Catalyst

Industrial Freesheet of the Solidarity Federation · International Workers' Association

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Work Until Your End!

Bosses' pay has more than doubled during the past six years while workers wages have remained virtually static. It has been calculated that for every £100 earned by directors in 2000, they now earn £205 after allowing for inflation. But for employees their £100 has climbed to an average of £106.



"It's the new man - he wants to know what the company retirement plan is."

In the City this year bonuses are expected to reach a record £9 billion. At Goldman Sachs alone, about 4,000 high-flying investment bankers are expected to receive £1 million each and those in the top grade are likely to get £10 million each.

Goldman Sachs was the centre of the recent cleaners' fight for better pay. The cleaners, many of whom are paid the £5.35-an-hour minimum wage, occupied one of the bank's most prominent sites in the City waving placards reading "Goldman Sucks".

To rub salt into the wounds the bosses top executives have the option of retiring at 60 and enjoy access to final-salary schemes. These pay a fixed proportion of annual salary as a pension for every year of service seeing top bosses amassing pensions worth £1bn in recent years. On average the final salary pension is worth nearly £3 million each. The largest directors' pension is worth nearly £5 million over 40 times more than most staff pensions.

In contrast these same fat cats have been happy to cut the pensions of their own staff, and have condemned the government for not cutting the pension built up by public servants such as nurses and school meals staff. Still hundreds of thousands of workers have found their workplace final-salary schemes replaced by less lucrative money purchase pensions and are facing the prospect of having to work even longer before they can retire.

IWW Under Attack!

"A number of Solidarity Federation locals have been mobilising to support our comrades in the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in their struggle to defend their members in the US who are facing victimisation and sackings due to their union organising activities.

The list of workers sacked so far for their union activities is:-

Joseph Agins, sacked December 12th 2005
Charles Fostrom sacked July 11th 2006
Evan Winterschiedt sacked July 18th 2006
Daniel Gross sacked August 5th 2006
Isis Saenz fired November 1st 2006

All sackings so far have taken place in New York.

So far SolFed members have been involved in a number of pickets of Starbucks stores and have enjoyed some success in sending potential coffee-drinkers elsewhere! It seems that the principle of never crossing a picket line is not quite dead despite all the years of defeat and ruling class propaganda. The struggle of the IWW's Starbucks Union has inspired action in some fifty cities around the world, including in Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand and of course the US and UK. We hope that SolFed members and others can assist our IWW comrades in winning some breathing space for those trying to take on the harassment and intimidation of this particularly anti-worker multinational. It doesn't take much to hand out some leaflets outside the store and the case is a pretty simple one to argue! See www.starbucksunion.org for further details."

Working For Free!

Workers in this country do an average of seven hours six minutes extra work a week, and should take home an extra £4,800 a year if they were paid the average wage for those unpaid hours.

The response of the TUC since 2005 has been to declare one day in February 'Work Your Proper Hours Day' and on that day calls on employees to use it to remind bosses of their extra unpaid work by taking a proper lunch break and going home on time for this one day a year. Employers should also use the day to say thank you to staff for their unpaid work, perhaps by buying them lunch or an after-work coffee or cocktail.



This sort of spineless approach is typical of the unions that will bend over backwards to ensure that they don't upset the bosses too much. We should be going home on time every day and be campaigning for a shorter working week. Instead we still work the longest hours in Europe, and many workplaces are gripped by a culture of long hours and staying at your desk. Many companies now ask workers to register on to a computer log for a piss break!

The TUC General Secretary, Brendan Barber, someone who went straight from university to student union president to work for the TUC, said, "We do not want to turn Britain into a nation of clock watchers, and few mind putting in extra effort from time to time when it is needed, but it is too easy for extra time to get taken for granted and then expected every week."

Well we've got news for him – some of us do mind that we are being screwed twice over by the bosses. It's time to put a stop to it and for us all to work collectively to make sure that they don't get any more out of us than we can help.

Industrial Unionism?

Is it not time that we stopped fighting our own battles just on our own? Is it time that when one group of workers in an industry take action to defend their conditions that all workers in that industry also take action as well? Because once they have driven down the conditions of one set of workers, they will be coming for the rest!

New Labours' privatisation agenda is costing thousands of jobs up and down the country in the NHS, the Civil service, the Post Office and across the public sector. The major union leaders response to this onslaught is pathetic, small often isolated one day strikes, which put the most minimal pressure on the Government.

What we need is Industrial Unions, were all workers in an industry regardless of grade, position and trade all fight together. As it is only through unity will we be able to push back privatisation.

