Osborne’s Waterloo!

By Graham Durham, Brent Central CLP, Unite the Union shop steward and Editor Socialist Labour

The rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate, God made them high and lowly, and ordered their estate

THE TORIES SEEK to create a Britain that resembles the Christian hymn, except all things are anything but bright and beautiful. Everywhere in Europe and across the world an underclass on low wages, uncertain hours and diminished benefits is being created in a desperate neo-liberal attempt to drive down wages and increase the falling rate of profits in a flagging late capitalist economy.

The sight of Lord Lloyd-Webber jetting back to hit the working poor, of the Bishop of Chester reconciling his Christianity with voting with the Tories and of that treacherous Blairite, Derry Irvine, being the only Labour peer to join the class enemy was truly illuminating for many.

The defeat for Osborne on tax credits was heartening and attributable to the strong lead given on this issue by Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell. Ignoring the so-called constitutional issue, Labour put the needs of workers first and suddenly even the Tory media are waking up to the challenge Labour as an anti-austerity party.

Elsewhere in Socialist Labour No. 2 we examine Corbynomics with a critical eye asking if it can create a true alternative to the world crisis of capitalism. On this page we explore how the defiance in the House of Lords, led by Labour, despite Tory cries of illegality can be extended.

The truth is that Labour cannot just wait five years for a Parliamentary majority, we must take action now to build a movement to force the Tories out much quicker. The closure of the steel mills in Redcar and elsewhere shows that international corporations have no interest in workers lives as they chase profit and the inaction of the Tories drives this home.

The news that the Fire Brigades Union has a re-call conference to consider reaffiliating to Labour and the sight of leading militants and socialists in the RMT and other unions rejoining Labour is a sign of a renewed class confidence and rebuilding of our movement. Socialist Labour believes every socialist and militant should be in the Labour Party and we call for the various parties of the left to disband, stop standing against Labour, and fight for their politics in the mass party of workers, the Labour Party.

Important as voter registration is, and Socialist Labour supporters have been out on the streets registering, what is really needed is a local force of socialists and trade unionists to fight evictions, protest privatisation and support direct action by trade unionists and community to make cuts unachievable. Many heroic struggles have already occurred; we must build local networks of support.

Momentum launched by the Corbyn election team is probably the best opportunity to achieve this. Although it is not a democratic organisation, local groups must welcome everyone and insist on common democratic decision making in supporting local and national campaigns. Against cuts and privatisation.

Building on the defeat of Osborne on tax credits we must defy the law where necessary. Just as it was defiance of Thatcher on the poll tax and local council cuts that forced her out, so we must demand that our trade union leaders take a lead in calling strikes together, for example, against the Trade Union Bill.

Our class is rebuilding its confidence at a desperately crucial moment in history, we must all do everything we can to build direct opposition to Tory cuts.

Scotland Says No to Trident!

Both the SNP and Scottish Labour will now oppose the renewal of Trident!

Socialist Labour No.3 will be an internationalist issue for upcoming events like the Stop Trident national demonstration, Saturday 20 February 2016, London.

The Scottish Labour party voted by 70% to scrap Trident on 31 October. Labour now holds different positions north and south of the border. Scottish leader Kezia Dugdale differs on defence but pledged to restore tax credits in Scotland. Both are victories for Corbyn who said: “Scottish Labour Party members have spoken. That will now feed into the wider UK Labour debate and review of defence policy.”
No bombing of Syria!

THE INFAMOUS INTERVIEW a few weeks after 9/11 with General Wesley Clark, Supreme Allied Command-

er of NATO during the 1999 war on Yugoslavia, says:

“I just got this down from upstairs”. meaning the Secretary of Defense’s office - “today. This is a memo that describes how we’re going to take out seven countries in five years, starting with Iraq, and then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, South Africa, and finally the US”. A bit of slippage in time and targets, but clearly that is still the US strategy. Syria surpassed Afghanistan in 2014 as the major source of refugees. Some 11 million are internally displaced, 4 million have fled the country and 10 of them since the start of the war in early 2011. Socialists must oppose the US and EU bombing of Syria and Iraq and they must oppose their proxies, the Free Syrian Army, the al Qaeda affiliated al Nusra Front and the Islamic State (IS, Isis) supplied via Jordan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, etc. The notion that the Southern Front, supplied via Amman and Riyadh, is leading a “democratic! revolution” is beyond ridicule.

