



## Save our NHS?

**WE MUST FIGHT health cuts, critically: the NHS - never 'ours', is far from perfect. Set up after the Second World War to ensure healthy workers (to fight the bosses wars, slave for their profits, do vital but unpaid childcare and housework).**

Illness is treated individually, but ill health is mostly caused by economic and social conditions we experience *collectively*: dangerous workplaces, overlong hours, factory and car pollution, poor food, unhealthy housing, lack of trees and green spaces, plus racism and sexism for many. In the 1960s and 70s women fought against inequality and dehumanising treatment. They won improvements, e.g. improved contraception, but a community health service remains distant.

The Tories health cuts continue with closures of hospitals, casualty departments, rationing of services by age, cuts to services for the disabled, to underpaid and overworked staff etc. Running healthcare for profit is contradictory (treatment based on ability to pay, not



need), and only benefits the 'haves' who can always pay, and the drug companies and other corporate cultures who are cannibalising the health service (e.g. Virgin, given nearly £2 billion of contracts since 2013). *We don't want 'Choice': we need local services, all both accessible and good.*

### NHS Crisis:

#### Who is to blame?

What is causing the NHS

crisis (and) 'lack of money'? Bed-blocking by old people? Obesity, smoking and alcohol abuse amongst the poor? Migrant workers and health tourists? The rising cost of the NHS, due to an ageing population, making it 'no longer affordable'?

### NONE OF THE ABOVE!

The Tories' policies are privatisation-by-stealth. All the parties are responsible

*Continued on back page*

### INSIDE

- Universal Credit
- Poverty of Student Unions
- Practical Internationalism
- Industrial Notes
- Resisting the Market
- ACG Dayschool

**"Running healthcare for profit only benefits the 'haves' who can always pay and the drug companies and other cultures who are cannibalising the health service"**



## Welcome to *Jackdaw* issue 3

*Jackdaw* is the bulletin of the Anarchist Communist Group, which we aim to publish quarterly. Copies can be found in various radical bookshops and social centres or are handed out

at meetings, demos or street distributions.

If you missed issues 1 and 2, you can download these from our website as pdf documents.



**“the class struggle at work (and for that matter elsewhere) hasn’t vanished. Class society still exists and workers are still exploited and are still resisting”**

## Workplace Notes

THE LAST FOUR decades have seen a big drop in workplace strikes as well as a drop in membership of the mainstream trade unions. An International Labour Organisation report showed that strike action across 38 countries had dropped by 80% between the 1970s and the 2000s. The European Trade union Institute also reported that the 15 core countries of the European Union had seen a 40% fall in strikes between the 1990s and the 2000s. In the UK the number of working days lost to strikes had hit an historic low in 2017.

In spite of this, the class struggle at work (and for that matter elsewhere) hasn’t vanished. Class society still exists and workers are still exploited and are still resisting. This is being done in a number of different ways, sometimes through the mainstream unions, sometimes through the



*CAIWU pickets*

newly emerging “grassroots” unions, the Industrial Workers off the World (IWW), the United Voices of the World (UVW), the Independent Workers of Great Britain (IWGB), the Cleaning And Allied Independent Workers Union (CAIWU), and sometimes outside any of these structures in wildcat strikes.

We’ve seen this in the strikes in Amazon warehouses, in Britain, the USA and Germany. We’ve seen it in the struggles of couriers and food delivery workers in fact among workers regarded as being unable to be organised because of the nature of their jobs as with Deliveroo and Uber Eats. An important development has been the joint initiative of the Angry Workers of the World and the IWW in West London among workers in food preparation plants. Other strikes have taken place at McDonalds and TGI Fridays. There are also glimmers of organisation among workers in the video-games industry. This year saw a four week strike over pensions of university lecturers and support staff organised within the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU). There was a big revolt among UCU members following the union leadership agreeing to a deri-

sory offer from management. A revolt took place at UCU conference, and a newly assertive rank and file came up against the union bureaucrats, resulting in a motion calling for the resignation of the UCU General secretary Sally Hunt.

More recently migrant workers working as cleaners outsourced by Kensington and Chelsea Council went out on 3 days of strikes in August. These workers organised in the UVW are demanding the London Living Wage and decent sick pay. Another group of cleaners in the UVW at the Ministry of Justice also simultaneously organised strikes on the same 3 days at the same time over similar concerns. At the Ministry of Justice the cleaners inspired MOJ security staff who joined UVW en masse.

