On July 10 the government faces the biggest “day of action” since it came to power. Perhaps as many as 1.4 million of us are striking that day.

Teaching assistants, refuse collectors, teachers, home helps, social workers, catering workers, environmental health officers and many more are set to join the walkout, along with local government workers in Unison, GMB and Unite. The PCS’s ballot gave a 73 percent yes vote for the strike. The firefighters are also joining it. The FBU has announced a further 8 days of continuous strikes from July 14.

Enough is Enough

People working in all these sectors have had enough. Ever since the financial crash of 2008 the ruling class have cleverly shifted the blame away from themselves and onto us. We’ve had the biggest drop in wages since the 1880’s and working people everywhere have been made to pay through longer hours and greater pressure at work, and through a declining standard of living with higher bills (the average gas bill has gone up 57% since 2010 and food banks are increasing to help people make ends meet, with one in five people now officially living in poverty in the UK).

Then there have been cuts in pensions. While there’s been a howl of protest on the one hand against bank bonusers’ bonuses being cut, it’s seen as acceptable for public sector workers to have their pensions robbed. The state has dipped into pension pots for years to cover the effects of the crisis, then it blamed people for living too long. As a result you might work harder (and for much longer) to pay your pension, but these days you won’t be guaranteed any decent standard of living when you retire. Firefighters who retire before they are 60 are now due to lose half their pension. One and a half million pensioners in the UK live in poverty (though according to the National Pensions Convention it’s about 4 million), in any case all agree the number is rising.

Then there’s the cuts. By 2015/16 the coalition will have taken £13.3 billion from local government funds in England alone. There are far more to come (for fairly 40% of scheduled cuts have already been). And there’s no sign Labour will be any different. Ed Balls has announced that they will accept the budget limits set by the coalition. Miliband plans to continue its attacks. They won’t even pretend to compensate by either expelling workers’ wages. Since all profits are devalued. Those in favour of “inclusive capitalism” (an oxymoron if ever there was one) recognise the same thing as Keynes in the 1930s. He “acknowledged Marx’s economic predictions without acknowledging Marx himself, and represented, in its essentials and in bourgeois terms, a kind of weaker repetition of the Marxian critique; and its purpose was to arrest capitalism’s decline and prevent its collapse.” (Mattick Marx and Keynes p.26)

The Bosses Really are Worried!

In the last week in May a conference of the great, and not so good, of the world capitalist system assembled at the opulent Mansion House in London. Their topic was “inclusive capitalism”. The final speech was made by the Governor of the Bank of England. As security staff “indiscreetly” prevented the invited from getting in, he told an audience, which included Bill Clinton, Christine Lagarde and Lawrence Summers (former US Treasury Secretary), that he worried that “unchecked market fundamentalism can devour the social capital essential for the long term dynamism of capitalism itself”.

Mr Carney is no Marxist but he has articulated what Marx predicted capitalism would always tend to do. Due to the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall insufficient profit is being produced in the system to meet the needs of capital. Capitalists try to compensate by either expelling workers from production or cutting workers’ wages. Since all profits are created by the exploitation of workers, expelling workers from production decreases the pool of profit, and in the longer term it makes the global crisis worse. Cutting wages restricts workers consumption and so restricts the market for consumption goods which in the short term makes the crisis worse. This is the reason for the periodic crises which engulfs the system. Today we are experiencing another and it will not go away until capital is devalued. Those in favour of “inclusive capitalism” (an oxymoron if ever there was one) recognise the same thing as Keynes in the 1930s. He is isolated strikes lead to defeat and victimisation but mass action allows us to defend each other. Unified action, linked across sectors and with strike committees elected by mass open assemblies of all workers, a bit like the “plenum” which Boisson workers set up earlier this year are the kind of things we need to organise for a real struggle. Mass strikes need to be linked with resistance in our communities organised by working class people in the workplaces and local communities. We don’t need platforms of windbags calling themselves Peoples Assemblies (whose ambition is restricted to putting pressure on the Labour Party). Real assemblies organised class-wide are essential for a real defensive struggle. Those assemblies also give us a glimpse of the organisations we need to establish a system based on need not profit.

After years of workers’ retreat it is going to take some time before more people see this but there is already palpable and growing class anger. And the more they attack us, the less we have to lose in an all-out fight, first to defend ourselves, and then to end the system which has created so much misery.
Crisis, Social Democracy informed the German Chancellor, Bethmann-Holweg that they would “not leave the Fatherland in the lurch” in the event of war. This was one month before the war broke out. When it did the German Social Democrats voted war credits to the Kaiser. It remains the greatest betrayal in working class history. It still today separates real revolutionaries from Social Democrats of all types. But German social democracy was not alone in not going over to the class enemy. In France the anarchico-syndicalist CGT decided to support the war and in Russia the venerable anarchist, Kropotkin came to the side of the Tsar in order to avoid the revolution in the east. In the orgy of patriotism the working class bitherly went off to slaughter one another. It was class war by another name and the capitalists won this round.