If US/ISIS thieves have fallen out now it is because ISIS ventured into the Iraqi oilfields controlled by the Israeli/ US stooge, the Iraqi Kurd leader Barzani, and because there is huge revulsion in the US and EU at the US/NATO behavior should not matter. The US/NATO’s support for the general genocidal strategy of the Syrian rebels in pursuit of a Caliphate or an Islamic state ruled by sharia law.

The US merely wants to clip the wings of ISIS as demonstrated by their support for Turkey’s bombing of the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG) in northern Syria, by far the most effective opponents of the ISIS, the ineffectiveness of their 18 month-long bombing of ISIS and the effectiveness of the Russian bombing after a few weeks. Regime change in Syria is still their goal. Robert Fisk, writing in The Independent on 4 October, exposes some mass media hypocracy of the Balfour declaration’s “American officials claim that the Syrian army does not fight ISIS. If true, who on earth killed the 56,000 Syrian soldiers who have so far died in the Syrian war? The preposterous Free Syrian Army (FSA)? This rubbish has reached its cre-

scendo in the on-again off-again saga of the Syrian “moderates”. These men were originally military defectors to the FSA, which America and European countries regarded as a “moderate” western force to be used against the Syrian government army. But the FSA fell to pieces, corrupted, and the “moderates” defected all over again, this time to the Islamist Nusra Front or its… ISIS. A few days ago, a White House spokesman even said “moderate forces” drives moderate elements… into the hands of extremists”. Who’s writing this fiction? “Moderate elements” indeed…”

Turkish general election and the Kurds

The 1920 punitive Treaty of Sèvres recognised a Kurdish state but totally humiliated Turkey (“revenge for Gallipoi-

li”). The 1923 Treaty of Lausanne recognised a viable Turkish state following Atatürk’s victorious secular but brutally anti-Muslim War of Independence but denied the Kurds a state and state. Socialists support Kurdish right to self-determination; at almost 30 million they are the largest nation in the planet without a state. Socialist should oppose the bombing of ISIS in Syria or Iraq but if the Kurds take advantage of that to defend Kobane and other territories that are a legitimate part of a real Kurdish nation we will not object.

But Iraqi Kurdish leader Barzani and his Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) are puppets of Israel and the US, they collaborated with Turkey against the Turkish Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and their allies in the civil war. Under the mid-1990’s KoNoLo, Kurds make up some 20% of Turkey’s population.

The Syrian allies of the PKK, the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and their militias, the YPG, are the best fighters and the dominant forces on the ground in Syrian Kurdistan. Other militias are not allowed in their territory and so they have been using numerically cleansed civilians. Between late 2014 and June 2015 the YPG advanced westward along the Turkish border beyond Kobane to the Euphrates river with the assistance of both the US and Assad!

However on 20 July 33 Socialist Youth Federation members on their way to rebuild Kobane were massacred in Suruç by what many suspect was a joint ISIS/Turkish deep state operation. The Turkish government had just ended the ceasefire with the PKK and begun a bombing campaign against both ISIS and the PKK. In fact it bombed ISIS only a few token times while launched hun-

dreds of strikes on the PKK in exile in Iraq and on the YPG in Syria. Less than a week later Isis massed upwards of 200 in Kobane in the most barbaric manner.

On 24 October Erdogan said Turkey would not let the Kurds “entirely” seize northern Syria. On the 25th Turkey fired on the YPG across the border. Prime Minister Davutoglu said, “the PYD will not go west of the Euphra-

tes and we hit it the moment it did”. Turkey is protecting the last crossing point for arms and international jihadist fighters including Chechens at Jarabulus. On 1 Jan, a truck was stopped on route to Syria by the police but about 15 members of the National Intelligence Organiza-

tion (MIT) prevented a search on the grounds that the contents constituted a “state secret.” Regional prosecutor Ozcan Sisman, who had ordered the search, has since been replaced and all involved in the search now face prosecution on allegations of “attempting to overthrow the state”.

The YPG would close that crossing by linking up with their western enclaves around Afrin (Efrin), relieving the pressure on Aleppo and assisting Assad militarily and politically by exposing the scale of Turkish and US assis-
tance to ISIS and al Nusra. The YPG would then control a fully contiguous Rojava territory, making a wider Kurd-

ish state a viable project. US opportunist support for the YPG could not go as far as that against Turkey. Erdogan allowed the US to use Incirlik airbase in return for its support, showing the PYD leaders the limitations of their pragmatism. They want to make the US and the EU, the FSA, jihadists and Assad against ISIS and al Nusra.