Home care workers for Birmingham Council also went out on a 3 day strike in August against plans by the council to slash their hours. Oil rig workers off the coast of Scotland also struck for two days after changes to their working rotas. Crane manufacturing workers in Sunderland also went out on a 2 day strike over dissatisfaction at a pay offer from the employers Liebherr.

Also see [notesfrombelow.org/article/the-worker-and-the-union](https://notesfrombelow.org/article/the-worker-and-the-union)

# Universal Credit?

## Universal Household Debt

THERE ARE NOW 870,000 claimants for Universal Credit, the Government's new flagship welfare scheme. By the end of 2018 the plan is for every area of England to be covered by this digitally based welfare service that rolls six different job-related benefits into one. It's expected that 5.7 million households will be claiming Universal Credit by 2023. This includes the transfer of more than 2 million recipients of Employment Support Allowance (ESA), so there's a very long way to go.

Yet even at this early stage of the programme, and after six years of trials and pilots with relatively simple claims, the badly-designed scheme is creaking and swaying. It's working class households, the poor, the disabled and the low-paid who are already paying the cost of this failure.

As predicted by welfare rights activists, demands on food banks have increased four-fold in areas where Universal Credit has been fully rolled-out. The scheme's IT system can't cope with even current levels of demand, leading to unnecessary miscalculations and delays. Rent arrears have soared due to claimants being forced to wait five weeks or more for payments. Forty per cent of UC claimants are in arrears, the majority for the first time in their lives. Private landlords are refusing to accept UC claimants as tenants.

Some people put this disaster down to wide-scale managerial incompetence. We say it is a deliberate politically driven attempt to punish and criminalise the working poor. Through so-called austerity programmes we are being made to pay for the international crisis in banking finance that surfaced in 2008 and will re-appear yet again.

### Reckless gambling

The Government had to print an extra £505 billion in "quantitative easing" to save its lords and masters in corporate finance from the effects of their reckless gambling. Not a single banker has been prosecuted for the 2008 crisis. Most of the extra public money printed has simply led to massive increases in house prices, rents, and the value of shares. Very little has found its way into new jobs and or even a modest rise in average wages. In the last ten years the UK has seen the longest period of declining real incomes in recorded economic history, which is back to the end of the Napoleonic Wars. In contrast, the amount of bonuses paid out in the UK finance sector last year was over £15 billion.

As well as claimants themselves, other people are starting to take notice. There's the possibility of change and resistance in the air. Stories are appearing in the local and national press virtually every day about



Universal Credit and its iniquities. A House of Commons Select Committee is desperately trying to shore up the scheme. In response to numerous court cases the DWP is on the back foot, forced to repay some claimants and moderate the rules for others. Groups of claimants and their friends are banding together locally to help one another and publicise the scheme's failures. Unite the Union and a number of DWP staff have followed the lead of Disabled People Against the Cuts and are calling for Universal Credit to be scrapped.

The Government can find (i.e. order the Bank of England to print) £5.5 billion to save a few banks. That's more than £9,000 for every woman, man and child in Britain. Clearly, the government has no interest in scrapping Universal Credit and wiping out record levels of household debt instead, not unless they are forced to do this.

**Scrap Universal Credit!  
Wipe out household debt!**

**"In the last ten years the UK has seen the longest period of declining real incomes in recorded economic history, which is back to the end of the Napoleonic Wars"**

# The Poverty of

**“Schools don’t exist to educate people and teach them how to think independently but to indoctrinate and create obedient workers”**

**INSTITUTIONS EXIST TO do the exact opposite of their stated aims. The police force don’t exist to protect you and stop crime, but instead to keep you in line and to facilitate a unilateral class war.**

Schools don’t exist to educate people and teach them how to think independently, but rather to indoctrinate and create obedient workers.

Governments don’t exist to enact the political will of the people but to frustrate it.

The same is true of student unions. A few months back, there was a wave of student activism, with hundreds of students across the country occupying in solidarity with academics whose pensions were being obliterated. These actions, and many others like them, are great. They lead to the radicalisation of those involved and widen the terms of political debate on campuses - for example Leicester University’s student occupation was calling for senior leaders of

the University to be elected rather than appointed.

