

# 'Anti-lobbying'

## Call to exempt grants for academic research from new regulations

The Cabinet Office has announced that a new 'anti-lobbying' clause will be included in all Government grants from May 2016. This is an attack on academic freedom as it would stop grants for university research being used to influence policy-makers. This draconian new rule will prevent university researchers from influencing policies on climate change, medicine, technology and many other important areas.

The Cabinet Office announced that any Government grants awarded from 1 May 2016 would include a clause outlawing “payments that support activities intended to influence or attempt to influence Parliament, government or political parties, or attempting to influence the awarding or renewal of contracts and grants, or attempting to influence legislative or regulatory action”.

### Academic Freedom

This infringement on academic freedom will be bad for policy-making, bad for the public interest and bad for democracy. It will for instance, forbid

publicly-funded researchers from advising ministers and civil servants or even responding to Parliamentary inquiries. It will mean lobbyists funded by companies and other vested interests will find it easier to promote inaccurate and misleading information to policy-makers without being challenged by university researchers. It could be a disaster for UK climate change policies.

*Sign the petition to demand a debate in Parliament:*

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/122957>

## Intergenerational Fairness

In January 2016, the House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee, chaired by Frank Field launched an inquiry on “intergenerational fairness”.

It was obvious that the committee were already of the view that the older generation were doing much better than younger people, and that the generous terms of state pensions and pensioner benefits should be looked at. Could we afford the “triple lock”?

Of course, many of us were indignant – knowing that a large proportion of older people were suffering dire poverty even before the recent austerity cuts. The committee needed to look at the facts clearly. Many factors were making life very difficult for younger people, but providing basic welfare for older people was not contributing to their problems.

Neil Duncan-Jordan, Officer for the National Pensioners Convention submitted a well-argued response for the committee and gave evidence. We know that the main problem facing UK citizens is growing wealth inequality, the accumulation of wealth and property in the hands of a small minority. This affects old and young alike.

*Janet Shapiro*

## New Banner



### The branch has a new banner.

*The Branch Secretary claims that the last one (below) was left on a 257 bus following a (rainy) demonstration in support of the hospital doctors and utterly denies the slanderous accusation that he left it in the pub.*



## Launch at TUC Congress House of the new edition of Mike Cooley's pioneering book,

# ARCHITECT OR BEE?

I attended as London Federation of Green Parties Trade Union Liaison Officer and representing UCU London Retired Members' Branch.

A short extract from Lucas plan video was shown. Followed by an address from Frances O'Grady, (TUC General Secretary), who focussed on the importance of consultation between workers and managements over the questions of deciding what production should be done and how it should be carried out.

She also argued that since the original Lucas Plan In 1976, many jobs were still repetitive and boring and did not involve workers in decision-making, and in some ways the contemporary situation was worse as many of the workers doing this type of work were over qualified for it. Generally she argued that the British economy suffered from "financialisation" at the expense of manufacturing. She mentioned projects that the TUC had been involved in, which addressed such matters eg the green workplace projects.

### Climate Jobs

Other contributions (from Robin Murray, Hilary Wainwright and others), recounted similar projects, concerned with extending planning beyond than a managerial elite, that had taken place since 1976 including the work of the Economic Policy Unit, the Greater London Enterprise Board and the Defence Diversification Agency.

Tony Simpson (of Spokesman Books) had introduced the event by suggesting that that there was a good fit between a revived or updated Lucas plan and proposals for coping with climate change such as those in "One Million Climate Jobs: Tackling the Environmental and Economic Crisis", but this was not discussed much, even though a message sent by Mike Cooley contained the following question: "*Can sophisticated electronics renovate our transport system and keep us safe from climate change? Is there a way of combatting the dehumanisation of whole communities?*".

### Working lives

It may be unfair to take these remarks out of a wider context of Mike Cooley's concerns about climate change and the nature of working lives, but it would be good to debate ways in which technical fixes such as those enabling new forms of transport could fit in with a wider programme that facilitated older low-carbon forms of transport, eg walking, cycling,

canals etc. Clearly transport is not the only aspect of a low carbon economy/society where such solutions could be planned and enacted.

### Conference

There is a conference proposed to commemorate the Lucas Plan and also to discuss its relevance for future developments. This event is planned for October or November 2016, date and venue to be finalised

### The Lucas Plan

In 1976, the militant workforce within Lucas Aerospace were facing t layoffs. Under the leadership of Mike Cooley, they developed the Lucas Plan to convert the company from arms to the manufacture of socially useful products, and save jobs.