Under the cover of the 10 October state massacre in Ankara of some 104 peace marches Erdogan began a major assault on the YPG and they have been piling us against each other for years, but never before have divisions been as sharp. Now it’s like south pole and north pole”.

Socialist Labour Says: Blair to The Hague!

The Desperate Plight of refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan, Congo, and Iraq demonstrates most graphically that the war in Syria, is the fruit of a racialism and chauvinism to cover up for the wars on a neo-liberal agenda which are the direct cause of this appalling human tragedy. The “dodgy dossier” and the lies of Tony Blair and those within the Labour and Social Democratic parties, the trade unions and, more importantly, the working class organisations, were the real means to put their anti-

imperialism in place. But their own expression of that popular outrage.

In an article for The Morning Star on 4 June he wrote: “War is not inevitable, but unless we understand the commercial, military and xenophobic forces that are able to produce, war. We in July 2009 but difficulty in stopping the wars of the future.” We suggest that once we understand these forces we will still have a very difficult revolutionary task to defeat them.

Such was the opposition to the Iraq war that between 3 January and 12 April 2003 36 million people across the globe took part in almost 3,000 protests against the invasion. However the 36 million had no role to play in turning the war around for the political feelings into effect. Their own working class organisations, the trade unions and, more importantly, the Labour and Social Democratic parties internationally, were so domi-

nated by the neoliberalism, that they have never been able to turn the war around. Neither have they been able to bring the war to the Hague, the Independent International Criminal Court in The Hague.
Corbynomics, from p. 4

bled; the bringing into play for the first time ever of the previously latent, but tremendous economic power of the United States; its rise to world dominance in the context of unparalleled victory in war on a global scale; that was the cause of the boom.

Keynesian economics were in part an ideological form, in part an economic tool used to ‘tweak’ an already booming capitalist economy to ensure the boom went on as long as possible. In that sense, Keynesian economics were not even particularly the preserve of the left; they became mainstream bourgeois economics for a while, falsely credited with bringing the world out of the Great Depression in fact the cause of that was the war. In fact, it was Cold War military expenditures, and the nuclear arms race, that also undoubtedly gave capitalist economies more of a shot in the arm than Keynesian economics per se.

And it was a developing crisis of profitability, the product of the tendency for the rate of profit to fall, that undermined the post-war boom and led the ruling classes to abandon Keynesianism. Attacking working class living standards to restore the rate of profit was the strategy adopted by capitalism to restore the rate of profit. But within the advanced countries, that had its limits.

Therefore, what followed was globalisation — the chase all over the world for cheaper and cheaper sources of labour. This going hand in hand with the massive growth of debt, the promotion of economic ‘growth’ through inflating asset bubbles, to produce a semblance of economic dynamism in the developed countries. Thus the falling rate of profit, and the offensive against all social gains, is a worldwide phenomenon of capitalism. This aspect of Marxist analysis therefore certainly fits the facts.

In the face of this, the Keynesianism of Corbyn and McDonnell, while a manifestation of resistance to neo-liberalism, will not solve the problem of capital’s offensive against the working class. Rejecting neo-liberalism and inflicting defeats on its adherents in Labour is a step forward. But if we do not go further, and challenge from the beginning the capitalist framework, and assimilate Marx’s best and most revolutionary insights into the need to do away with capitalism itself by a revolutionary transformation and the abolition of private property in the means of production, and on an international scale at that, then retreats are a grave danger.

We need to concretise this by fighting for the working class movement, both its political and economic/trade union wings together, to use its combined political clout and economic/industrial muscle to force the capitalists to concede what the working class needs.

For instance, People’s Quantitative Easing, whatever its economic basis, in its originally mooted form implied that the bourgeois state would take the ruling class lead for what the working class needs. This is a correct idea, we need decent pay for all, a real living wage decided by the workers, not the bosses. We need a real end of unemployment — real jobs for all, through a massive expansion of public works and also shorter working hours with no loss in pay.

There are numerous similar demands that can be made: there is not space to discuss all that now. But all these things point to the need for the working class to take power away from the capitalists and their state, administering the economy collectively, democratically and in unity with workers elsewhere in the world — thus beginning the process of abolishing the state itself as a tool of the exploitation of some humans by others.