But this isn’t the first time we have seen this happen. Every now and then the student movement starts to take actions, these actions start to gain speed, but then suddenly die out. When I was at university the government was passing legislation to treble tuition fees, and students attacked the buildings of political parties in London and made a move on parliament, but then these movements died out.

They died out for several reasons, but one of them is because students engaged with their Students’ unions. SU’s are neither unions, nor are they made up of students. In fact, they have a fundamentally different set of motivations and priorities to the ‘student movement’ and student body which they claim to represent.

Student unions are a problem in a series of different ways. First of all, they direct the energies of some of the most active students (and also some of the most

despicable) into electioneering. A handful of students each year become paid elected representatives of the student body. These students are led to believe that once elected they will be the recognised legitimate voice of students (they won’t and they aren’t) and that they will be in control of the Student Union and its institutional power (they won’t be and it doesn’t have any). This wouldn’t be a problem in and of itself, if it wasn’t for that fact that the process of gaining and maintaining elected office takes a number of students who could be challenging pre-existing figures of authority, and leads them to imitate them instead.

The second way in which student unions are a problem is that they claim to be the legitimate voice of students. How can a handful of elected students represent an entire student body? And would they if they could?

## Consulted to death

Student unions can claim to make representative decisions without ever consulting the student body, or they can consult it to death. What should the graduate office be called? How many representative roles should a student be able to undertake at one time? Should we change article 7 of the code of conducts for international vol-



*No chance of that happening with the student union*

# Student Unions



unteers working in Sainsbury? As a result, students disengage.

In these ways, the student union becomes a proxy for student opinion that can be slapped on to decisions as a method of legitimisation, often without a single student being meaningfully involved. This, in turn, kills any radicalism within the student movement because it's hard to campaign against a decision which your representative body has already legitimised - and it's impossible to make meaningful change at your institution if you have to formally change the position of your SU before even starting on the university.

And a final problem with student unions is that they last a long time. SU's have a separate set of institutional interests to the student body as a whole, as SU's receive large sums of (originally student) money from the university, and are dependent on the university allowing them access to key personnel and meetings to make change. Therefore SU's will always delay challenging the university in the hope of maintaining relationships with the university so change can be made at some later (unspecified) date, and the large number of SU staff (full time paid people who aren't students) can continue to

pull their salaries in the meantime. Most students are at university for three years, but SUs put off challenging the university indefinitely.

What does all this mean for the student movement? For individual students it means avoid SU's like the plague and be aware that they replicate and perpetuate power structures that exist across society as a whole.

For the student movement, it must be realised that reforming student unions is a pipe dream and that any meaningful actions will have to be protected from the student union.

**“the student union becomes a proxy for student opinion that can be slapped onto decisions as a method of legitimisation, often without a single student being meaningfully involved”**

## Practical Internationalism:

from the mines around the world to the corporate power centres of London

Low wages and appalling working conditions, environmental destruction, corporate greed - all these are components of the mining and extractive industries.

We have seen the treatment of miners in this country and also the problem with extracting fossil fuels when we desperately need to deal with climate change. Fracking is currently one of the main battlefields. However, the worst of the mining industry is seen abroad, in the global south, as companies benefit from the colonial legacy. Mining is spread to even the remotest parts of the globe, completely destroying the environment and cultures of indigenous peoples.

### Extreme violence

It is not just the mines but it is also the processing stages that pose problems. Communities in Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu have been fighting the expansion of Sterlite's copper smelter which is already causing toxic air and water pollution. However, the company has reacted to peaceful protests with extreme violence. Pro-

tests have been going on for months but the reaction of the company and the State has been extreme violence with many arrests. In May thirteen people were killed by the police during a protest. On Wednesday 23 May, a day after the massacre, a large and noisy protest dominated by traditional Parai drummers was held at the India High Commission in London. Protesters called on the British government to launch an inquiry into the multiple legal, environmental and human rights violations by Vedanta Resources, the parent company of Sterlite, and consider de-listing the company from the London Stock Exchange.

Vedanta Resources is one of the worst examples of global resource and extraction companies with a history of human rights and environmental abuses. Their owner is Anglo-Indian and based in London. They have mining interests all over the world and everywhere they go there are problems and protest movements develop.

They came into the news

a few years ago with their attempt to mine bauxite from the sacred mountain of the Dongria in Odisha state, eastern India. Thanks to a concerted campaign with international support, Vedanta backed down ([www.survivalinternational.org/tribes/dongria](http://www.survivalinternational.org/tribes/dongria)). Recently, Zambian farmers have organised resistance against the pollution caused by copper mining. They are aiming to sue Vedanta and managed to win the right to do so after Vedanta tried to stop them in the courts in London.

All over the world resource industry workers and local communities are struggling against the companies that are providing the minerals for our way of life, eg mobile phones and all other electronic devices. The aim as always is to maximise profits at the expense of people and the environment.

### Not alone

However, those who are directly battling these companies are not alone. It is possible to organise practical solidarity for these resistance movements. Companies like Vedanta often have headquarters in London and are registered on the London Stock exchange. The London Mining Network was set up to take advantage of this in order to support anti-mining movements around the world.

See box on the left for info on the London Mining Network and Vedanta.

From the website of London Mining network:

"London Mining Network works in support of communities around the world who are badly affected by mining – mining by companies based in, or financed from, London. Mining is one of the most polluting industries in the world. It is linked with conflict and human rights abuses. Most of the world's biggest mining companies, and many smaller mining companies, are listed on the London Stock Exchange, and on its Alternative Investment Market (AIM)."

Since the protests against Vedanta and calls for the company's delisting, Vedanta has delisted itself. Whatever the implications of this it is vital that we continue to show solidarity to those who struggle around the world against the extraction industry as well as fighting in this country against fracking.

For more information on struggles against Vedanta see: [www.foilvedanta.org](http://www.foilvedanta.org)



# LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISM 2018

ACG Dayschool - Advancing the Class Struggle

Saturday 3 November, the Mayday Rooms, 88 Fleet St London EC4Y 1DH

Workshops on...

- the NHS
- What is effective organisation?
- Neither Party nor Network

All those interested in the ideas of libertarian communism are welcome



*"There are periods in the life of human society when revolution becomes an imperative necessity, when it proclaims itself as inevitable. New ideas germinate everywhere, seeking to force their way into the light, to find an application in life.*

*"We are profoundly convinced that no revolution is possible if the need for it is not felt among the people themselves. No handful of individuals, however energetic and talented, can arouse a popular insurrection if the people themselves through their best representatives do not come to the realization that they have no other way out of the situation they are dissatisfied with except insurrection."*

*Kropotkin*

**Austerity and poverty, attacks on wages and working conditions, unaffordable housing, war and nationalism, the rise of right-wing populism and increase in racism, climate change - all things to make us feel that the situation is hopeless and that all we can do is make feeble efforts to resist. However, we believe, as Kropotkin says, that real change is possible and may come when it is most unexpected. So what can we do to bring this moment closer? We will discuss this question in the context of actual struggles going on in Britain today.**

More info from [www.anarchistcommunism.org](http://www.anarchistcommunism.org)

## UCU "Resisting the Market" conference

October 13th will see a national conference 'Resisting the Market' hosted by the London Region University and College Union (UCU) involving a number of networks and groups in the UCU including the UCU Transformed, the Branch Solidarity Network and the UCU Left group. Other than the latter, which is a long standing leftist caucus, these grassroots networks are a product of the fight against changes to the University Superannuation Scheme (USS) which took place earlier this year. This fight, which the UCU leadership did everything to contain, saw an outpouring of activity at a Branch level unseen for many years as academic and professional UCU members took initiatives and linked up through unofficial networks, generally bypassing the official union structures. The level of engagement took not only the

union's leadership but also local branches by surprise. In part this was because previous industrial action called by the UCU had been so pathetic and demoralising. The enthusiasm and imagination shown was unprecedented, with some UCU Branches inviting other unions and students to join their strike committees and a conscious reaching out in some areas to grassroots unions such as the United Voices of the World in London and the Scottish Couriers Network in Glasgow. However, whilst all this was encouraging and led to a resounding rejection of a contemptuous 'deal' pushed in the middle of the strike, the reality was that the struggle was not extended to include even some workers with USS but in other unions and the impact was not maximised. The offer from the employers to set-up a Joint Expert Panel (JEP)

which will look at 2017 evaluation of the pension scheme was accepted by the membership but only postpones the inevitable Round Two of this fight.