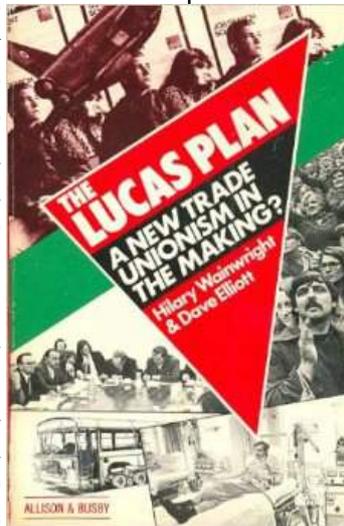
The plan was not put into place but it is claimed that the associated industrial action saved some jobs. It's a model to enact a just transition from ecologically damaging to ecologically positive employment in a low-carbon economy, where certain industries will have to shrink- for example, the power generation, aviation and cars. However, instead of a net loss of jobs, efforts must be put into creating green jobs or 'converting' old jobs. to produce the hardware for harnessing renewable wind and solar energy- employing skilled engineers and training new engineers for the future.

### Production under Capitalism

The Plan, drawn up by workers on the shop floor, contained over 150 ideas with detailed plans. The issue of climate change was not so well known as it is today, but there was a problem of oil supply and the Lucas plan focused extensively on the development of alternative, renewable energy. Plans included: Efficient wind-turbines, Solar cells and heat pumps, The "Power Pack" to create cars with 80% less emissions and 50% greater fuel economy, an efficient method for small scale electricity generation and a vehicle like a train but with pneumatic tyres allowing it also to travel on roads.

However, the importance of the Lucas Plan is not the specific technologies and products but in the questions raised about production under capitalism and the vision it offered of a new society in which human needs come before the blind pursuit of profit.

*Report from Peter Murry*



## Bahrain Update: Mahdi Abu Dheeb Released

Alongside some welcome news from Bahrain, recent developments broadly strengthen the case for not only continuing, but further intensifying solidarity with the popular struggles against the regime, above all with independent Bahraini trade unions.

The good news, first, is that Mahdi Abu Dheeb, president of the Bahrain Teachers Association (BTA), has been released from prison. Mahdi was convicted by a military court following involvement in the protests of Spring 2011. His imprisonment was an element of the regime's response to mass support for democratic reform. As such it provoked trade union opposition internationally. Mahdi's release, five years on, is widely welcomed, but not an ounce of gratitude to the regime and its supporters would be appropriate.

As Chris Keates, General Secretary of British teachers' union NASUWT, has observed:

*"While the news that Mahdi has finally been released is wonderful, the fact remains that he has lost the last five years of his life and been subjected to repeated abuse and torture while in prison simply for doing nothing more than organising and representing the interests of teachers, and calling for quality education for all children and young people in Bahrain."*

The victimisation of Mahdi is not an isolated phenomenon. Nor are the underlying issues in any sense resolved or even addressed by his release. What continues is a reign of diffuse state terror, directed especially against trade unionists and other regime critics. Arrests continue, as do assaults, inflicting of torture and revoking of citizenship as retaliation for expression of dissent or resistance in any form.

The arrest in February of Ibrahim Sharif, former leader of established secular opposition Waad party and veteran of the 2011 mass mobilisations, is a well publicised example. Many other instances are documented at the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) website. The simmering stalemate of opposition versus repression continues, as do the apologetics of allied state spokespersons, above all in Britain.

But the support which the British ruling class and their state are providing for the dictatorship involves more than Whitehall reassurances. In January the Mirror reported parliamentary figures revealing that, since 2006, Sandhurst military school *"has offered*

*taxpayer-subsidised training to 843 officers from other countries"*, including Saudi Arabia and the Emirates. These graduates, the Mirror adds, *"include 66 recruits from Bahrain which is accused of engaging in systematic torture, extra-judicial killing and enforced disappearances."*

In addition, the British prime minister publicly celebrates commercial dispersal of British weaponry on a wide front, including to allied tyrants. In late February the Guardian quoted his defiant assertion, made during a visit to the BAE Systems Preston factory: *"I promise I will not be taking my eye off the ball, making sure the brilliant things you make here at BAE Systems are available and sold all over the world."* Bahrain, of course, is well known as a "priority market" for UK armaments.