**Reinstate the expelled Members!**

Socialist Labour condemns ‘Operation Icepick’, the obscenely named expulsion of Corbyn supporters during the course of the election for leadership. Long-standing members and new applications were auto-excluded on the basis that they had stood or supported candidates standing against Labour in the past and from their social media posts there were deemed contrary to the ‘aims and values of the Labour party. We demand the immediate recall of these expulsion to all who would not stand and not to support any who stand against Labour in the future. Clearly the aims and values of Labour under Tony Blair and since are very different to the those under Jeremy Corbyn. Membership conditions should reflect that. As he said at Conference: “Above all I want to welcome our new members to this party, everyone who’s joined this party in this great endeavour. To change our country, change our policies and change the way we do things. Above all I want to speak to everyone in Britain about the tasks Labour has now turned to”.

Immediate and full Renationalisation of the Railways

By Steve Forrest, Harrow West CLP.

**Shaker Aamer Free!**

Here he is with daughter, Johnina (left), and son Michael (photo taken before his capture in 2001, released by his lawyer). He arrived back in England on 30-10-15 after 14 years detention without charge in Guantamano bay. Since January 2002 780 men have been held there, almost all without charge or criminal trial. It is a part of the ‘war on terror’ which the US used as an excuse to invade Afghanistan and Iraq and by-pass domestic US laws by characterising opponents and those against whom they had no evidence as ‘enemy combatants’.

They held them in the Cuban base which they declared not subject to US law. Torture of the most horrific nature was employed as those released testified. We can expect more gruesome details from Aamer soon.

**AT THE RECENT LABOUR Party conference a vote was overwhelmingly passed to commit the next Labour government to bring the railways back into public ownership. It is important to note that conference delegates were elected prior to the leadership election. This is significant because it demonstrates the widespread support for rail renationalisation from both new members and long standing party members.**

This is in particular a significant and marvellous policy victory as just 6 months ago the Labour Party went to the electorate with a manifesto commitment far different to the one adopted at September conferences.

Our manifesto pledged to: “A new National Rail body will oversee and plan for the railways and give rail users a say in how trains operate. We will legislate so that a public railway system is owned and run by the people for the people. It is important for our economy, society and the environment that our railways are run in the public interest not for private profit. Under my leadership Labour will commit to public ownership, run by passengers, workers and government.” (Jeremy Corbyn a Peoples Railway).

This policy document was welcomed with great enthusiasm by Corbyn supporters, trade unionists and the public. However as the old saying goes the devil is in the details. This policy document although as we have seen is not a radical departure from Miliband and although written with inspiring language its proposals although to be welcomed fall short of answering what we know and Corbyn outlines is an urgent need for our railway system.

The Corbyn policy statement that formed the basis of the NEC resolution to conference proposes only to bring back into public ownership the existing franchises when they expire and the contract runs out.

Between 2020 and 2025 the term of office of the next Labour government only 5of the 21 operating companies franchises expire. Therefore the policy of Jeremy Corbyn and endorsed by Party conference amounts to little more than a partial renationalisation at best.

Although in Socialist Labour we support Jeremy against attacks from the right in the Party and beyond we are critical friends when we need to be.

This strategy doesn’t go far enough or fast enough to solve the urgent crisis of our crumbling railways and the robbery of the public from the private.

There are break clauses in each of the contracts of the 21 operating companies that if actioned could mean the immediate breakout of all the franchises just when they naturally expire. This would open the way to full and immediate renationalisation.

At this point the hue and cry will be about compensation, well as socialists we will say to the companies we are in favour of compensation but only on the basis of proven need. I think Branson for one may struggle with our criteria for proven need.

We demand the immediate and full renationalisation of the railways. We urge Jeremy to take this step and end the chaos and profiteering.
“Corbnomics”, the solution to neo-liberalism?
By Ian D, Croydon

JEREMY CORBYN’S ASCENT to the leadership of the Labour Party in September marks a major break with the previous adherence of the core leadership of the Labour Party to the tenets of neo-liberal economics. With economics goes politics, as Lenin once noted, politics is concentrated economics. In Labour, this kind of political-economic trend goes back further than 1994, when Labour elected Blair. Though Blair formalised the Labour Party’s joining the neo-liberal camp, particular by his abrogation of the party’s adherence to formal social democracy, this occurred as a reaction in leading Labour circles of Thatcher’s mantra that ‘There Is No Alternative’ goes back to the Wilson-Callaghan government’s austerity programme in 1976 at the behest of the IMF, i.e. even before Thatcher.