Solidarity Federation Membership Application

I wish to join the Solidarity Federation. I have enclosed a cheque for £5.00 (made out to 'Solidarity Federation') to cover my initial 3 months of membership. I understand my details will be passed on to the nearest SolFed local who will contact me shortly.

www.solfed.org.uk

Name:
Address:
Post code:
Tel:
E-mail:
Occupation/Union (if any):

Education Workers' Network (EWN), c/o Preston SF ewn@ewn.org.uk lists.riseup.net/www/info/ewn www.ewn.org.uk · **Public Service Workers' Network** (PSWN) c/o Solidarity Bristol · **Birmingham & Northampton SF**, c/o The Blackcurrent Centre, 24 St. Michael's Ave., Northampton NN1 4JQ brumsf@solfed.org.uk northamptonsf@solfed.org.uk · **W Yorks SF**, PO Box 75, Hebden Bridge, West Yorks HX7 8WB · **Manchester SF**, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW 07984675281 manchestersf@solfed.org.uk www.manchestersf.org.uk · **Preston SF**, PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8XF 07707256682 prestonsf@solfed.org.uk · **Edinburgh SF**, 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh EH7 5HA 07896621313 edinburghsf@solfed.org.uk · **N&E London SF**, PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE 07984675281 nelsf@solfed.org.uk · **South Herts SF**, PO Box 493, St. Albans AL1 5TW · **South London SF**, PO Box 17773, London SE8 4WX southlondonsf@solfed.org.uk · **Solidariy Bristol** solidaritybristol@solfed.org.uk · **South West Solidarity** sws@solfed.org.uk

Wont Get Fooled Again?

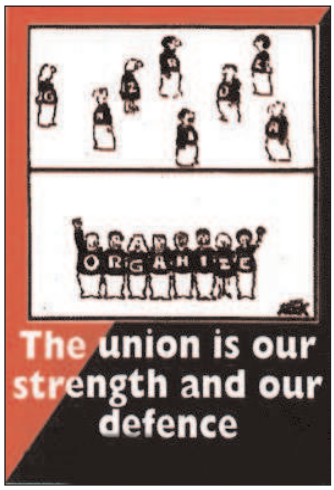
Few can still harbour any illusion about the Labour Party. Hardly any brain cells are required to see that Labour is just a continuation of Thatcher's vicious free market polices glossed over with a touch of caring concern. This says much about the reasoning capacity of boneheaded trade union leaders who still insist on handing over millions of pounds to Labour.



That the Labour Party has finally evolved into the Tory Party will not come as a surprise to anarcho-syndicalists. One of the driving forces which gave birth to our movement, in the early years of the 20th century, was the disillusionment felt by workers with newly elected MPs. In country after country newly franchised (mainly male) workers used their votes to elect socialist and communist party members to office for the first time; only to find that, once in office, their elected representatives were quickly seduced by the trappings of power. In a number of countries they were corrupted to the extent of supporting the use of troops to put down strikes.

The revulsion over this betrayal led to the embryonic revolutionary unions adopting a firm anti-parliamentary line. They rejected electoral politics and took up direct action as the means by which the working class could keep democratic control of their own struggle and confront capitalism directly. Instead of placing their faith in politicians and governments, they sought to build a mass movement that would use boycotts and various forms of strike action as part of the wider struggle against capitalism. The ultimate aim was to launch a social general strike which would be the means of overthrowing capitalism and creating a better world.

The experience of those early workers and the direct action alternative is still relevant today. As Labour transformed themselves into the Tories, numerous socialist parties have stepped in to try and occupy the place once occupied by Labour. We should not be fooled; the whole history of electoral politics, not just here but across the world, is that once in power political parties soon ditch any thoughts of destroying capitalism and become part of the elite ruling over us in the same old way.



The Stuff Your Boss Anti-casualisation campaign

Initially in NW England, centered around workplace conditions, casual and temp work, homeworking, health and safety at work, workplace bullying, as well as issues around Job Seekers Allowance and Incapacity Benefit.

contact: <stuffyourboss@lists.riseup.net>
or http://lists.riseup.net/www/subscribe/stuffyourboss
or write to: SYB, c/o PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester, M15 5HW to be put in touch with activists in your area

Name:

Address:

Post code:

Tel:

E-mail:

Know Your Rights!

One in fifty workers in Britain suffers from work related upper limb disorders (WRULDs) caused by improper use of computers at work. WRULDs, also known as repetitive strain injuries, most frequently occur in the soft tissues of the hands, arms, shoulders and the neck of computer users. Their effects can be devastating forcing people to leave their jobs and condemning them to a life of pain.

WRULDs are avoidable, however, if work stations are properly designed and the correct working practices are in use:

All workstations should be risk assessed by management to ensure they comply with health and safety legislation

People who work for more than an hour a day on computers should also be provided with the correct type of chair, with seat height, back height and tilt adjustability

No one should work longer than 90 minutes on a computer without a 15 minute break or a change of activity, and a 5 minute break should be taken every 30 minutes

.

You should also receive proper training in the use of work stations as well as an eye test on request.

Contact Catalyst for further information.

Catalyst, c/o The Blackcurrent Centre, 24 St. Michael's Ave., Northampton NN1 4JQ e-mail; catalyst@solfed.org.uk

Anarcho-syndicalism

The Solidarity Federation seeks to create a militant opposition to the bosses and the state, controlled by the workers themselves. Its strategy can apply equally to those in the official trade unions who wish to organise independently of the union bureaucracy and those who wish to set up other types of self-organisation.