So what of those Bahrainis whom economists might term final consumers of such "brilliant" deadly products of twenty first century British capitalism? Gratitude may not fully describe their response to a recent report of *"elite Royal Navy commandos...running week-long training courses for Bahraini personnel."* Writing in the Independent, Jamie Merrill notes that sniper firing is amongst the skills being passed on to the Bahraini armed forces by British professionals. The trainees are members of the state gangs who, alongside Saudi and Emirates detachments, went on a murderous rampage against non-violent Bahraini protesters just five years ago. The incarceration of the BTA leaders was part of the same campaign of repression, while the Union Jack fluttered discreetly in the wings.

On the other hand, publication of the UCU originated inter-union statement last Autumn confirms that neither successive bourgeois governments nor more core elements of the British state speak for the labour movement on Bahrain and wider issues of the Gulf and global capitalism. Watch this space.



By David Binns

**Jamie Merrill on Royal Navy commandos running sniper courses for Bahraini state operatives:**  
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/british-commandos-training-bahraini-armed-forces-to-use-sniper-rifles-a6952836.html>

**On the September 2015 inter-union statement on Bahrain, including a link to the complete text:**  
<http://www.ucu-retired-london.org.uk/pdf/Bahrain-TU-breakthrough.pdf>

## SERTUC seminar

# Crisis in Care and Caring

The TUC in the South East & Eastern Region (SERTUC) organised a seminar on Tuesday March 15th at Congress House entitled 'Crisis in Care and Caring'. It was held in the Congress Centre, spacious and equipped with microphones and video, yet the stalls were taken up and few empty chairs could be seen. The programme allowed time for questions and contributions; those attending were not slow to speak up.

The seminar, chaired by Carolyn Simpson had speakers Eric Smith, UNISON, Judy Downey chair of the Relatives and Residents Association, Jan Shortt Vice-president National Pensioners Convention, Matthew Eagan, Assistant National Office UNISON, Barbara Keeley MP, Shadow Minister for Older People, Social Care and Carers, and Stephen Gilbert, retired Chief Executive of The Printing Charity.

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### **Relatives and Residents Association**

Judy Downey's charity R&RA began in 1993 and sets out to assist relatives achieve a useful relationship with the residential home directed at improving the resident's comfort. The charity gives a full range of support – a website [www.reires.org](http://www.reires.org), a helpline 020 7359 8148 and lots of advice. Judy focussed on the quality of care of care that is frustrated by current poor work conditions, low pay, inadequate training, high turnover and lack of status. To help the care-worker R&RA have produced 'Keys To Care'. These give a practical, authoritative and jargon free instructions for 12 common care situations in care, and can be carried on the person.

### **National Pensioners Convention**

Jan Shortt summarised the history that led up to the current crisis. Care of older people is considered to be social rather than clinical and thus not provided by the NHS. Closure of geriatric wards since the 1980s, dementia not acknowledged as a medical condition, social care provided on a means-tested service, - all these have contributed. Numerous commissions have fail to address the poor access to care, in which only the most critically in need get attention.

While the NHS is increasingly privatised, fragmented, under funded with hospitals struggling with a legacy of PFIs, 80% of social care is privately provided. Slashed budgets to local authorities have made it even more difficult to deliver adequate home care, or provide residential care home places.

Informal carers, low paid care-workers and the most vulnerable are suffering, yet the government does not adopt a realistic policy. To stop this neglect the NPC recommends a National Care Service funded, like the NHS by taxation.

### **Shadow Minister for Older People**

Barbara Keeley pointed out that most hospital trusts were in deficit, and that the Better Care Plan used shared funding that was not new money. Other problems were that older people were still having to sell their homes to pay for care, and those entrusted with their care did not get proper training or decent wages.

### **The Printing Charity**

Stephen Gilbert explained that 'The Printing Charity' founded in 1827 intended for 'printers', was now a possible resource for specific assistance, financial or for help filling in forms for grant applications. The charity runs several sheltered homes.

Contributions from the floor indicated the wide experience of those attending and their anxieties about the current crisis in care. Darren Lewis who organised the event, sent a transcript of questions and answers from Barbara Keeley; this can be forwarded on request. Darren also gave attendees the opportunity to send comments on how Labour Party policy could address the problems highlighted in the seminar.