Jeremy Corbyn’s victory is the first time the outside left has ever won the leadership of the Labour Party outright in a contested election against the right wing. This occurred as working class political rebellion against the consequences of Labour’s decades long embrace of neo-liberalism, under Kinnock, Blair, Brown and the insipid soft-left Miliband.

Labour neo-liberalism led to the horrors of the Iraq War and the ‘war on terror’, and then the ravaging of working class living standards first of all by the credit crunch with its bailout of the financial system, and then the massive attack on the working class, the poor and the disabled, instituted by the Cameron/Clegg coalition government. For reasons that are well known, Ed Miliband’s half-hearted leadership was not up to the job of opposing this politically. Corbyn has been put into the leadership by angry working class people demanding a real opposition to the capitalist offensive and the Tory government. The idea that ‘There is no alternative’ has been debunked.

The economic alternative being put forward by Corbyn and John McDonnell as Shadow Chancellor is a form of Keynesianism, involving government borrowing to invest in new infrastructure, the restoration of public sector wages, benefits and services cut by the Tories, infrastructure, the restoration of public sector services alongside the NHS, the abolition of student fees and the restoration of universal healthcare. It is not part of the ideology of austerity for the benefit of the capitalist class.

The economic tenets of Keynesian policy, as their empires crum-pled and act in the classic manner of a coun-
ter-cyclical, Keynesian policy. This turn by McDonnell to more orthodox Keynesianism was accompanied by the political/tactical error he made shortly after taking the Shadow Chancellorship.

He initially said that Labour would back George Osborne’s so-called Charter of Budget Responsibility, which involves a legal commitment on future governments to run a budget surplus in ‘normal’ times, i.e. outside of actual capitalist economic recessions. McDonnell said he would do this by attacking the wealthy, not starving the poor, as the Tories are doing, and would exclude borrowing for investment from the calculations.

When the Parliamentary vote approached on Osborne’s Charter, he abruptly (and very late) changed his position, noting that the proposal programme, but an economic strategy that aims merely to stabilise capitalism and to even out its economic cycles to mitigate their effects on the working class. This fits in well enough with some formal aspects of Osborne’s Charter that it was not completely outlandish for McDonnell to critically endorse it.

Keynesian counter-cyclical policies, in their ideal form, do indeed involve the building up of a surplus during an economic upswing which can be then spent to hopefully mitigate the effects of a recession or depression. Even Osborne pays lip service to that, in a completely hypocritical manner, as the Tories agenda is directed at a further massive attack on what is left of social provision in the UK, including the NHS.

So the questions then arise: does Keynesianism work? Can it really stabilise the capitalist boom-bust cycle to make the capitalist economy satisfy the needs of the working class? Is it true, as Keynesianism claims, that Keynesian economics were responsible for the long boom in Western capitalism from the beginning of the 1950s to the end of the 1960s? If so, why were these policies abandoned, including by social democratic parties not just in Britain but in much of Europe, which became ‘social-liberal’ parties pursuing neo-liberalism ‘with a human face’ through most of the advanced capitalist world?

An important element in Keynesian ideology is underconsumptionism: the belief that the most important flaw of capitalism is its tendency to reduce demand in the economy through ‘short-sighted’ cutting of the living standards of the population, particularly the working class. According to Keynesianism, the use of state-stimuli to increase the purchasing power of workers should create a bigger market for products produced by capitalist firms, and thereby increase production and profitability, resulting in economic expansion.

The fundamental problem is that this fails to take account of what Karl Marx referred to as the ‘most important’ law of capitalism – the tendency of the rate of profit to fall as capitalist products involve a greater proportion of the source of value in a capitalist economy is labour, and that the source of additional value, the tendency to reduce demand in the economy – is not the solution to neo-liberalism.

This appeared to be the manner in which it was presented in Jeremy Corbyn’s campaign, or at least many people may have gained this impression. But in terms of the logic of the presently dominant ideology on the left-wing of Labour, it was always the case that this could not be implemented, bar major events in the class struggle in an extra-parliamentary sense, until after 2020 and the election of a Labour government. It is not part of the outlook of the Labour left, Corbyn included, however much they are likely to express platonic ‘solidarity’ with struggles outside the parlia-

mentary framework that may threaten to bring down a reactionary government, to actually seek to lead a movement. They always aimed to wait until the next parliamentary cycle to implement their economic policies.

So therefore there could be no infusion of money from ‘People’s Quantitative Easing’ as an antidote to austerity now. This fits Keynesianism, which is not a radically anti-capitalist