Rank and File Control. Decisions should be made collectively. This means they are made by mass meetings, not by officials in union offices. These mass meetings include all those in the workplace, regardless of union membership. It will not, however, include scabs or managers. Anyone we elect to negotiate with management should have a mandate from the workforce that gives them clear guidance on what is and is not acceptable. Mass meetings of workers need to be able to recall all delegates.

Direct Action at work means strikes, go-slows, working-to-rule, occupations and boycotts. We are opposed to the alternative which is 'partnership' with bosses. Workers can only win serious concessions from management when industrial action is used or when bosses fear it might be.

Solidarity with other workers is the key to victory. Workers should support each others' disputes despite the anti-trade union laws. We need to approach other workers directly for their support. 'Don't Cross Picket Lines!'

Control of Funds. Strike funds need to be controlled by the workers themselves. Officials will refuse to fund unlawful solidarity action. Union bureaucrats use official backing and strike pay to turn action on and off like a tap. Unions use a large proportion of their political funds on sponsoring parliamentary candidates. Backing the Labour Party is not in the interests of workers. We should also not fall into the trap of backing so-called 'socialist' candidates. The Parliamentary system is about working class people giving up power and control, not exercising it.

Social Change. The interests of the working class lie in the destruction of capitalist society. The whole of the wealth of society is produced by the workers. However, a portion of this is converted into profits for those who own the means of production. When workers make wage demands, they are simply trying to win a bigger share of what is rightfully their own.

Our ultimate aim is a self-managed, stateless society based on the principle of from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs. It is a society where we are no longer just used as a means to an end by bosses wanting to make money from our labour.

We welcome comments and contributions, contact us at: Catalyst, c/o The Blackcurrent Centre, 24 St. Michael's Ave., Northampton NN1 4JQ e-mail; catalyst@solfed.org.uk

When We Fight Back!

Older readers may remember those far off days of the 1970s when attacking greedy militant trade unionist was all the rage. A rain forest's worth of print was produced arguing that organised workers were grabbing all the wealth, causing economic havoc and creating a more unequal Britain. The low paid, less well organised workers, were supposedly left behind in the wage race by their unionised brothers and sisters.

Well the demon of the wildcat strikes has been tamed and as a result so has trade union power. Surley now without all those greedy trade unionists Britain has become a more equal place. Not quite, in fact just the opposite. In the last 30 years Britain has become a far more unequal place to live. In 1934 13% of the national income was owned by the richest 1%. By the 1970s this had dropped to just 4%. The Thatcher years saw it rise again 11% and under Blair we are back to the 1930's levels. Their share of the country's wealth has also shot up. In the 1970s the richest 1% owned 17% of the country's total wealth; by 2002 this had risen to 23%. During the same period the bottom 50% of the population's share of wealth dropped to just 6%. After 30 years free of mindless militancy the richest 10% now earns more than the total income of the bottom 50% of the population.

At the other end of the scale the poorest 10% of the population have faired even worse in our strike-free paradise. Under Thatcher their earnings fell by 8% in real terms. Under Labour their lot has hardly improved and in both 2002 and 2003, the disposable income of the bottom 10% fell. This at a time when some 75,000 people now own 50% of Britain's total liquid assists, with their earnings actually increasing by 66% in the last five years. In the last nine years the richest 1000 people have seen their wealth increase from £99 billion to £301billion. While in the strike ridden 1970s a top executive earned 25 times more than the average worker, they currently earn 120 times more or around £46,000 a week.

Yet surprise, surprise we hear little about the greedy rich and growing inequality from the politicians and media. It seems that for ordinary workers to strive for a living wage in the 1970s was greedy, it wrecked the economy and somehow caused greater inequality. While in 2007 the super rich ripping off an ever larger proportion of the country's wealth helps the economy by attracting the right people to the top jobs. This mysteriously leads to greater equality, due to some magical process no one can explain, under which the fortunes earned by the rich somehow trickles down through society enriching the needy poor.

The truth is that under the post war system of free collective bargaining workers were able to begin to challenge both the power and the earning of the rich ensuring that the earnings of all sectors, including the low paid, increased in real terms. That is the real reason why militant workers were so despised for much of the post war period because they challenged the power of capitalism to make money.

We should learn the lesson well; we cannot trust the state or politicians to defend workers rights because they will always side with capitalism. Our only defence is workers collective power, based on self organisation and direct action. It is only through our collective strength can begin to challenge growing inequality and rid the world of the evil that is capitalism and replace it with a better world based on common ownership and workers democratic control.

Cut out and send to your union HQ

POLITICAL FUND EXEMPTION NOTICE

I hereby give notice that I object to contributing to the Political Fund of the union and am in consequence exempt, in the manner provided by Chapter 6 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (consolidation) Act 1992, from contributing to that fund.

Name:	
Address:	
Union:	Branch:
Membership No:	Payroll No:
Signature:	Date: