

# Our alternative: resist the capitalist regime!



As the government rains attack after attack on our living standards – whether through cuts in health, education, benefits and local services, through redundancies in both the private and public sector, through tuition fee increases or the abolition of EMA, or through the steadily rising price of basic necessities – the TUC has for months now been telling us to fix our gaze on the Big Demo on the 26<sup>th</sup> March. The bosses of the trade unions have argued that a very large turn-out on the day will send a clear message to the Lib-Con government, which will start carrying out its spending review at the beginning of April, involving even more savage cuts than the ones we have seen already. It will show that more and more working and unemployed people, students and pensioners, in short, a growing part of the working class, are opposed to the government's programme of cuts and are looking for an "alternative".

And there's no doubt that people are increasingly fed up with the argument that we have no choice but to submit to the blind laws of a crisis-torn economic system. No choice but to accept the tough medicine that the politicians assure us will, at some point in the future, make everything all right again. There's also no doubt that a growing number of people are not content to sit at home and moan about it, but want to go out on the street, encounter others who feel the same way, and form themselves into a force that can make the powerful of the world take notice. This is what was so inspiring about the unruly student demonstrations and occupations in the UK at the end of last year; this is why the enormous revolts that are spreading throughout North Africa and the Middle East are such a hopeful sign.

But if these movements tell us anything, it's that effective action, action that can actually force the ruling powers to back down and make concessions, doesn't come about when people tamely follow the orders of professional 'opposition' leaders, whether people like El Baradei and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt or the TUC and the Labour Party in the UK. It comes about when people begin to act and think for themselves, on a massive scale – like the huge crowds who began to organise themselves in Tahrir Square, like the tens of thousands of Egyptian workers who spontaneously came out on strike to raise their own demands, like the students here who found new and inventive ways of countering police repression, like the school kids who joined the student movement without waiting for an endless round of union ballots.....

The TUC and the Labour Party, as well as the numerous 'left wing' groups who act as their scouts, are there to keep protest and rebellion inside limits that are acceptable to the status quo. The TUC didn't say very much in the period from 1997 to 2010 while its Labour friends launched a vast array attacks on workers' living standards, attacks that the pres-

ent government is just continuing and accelerating. That's because the social situation was different – there was less danger that people would resist. Now that this danger is growing, the 'official' opposition is stepping in with its expertise in controlling mass movements and keeping them respectable. The trade unions do this on a daily basis by handcuffing workers to the legal rigmarole of balloting and the avoidance of 'secondary' action. And now, with March 26, they are doing it on a national scale: one big march from A to B, and we can all go home. And during the march itself the TUC will be working directly with Scotland Yard to ensure that the day goes entirely to their jointly agreed plans.

True, some of the more radical trade unions and political groups call for more than a one-off march: they want the TUC to 'coordinate strike action', even call a 'general strike'. But these approaches just reinforce the idea that the best we can hope for is to get the official opposition to act more effectively on our behalf, rather than organising and spreading the struggle ourselves.

If there is to be a real opposition to the ruling class and its assault on our lives, it's not going to be content with one big demo: it has to be part of a much wider movement of strikes, occupations, demonstrations and other actions, controlled directly through mass meetings and willing to defy laws aimed at rendering resistance passive and divided.

And when we are taking part in demonstrations, whether local rallies or big national marches, let's use them to make links between different centres of resistance, different sectors of the working class. Let's organise our own street meetings where instead of listening to celebrity speakers we can freely exchange experiences from our own struggles and prepare for the battles of the future. Let all those who stand for independent, self-organised workers' struggles use them as an opportunity to meet up and decide on how to connect to wider numbers of their class.

And let's also use such occasions to challenge not only the deadening methods advocated by the official opposition, but also the false perspective they offer us for the future. The TUC 'alternative' of 'jobs, growth, justice', for example, is completely misleading: this system is in an irreversible crisis and can't guarantee anyone's job; even if was possible without vast increases in state debt, capitalist growth can only be based on increasing workers' exploitation and further despoiling the environment; and a society based on the exploitation of one class by another can never achieve justice. In sum: inside of capitalism, there is no 'alternative' except increasing austerity and barbarism. The only real alternative is to fight against this regime of capitalism and in doing so prepare the ground for a total transformation of society. **WR 5/3/11**