The seminar exposed the critical problems that are not being addressed by government. Refreshments were provided and we had good opportunity to network during the breaks.

*Janet Shapiro*



# The Cleaner of Kastoria

a novel by Jacqueline Paizis

*'The Cleaner of Kastoria enters the past and present of Dina, a young village girl whose wild decision sets her on an unforgettable odyssey through the horrors and tragedy of the Greek civil war...Dina still guards her dark secrets in the aftermath of the Colonels' dictatorship of 1974...'*

*"I think the Cleaner of Kastoria is a wonderful book."* Edward Wilson, author of The Midnight Swimmer and The Whitehall Mandarin

Jacqueline Paizis was a London high school teacher, active member of the NUT and FE lecturer and member of UCU for many years. She then trained as a therapist and worked in student support at the University of Sussex. She has spent extensive periods living and working in Greece and now divides her time between Hove in East Sussex and Greece.

In 1990 Jacqueline travelled to towns and villages in Greece, interviewing women who had fought in the Greek civil war of 1947-49. She taped, transcribed and later translated these interviews into English. Jacqueline was interested in gaining an in depth understanding of the civil war experience from a female perspective. In particular she was exploring the myth that although women participated in logistics tasks, served as wireless operators, nurses and the caring for child evacuees,

they did not fight on the front line. All the interviewees denied this myth and most had actually fought on the front line themselves. These women who gave their time and memories to Jacqueline also highlighted the equality that existed between men and women during their soldier years compared with their return to civilian life after the war when they were expected to resume their roles of wives and mothers. Jacqueline has written a novel enriched by these women's stories not only of war but their lives after war.

**To buy a copy of The Cleaner of Kastoria go to:**

<http://www.lulu.com/shop/jacqueline-paizis/the-cleaner-of-kastoria/paperback/product-22639064.html>

## London Mayoral manifesto on behalf of the London Region National Pensioners Convention

The London Region National Pensioners Convention is the largest Pensioner group in London and has members in all London Boroughs and campaigns to protect and enhance the interests of older people in the Capital.

We therefore have a special interest in the forthcoming Mayoral election. Having examined the wide remit of the Mayor of London we have produced this manifesto based on what our members consider to be their priorities in the forthcoming Mayoral election. Below are the headings, together with a small sample of the relevant related issues.

Candidates are invited to endorse these proposals or should they disagree, to explain their reasons

- \* **Safety:** Adequate manning for policing and Fire Station services, safe travel and road crossing.
- \* **Transport:** Sufficient bus routes, accessible buses and underground/main line rail stations, assisted transport, including 'dial a ride'
- \* **Housed in comfort:** affordable, safe & warm homes, option of sheltered accommodation. Mayor to promote adequate home services & home adaptations for independent healthy living.
- \* **Age Friendly London:** Cultural venues, accessible libraries, day centres, green spaces, places to sit & public toilets, clean air.
- \* **Community and communications/Equal life chances for all – (age, gender ethnicity and disability equality):** no discrimination against those without IT expertise and access to broadband, inclusive publicity, options for telephone access & paper bills without financial penalty.

\* **Living Costs in London to be affordable for public sector workers.** Young people and all the workers we rely on need to be able to rent/live in London.

*While the London Mayor is not responsible for the provision of NHS services, we expect him or her to oppose any further changes that would dismantle health services in London, such as the current devolution proposals.*

## CELEBRATE MAY DAY FIGHTING FOR A BETTER WORLD

### MAY DAY IS INTERNATIONAL WORKERS DAY CELEBRATING WORKERS' ACHIEVEMENTS

We celebrate what was won by workers' campaigning over many years – like the NHS, good education for all, good pensions, affordable housing – all now under attack by the austerity agenda. We fight for the interests of the many against the interests of the rich and powerful.

We fight for the unity of young and old, women and men, those of all different ethnic and national backgrounds. We call for equality and social justice.

We stand with workers across the world celebrating May Day.

### SUPPORT THE MAY DAY FOOTBALL COMPETITION & OTHER MAY DAY EVENTS

For details go to our website

Join us at

Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU  
nearest tube - Farringdon



## LONDON RETIRED MEMBERS BRANCH

More details and updates on all the stories in this newsletter can be found on our website :  
[www.ucu-retired-london.org.uk](http://www.ucu-retired-london.org.uk)

Contact us via the secretary:  
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