And the need for organisation for that fight is what the national conference is, in part, what needs to be developing. Ultimately, it will require the rank and file to self-organise the struggle, to strengthen and develop the networks of resistance and take control. Simply replacing the leadership, which has been the main focus of the left in the past, is not enough. Time and energy wasted trying to 'reform' the union will be better spent trying to build an autonomous and independent rank and file movement which goes beyond the UCU and encourages all University workers regardless of grade, role or status to resist the attacks of the employers.





**ANARCHIST COMMUNIST GROUP**  
75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester LE1 1WB

info@anarchistcommunism.org

[www.anarchistcommunism.org](http://www.anarchistcommunism.org)

### UPCOMING EVENTS

*ACG groups meet regularly. See the events page on our website for more details or get in touch directly with your nearest local group.*

**14&15/9/18 Dublin Anarchist Bookfair**

More info from [www.wsm.ie/bookfair](http://www.wsm.ie/bookfair)

**15/9/18 Swindon Radical Bookfair,**

Central Community Centre, Emlyn Sq. 1-5pm

**13/10/18 Swansea Radical Bookfair**

More info at [www.facebook.com/Rhyddical/](http://www.facebook.com/Rhyddical/)

**3/11/18 Libertarian Communism 2018**

ACG Dayschool, London. See page 7 for info.

**17/11/18 Nottingham Radical Bookfair**

11-4 at Nottingham Mechanics Institute

**1/12/18 Manchester & Salford**

**Anarchist Bookfair** - for info see

[www.facebook.com/anarchistbookfair](http://www.facebook.com/anarchistbookfair)



### WHO WE ARE...

The Anarchist Communist Group (ACG) is a revolutionary anarchist communist organisation made up of local groups and individuals who seek a complete transformation of society, and the creation of anarchist communism.

This will mean the working class overthrowing capitalism, abolishing the State, getting rid of exploitation, hierarchies and oppressions, and halting the destruction of the environment. To contribute to the building of a revolutionary anarchist movement we believe it is important to be organised.

We are committed to building an effective national and international organisation that has a collective identity and works towards the common goal of anarchist communism, whilst at the same time working together with other working class organisations and in grass roots campaigns.

We do not see ourselves as the leaders of a revolutionary movement but part of a wider movement for revolutionary change. In addition, we strive to base all our current actions on the principles that will be the basis of the future society: mutual aid, solidarity, collective responsibility, individual freedom and autonomy, free association and federalism.

If you are considering joining the ACG, then to see where we are coming from in terms of ideas and politics, we suggest you look first at our **Aims & Principles** on our website [www.anarchistcommunism.org](http://www.anarchistcommunism.org)

Then if you think the ACG is politically the right place for you, simply drop us a line at [info@anarchistcommunism.org](mailto:info@anarchistcommunism.org) or write to the postal address at the top left of this page.

## Save our NHS?

*Continued from front page*

however: the Lib-Dems (in Coalition government). New Labour used the PFI (Private Finance Initiative) to build schools, hospitals etc with mortgage finance from the private sector (banks etc) who leased them back at a much higher cost (40% more). Old hospitals were closed, cutting bed numbers. Labour also introduced 'the internal market' and Foundation Trusts into the Health Service. *The NHS was left with debts of £81.6 billion, these with cuts, are the cause of the crisis.*

### Powerless and divided?

We need to stop cuts, and to create a community health service.

How we do this is crucial: using the old tired methods (petitions, trade unions, political parties etc), we will lose, and remain powerless and divided. We need methods and organisation that empower us: to organise ourselves, without leaders; and use direct action: occupations, work-ins, strikes, work to rule etc.

To break down the barriers between staff and patients (e.g. ignoring prohibition of joint protests), carers and service-users, workers and unemployed, to link our struggles. We can empower ourselves through self-education in groups e.g. about our bodies and health, as in the Womens' Movement; through communities tackling the causes of ill health collectively e.g. fighting fracking plans; growing and/buying healthier food

together in allotments and co-ops, etc.

### What do we want?

A free health service controlled and run by the staff and users together.

Pie-in-the-sky? No, we learn from struggles here and abroad. In Greece, massive health cuts have resulted in healthworkers running hospitals and clinics etc for free, with the support of their local communities.



*Occupied hospital, Athens*