displayed banners, played music from a sound system, chanted, blew whistles, banged pan lids and shouted messages of solidarity to the prisoners. A police Forward Intelligence Team (FIT) arrived

along with armed cops, around 10 police vehicles plus Gatwick airport security vans.

London

Up to 100 people held a New Year's Eve noise protest outside Holloway Women's Prison and Young Offenders' Unit. Large banners and a sound system grabbed attention including a few hoots from passing drivers. Leaflets were handed to people walking past. When the police arrived their questions were drowned-out



by a megaphone, chants and music. The demonstration walked into the grounds of the prison and to the back gates. A cacophony was created using the sound system, whistles, pots and pans. A loud cheer went up when the prisoners who wanted to get a clearer view of the banners shouted to the demo to raise them higher. Several people addressed the demo including the mother of

student Zenon Mitchell-Kotsakis jailed after the 2010 student demo in London.

Bristol

About 25 people held a solidarity demo outside Horfield prison in Bristol. Around 11.30pm demonstrators started to shout 'Fuck the screws' and 'Happy New Year' then launched fireworks into the prison courtyard. People climbed onto an outer wall and bashed the fence to

create more noise. Police turned up around midnight, used pepper-spray and dragged people to the ground to make four arrests. Shouts and banging could then be heard from inside the prison as lights went on in the jail as well as the floodlights. New Year's Eve noise demos were also held outside prisons in: Argentina, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain, Barcelona and the USA.

La Senza Workers Occupy And Win

A store occupation by 25 La Senza workers in Dublin has succeeded in winning redundancy pay for all 100 Ireland-based employees of the bankrupt bra bazaar.

Despite working overtime over Christmas and pulling in more than €250,000 for the shop, workers were told that they might not be getting their pay since Irish law treats workers as low-priority creditors.

On Monday 9th January, workers from several sites occupied the West Dublin branch. By Friday, they had forced administrators KPMG to agree to pay them all monies due. This was done through a simple direct action tactic, by low-paid shop workers acting on their own initiative. They didn't wait for outside help, they acted for themselves and they won. With many "High Street" shops in trouble, this is an example of what workers can do in difficult circumstances.

Scottish Sparks hand back Contracts Unsigned

On 6th January, electrical engineers in Glasgow working for Balfour Beatty came together to turn in their new contracts unsigned en masse at the company office in Hillington. Balfour Beatty is the largest company of the six trying to get rid of the current pay and conditions agreement. They had issued the contracts on the last day of work in December, and workers in Glasgow held a meeting that day in which they agreed to refuse the contracts together, even though Balfour Beatty made it clear to them that they would all be fired in April if they refused to sign away their pay and conditions. They are hoping that other electricians will refuse to work in their places under the new contracts if Balfour Beatty goes ahead with its plan.

The office wouldn't let their own

employees into the building to turn in the contracts; they sent an admin worker out with a box to collect the contracts. One electrician outside the office explained to the writer of this article that they stand to lose £15,000 a year under the new offer, which will allow employers to train apprentices to weld while paying these apprentices significantly less than electricians. If welding is 75% of a job, as it can be, then an electrician will lose 75% of that job to the cheaper-to-hire apprentice. The sparks working for Balfour Beatty are well aware that their livelihood is under threat, and encouragingly, some electricians not employed by Balfour Beatty came on the 6th to show support for their fellow workers.

The decision to turn in contracts together in an action of visible solidar-

ity shows how well the sparks understand their situation. One electrician explained to me that there was no point in waiting for the union to take action – unofficial action is the way forward. He told me that they know the bosses don't want any disruption at their Grangemouth oil refinery site. These workers aren't being hoodwinked by union bureaucrats or by their bosses. They are taking action to protect their interests. Here's hoping other electrical engineers will refuse to scab on their courageous colleagues and that the sparks will be willing to escalate the fight to protect their jobs when the going gets tough. We owe them our full support.

Nigeria Strike Shell Pension

Nigeria has been brought to a standstill by a general strike against the government's IMF-approved removal of petrol price subsidy. Despite exporting oil worth billions every year, Nigeria's citizens depend on the subsidy not only for transport but also for electricity generation and it's their only compensation for years of environmental degradation and exploitation by Western oil companies and corrupt leaders.

After 5 days of total stoppage, the strike was suspended by union leaders for negotiations with the government, the day before oil workers were to join the strike. As we go to press, the situation remains uncertain.

What is certain is that despite oil companies getting rich from Nigeria,

that wealth is not being shared by workers in the Europe. Anglo-Dutch fossil fuel empire Shell started 2012 by closing its final salary pension scheme to new workers, the last FTSE 100 company to do so. Its vast wealth and continuing profitability

make it clear that assaults on workers' pension provision are not a problem of affordability but are an attack on ordinary workers aimed at making shareholders and directors richer.



Syrian Anarchists and Activists and their Recent Struggles

Recently the great revolts that have been springing up in the Arab world have been some of the most significant set of events in the early part of 21st century. What took place in recent months in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria caught people by surprise when citizens in these countries took up the fight with their dictatorial regimes and were sending messages to the rest of the world that there was no place for these imperialist backed dictators that refused to change after decades of repression.



The oppressed that made up these rebellions, the youth, workers, unemployed and the poor were starting to show that they can and will change society even against the might of the military and police. Those who challenged the regime were determined even though they would be severely punished if they showed the slightest hint of rebellion. In an era of revolutionary change emerges a prominent anarchist in Syria, Mazen Kamalmaz, editor of the blog <http://www.ahewar.org/m.asp?i=1385> and she gave an interview with an anarchist site, anarchismo.net. Here is some of what she said.

It seems that all of a sudden massive waves of protests are shaking the foundations of long standing oppressive regimes in the Arab world... were there any signs that these protests could happen?

That is one of the interesting things about this revolutionary wave

spreading in the Arab world, it struck exactly when almost no one was expecting it. Few days only before the mass demonstrations in Egypt, the US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, declared the Egyptian government to be stable, and now nothing is stable in the area: the masses are on revolt and everywhere the repressive regimes are expecting the worst. There are things in common to these big incidents, which went unnoticed to the regimes, the statesmen and even the intellectuals, such as the anger which was there, hidden, silenced by the repression of the States, the poverty and unemployment that were on the rise everywhere... but the governments, local and western alike, thought that this anger could be kept under control... we now know how wrong they were.

What's the significance of the flight of Ben Ali in Tunisia?

It is only the first step of the cascade to follow. It meant that people, revolting people, can defy the repression and win. It is very early to talk about the final solution yet, it is still all too complex now, but the people got to know their real power and are still in the streets, so the struggle is still open to many possibilities. Another activist Syrian blogger and activist Hussein Ghrer was kidnapped in Damascus on 24.10.2011 and taken to the security services branches in Al-Kkhateeb and Kafa Souseh then was transferred to Adra prison. Adra prison was considered by activists and revolutionaries as the worst kind of prison where torture was commonplace against detainees. Many said his life would be under threat if he stayed in prison because he has a heart problem. The 32 year old was given bail eventually on Thursday 1.12.2011 by a judge.

Many human rights organisations

are appalled by the treatment of activists in Syria mainly because they have been arrested for unknown reasons.



Syrian Blogger Hussein Ghrer

The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression considers the treatment of blogger Hussein Ghrer, as clear signal of legal mistreatment considering that the state of emergency act in Syria since 1963 was ended in 21.4.2011.

Hussein Ghrer blogs were about Syrian and Arab public affairs and by many considered a valuable activist.

A Letter:

Comrades,

I've just read your report on the day in Resistance 136, I was part of the breakaway group that attempted to occupy Lambeth bridge. Whilst it's true there weren't enough of us to block the bridge ourselves, we were met by police at the far (parliament) end, arriving just as they pulled all their vans up together. I imagine they assumed we were heading for parliament and panicked. By cordoning off this end and kettling us they effectively blocked the bridge for us, for well over an hour; seems like a result to me!

We have just formed an affinity group called Wessex Solidarity to link up anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian, anti-fascist types in our area:

<http://wessexsolidarity.wordpress.com/>

(You Gotta) Fight For Your Right (To Decent Pensions)

On November the 30th members of Nottingham Anarchist Federation were on the picket lines supporting the biggest UK strike in a generation. Some members manned picket lines at their own workplaces whilst students in further and higher education supported the pickets of their striking lecturers and teachers. Later, up to 10,000 people marched from the forest, again easily one the biggest marches Nottingham has seen in recent times.

Speaking as one of the strikers on the day, management in my workplace was keen in the build up to intimidate as many people into work as possible. Messages were sent out informing people that they needed to report their absence in advance to line managers and that sick notes would be required on the day when normally self certification will do (an arbitrary change to local union agreements). The union response in the lead up could have been better with these management provocations going either unchallenged or having lengthy delays before a response, meaning people were badly advised. I was out because my final pension amount is being cut by 25%, my contributions are going up nearly 50% a year and am retiring 3 years later. But this would be to assume that the pensions issue is the only thing people are angry and wanting to take action over. People here are sick of privatisation, real term pay cuts, increased workloads due to recruitment freezes and increasing use of temps and bank staff to create a more precarious workforce. However pension changes are one of the few issues that unions can legally ballot the majority of their workplaces over so this is what the focus has been on.

On the day picket lines were visited by UK Uncut and local anti cuts activists and soup was distributed. An enthusiastic picket gathered outside

my workplace from 7:30am. Some non-union members refused to come in, which was heartening and others refused to cross the line and went home. In the end the workplace was noticeably quieter than usual with the car park being over half empty compared with its normal bustling overflow. This is a workplace with low union density and probably the first picket line in its history. One frustrating aspect was people congratulating us on our strike but then still going into work. For me it drums home the importance of explaining that a strike is a democratic decision by their fellow workers in dispute with their bosses. It is designed to shutdown a workplace in dispute and solidarity is needed to make this happen. In return they should expect solidarity in their disputes, for we're all the labour market together. This needs to be done by us, the rank and file, as it's a message the unions are either unwilling or unable to do for us. There are only two sides to a picket line after all.

The local newspaper, not known for exaggerating numbers of protesters, estimated 60,000 people were on strike in Nottinghamshire, an astonishing number. Come 11 o'clock people started to assemble in preparation for a march. I'm still wary of this as a tactic as I think there is more sense in some workers remaining on pickets if there is going to continue to be comings and goings, such as at a university library. Shutting down a workplace and disrupting its running is surely more important than going for a walk. Upon arriving I have never seen here such a wide array of union branded tat; flags, vuvuzelas, whistles, drums jackets, placards, even giant union balloons were evident. The numbers, but mostly the noise from the instruments really made the march have a far livelier feel than most staid A to B marches I've experienced. Along the way we

snaked by representatives of the local refugee forum, hard hit by cuts, and chanting members of the Occupy Nottingham camp. Both were greeted with cheers. Stationary cars, buses and shoppers also greeted us warmly. The only negative voice I heard was a young cliché shouting, "get a job." At a march full of people with jobs. Oh dear.

The Anarchist federation handed out the below leaflet, which was warmly received, and carried the local banner.

The march finally came to a halt at the Playhouse where the lucky few could listen to the echo chamber of union officials' rhetoric. Judging by the 45 minutes queue in Wetherspoons, the majority of strikers didn't fancy that much.

Workmates I speak to are universally in favour of more strikes with even picket line crossers now willing to take action now they feel they have protection from the union. Someone who has no experience of ever being on strike even expressed the opinion, "why don't we just go on strike till they give up?" a fine postscript that in my brighter moments I hope is an attitude that will spread and find a way of being put into action. REMEMBER: if the union in your workplace has a non disclosure agreement with management (most of them do. and if not, ask them why not) your bosses have no clue who is striking and who is not.

ONE OUT, ALL OUT!

From:

<http://nottsblackarrow.wordpress.com/2011/12/08/you-gotta-fight-for-your-right-to-decent-pensions/>

See also:

<http://glasgowanarchists.wordpress.com/2011/12/01/n30-report-from-glasgow-anarchists/>



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ANARCHIST FEDERATION

The Anarchist Federation is an organisation of class struggle anarchists (based in Britain and Ireland, but with many contacts overseas) which aims to abolish Capitalism and all oppression to create a free and equal society. This is Anarchist Communism.

We see today's society as being divided into two main opposing classes: the ruling class which controls all the power and wealth, and the working class which the rulers exploit to maintain this. By racism, sexism and other forms of oppression, as well as war and environmental destruction the rulers weaken and divide us. Only the direct action of working class people can defeat these attacks and

ultimately overthrow capitalism.

As the capitalist system rules the whole world it's destruction must be complete and world wide. We reject attempts to reform it such as working through parliament and national liberation movements (like the IRA) as they fail to challenge capitalism itself. Unions also work as a part of the capitalist system, so although workers struggle within them, they will be unable to bring about capitalism's destruction unless they go beyond these limits.

Organisation is vital if we're to beat the bosses, so we work for a united anarchist movement and are affiliated to the International of Anarchist Federations.

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