Revolutionary Defeatism

But there was opposition to the war. From the beginning the Serbian, Bulgarian and above all Russian Bolshevik Party refused to go with the flow. For them pacifist opposition to imperial war was not enough. Lenin recognised this first. The slogan “turn the imperialist war into civil war” was not an empty phrase but it was the basis for a revolutionary movement once the glamour of the idea of war was confronted by its grim reality. It is no accident that “Down with the war” was on the banners of the first strikers in Petrograd in 1917. And in the end it was working class revolution which brought about the end to the imperialist war. It started in Russia in 1917 but was in evidence almost everywhere from Red John Maclean - the first man to be gaoled under DORA. In Britain the younger generation will not remember how the notion of flag flying and nationalism were derided before 1982. With the Falklands War we have seen an increase in jingoism and racism and every time there is a rumour that the banks are being funded like Help for Heroes (otherwise known as trained mercenary killers) and the Poppy Day has gone downhill. We will never have another war on this scale as in 1914. Nation versus class, the terms of the fight have not changed. And with the system in crisis we are once again having something that has been in retreat for decades. From the East of Europe across the Middle East and Central Asia to the South China Sea confrontations are on the increase. Wars that broke out decades ago are still being fought across the planet. Behind it all lies the drive to corner resources in an increasingly desperate capitalist world.

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“Their First World War: Commemorations and Ours”

“inclusive capitalism”? (continued)

(social consequences are of no interest to him) is planning a (very modest) increase in the minimum wage. They are all however united in trying to save the system. But all of them fear that if these new and improved theories were based on government’s spending money to create jobs at a time when spending had been cut. Today, a fish is cheap but the bubble burst in 2007, every state has had to prop up the financial system to save capitalism. They have literally been printing money with a policy of “quantitative easing”. This means they are already saddled with too much sovereign debt to go on the road of piling up more debt. The only alternative they have therefore is to attack the working class all the harder in an equally vain attempt to solve the crisis.

And this is what worries our neo-Keynesian “inclusive capitalists”. They can see that the store of social strike is mounting up. In the EU and the US the working class’ share of income has fallen from 58% to 50% since 2009. This comes on top of a slow decline in real wages in the traditional capitalist countries since the current devastating challenge from the working class since.

Nation v. Class

But capitalist contradictions do not go away. The constant need to exploit the working class means that social peace cannot last for ever. The crisis of capitalism is the best of all possible systems. “Progressive wars” were things of the past. Now capitalism needed war to maintain its process of accumulation.

And one reason the war broke out in 1914, and not sooner or later, was the ruling class fear of the working class. The same crisis which impelled capitalism to imperial war also produced a working class response. Since the beginning of the century there had been workers’ resistance to the driving down of wages and increasing poverty which many experienced. Anarcho-syndicalism, syndicalism and social democracy were on the rise in many countries where mass strikes were breaking out and this was a real threat to the empire “on which the sun never set”. The invasion of Belgium was the excuse they needed to declare war on August 4. In an interview with the Belgian “Indépendance Belge” was no innocent victim here. It was an imperial power in its own right. The torturing and mutilating by amputating and gouling people of the Congo, delivered up cheap rubber for British manufacturing.

We can though agree with ruling class commentators on one thing. The war that broke out in 1914 defined a new era for capitalism. The era of global economy was now announced. It set in train a process towards greater integration of the world economy. It was the start of the era of imperialism. It changed the world. It was the first issue to man for it capitalism was the best of all possible systems. “Progressive wars” were things of the past. Now capitalism needed war to maintain its process of accumulation.

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We are for the revolutionary party but we are not that Party. Nor are we a “left wing” or “radical” party which has no real roots among the working class. It was Lenin who said that the only thing that has changed among the working masses of China, Vietnam, Cambodia and Bengal Desh are the metalworkers and the long running series of strikes in China, Vietnam, Cambodia and Bengal Desh is the same crisis which impelled capitalism to imperial war also produced a working class response. Since the beginning of the century there had been workers’ resistance to the driving down of wages and increasing poverty which many experienced. Anarcho-syndicalism, syndicalism and social democracy were on the rise in many countries where mass strikes were breaking out and this was a real threat to the empire “on which the sun never set”. The invasion of Belgium was the excuse they needed to declare war on August 4. In an interview with the Belgian “Indépendance Belge” was no innocent victim here. It was an imperial power in its own right. The torturing and mutilating by amputating and gouling people of the Congo, delivered up cheap rubber for British manufacturing.

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