

Profiting from global hunger

Vincent Kolo
chinaworker.info

The Swiss based multibillion dollar mining, energy and food trader Glencore was listed on the London and Hong Kong stock markets on 24 May. Protesters from the League of Social Democrats and Socialist Action (CWI Hong Kong) showed their opposition to a company that makes a handful of speculators insanely rich while impoverishing millions.

Glencore is profiting from the current China-driven bubble in global commodity prices. Even before its stock market debut, Glencore controlled 60% of the global zinc market and 50% of the copper market as a trading intermediary.

Glencore is a major speculator and manipulator of commodity prices, gambling on price movements that hammer the poor, but enrich its small band of directors and fellow speculators. The company made a financial killing from rising wheat prices in August 2010, when Russia – the world's third largest exporter – suffered its worst ever drought.

The Asian Development Bank recently warned that an additional 64 million people globally could be thrust into extreme poverty this year as a result of skyrocketing food and fuel prices. Inflation has been a trigger for massive movements across the Middle East, North Africa and elsewhere. Also in Hong Kong, Sin-

gapore and other Asian economies, food prices are fanning discontent.

Glencore has caused misery for thousands of townspeople living near its copper mines in Zambia. Local residents told the Daily Mail of acid in the water supply and huge clouds of sulphurous gas drifting through their homeland. The company is also accused of tax avoidance in Zambia, cheating the desperately poor country and its people of a few crumbs from its banquet table.

The initial public offering of Glencore shares will make its eight directors fabulously rich. Chief executive, Ivan Glasenberg, will become one of Europe's richest men with a paper fortune of nearly \$10 billion from the flotation and his own 15% stake.

With an estimated valuation of about \$60 billion, Glencore will be the first company in a quarter century to make the FTSE 100 (the London market's biggest companies) on its first day of trading.

Capitalist symbol

Glencore was founded by the US fugitive Marc Rich, who fled to Switzerland in 1983 after being indicted by federal prosecutors for tax evasion and trading with Iran. Rich was later pardoned by former US president Bill Clinton, on his final day in the White House, in a move that drew massive criticism at the time.

The company recently appointed as a non-executive director and



Protesting against food price hikes in Jordan

'environmental adviser' none other than Tony Hayward, who as former chief executive of BP presided over last year's massive oil spill and bungled clean-up in the Gulf of Mexico – the biggest oil spill in US history.

Glencore is a symbol of all that is wrong with capitalism and why working class people around the world need to join the fight for democratic socialism. Only through

public ownership – placing the mining and energy industries under democratic workers' control and management – can these resources be planned in the interests of the majority, rather than being used as gigantic chips for the billionaires in the casino of global capitalism.

Full article on
www.chinaworker.info

New attacks on women's sexual and reproductive rights

Beth Granter

Women's sexual and reproductive rights have taken quite a beating in recent weeks. The latest assault comes at the hands of Tory MP and education minister Michael Gove.

He has launched the government's new Sex and Relationships Education Council. All nine "sex and relationship education providers" represented on the council are either pro-abstinence faith groups or anti-abortion education, or both.

LIFE, which opposes abortion even in cases of rape or incest, has been newly appointed, whilst the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS), with over 40 years of experience of providing sexual health services including abortions, has been kicked off the council.

Reactionary MPs Nadine Dorries (Tory) and Frank Field (Labour) have tabled amendments to the



Health and Social Care Bill to require women seeking abortion to receive mandatory counselling from

'independent' organisations.

BPAS called the amendments "misguided and unnecessary". Clearly, Dorries and Field believe women to be incapable of making independent decisions about their bodies without first having to endure 'independent' advice including from anti-choice Pregnancy Crisis Centres. The amendments give no regard to existing counselling services and risk increasing obstacles to abortion.

Earlier this month another Dorries' bill, proposing abstinence teaching for girls aged 13-16 in particular, passed its first reading in parliament with support from the Conservative Christian Fellowship. The bill positions women as the gatekeepers of sexual intercourse and disregards the equal responsibility of men. Abstinence teaching has never been proven to have any positive impact on unwanted teenage pregnancy or Sexually Trans-

mitted Infections rates.

A motion was passed at last month's PCS civil service union conference for PCS to campaign against the bill and to re-affiliate to Abortion Rights. Socialist Party members have been leading a growing campaign against the bill, which you can join at <http://facebook.com/stopdorries>. It was working class struggles that led to the 1967 Act which legalised abortion.

Each of these actions have been positioned by the government as being in the best interests of women, while their truly ideological impetus is the capitalist drive to reduce services offered to working class single mothers, benefit claimants and NHS patients.

As socialists and feminists we must fight back against every attack the Con-Dem government makes against our human rights, to protect and build upon what previous campaigns have achieved.

Disabled protester - "inadvertently struck with a police baton"

By a disabled activist

Disabled activists are outraged by the Metropolitan Police's directorate of professional standards decision to reject a complaint by Jody McIntyre after he was batoned and deliberately pulled out of his wheelchair twice during a demonstration against Con-Dem tuition fees rises last December.

The Met has admitted "there is evidence that Jody McIntyre was inadvertently struck with a police baton" but this was according to them "justifiable and lawful given the volatile and dangerous situation occurring at the location".

More amazingly, the Met says the "removal from his wheelchair was also justifiable given the officers perceived risk to Jody McIntyre", ie they were protecting him!

While the Met can argue Jody was at the front of a large group of demonstrators during the first incident, a grainy video shows the opposite was true during the second one. Jody had very few people around him when he was pulled from his chair and dragged across the road by a police officer.

When a group of young people came forward to protest, the officer can be seen being pulled away by his own colleagues.

In a Guardian interview, Jody re-

sponded to the Met's investigation: "This decision confirms the corruption and complete ineptitude within the Metropolitan police. Firstly, we should be asking ourselves why they investigate themselves? And secondly, for them to say there is no evidence to support my complaints of assault when there was video evidence viewed by hundreds of thousands of people is laughable. What more evidence to you need?"

No state investigation into the violent policing of the student demonstrations can be trusted. But the point needs to be made forcibly to the police that the treatment meted out to Jody would have led to life-threatening injuries if he had had a

different impairment, such as a neuromuscular one or brittle bones.

Also, the members of the Met's Disability Independent Advisory Group should hang their heads in shame for advising that 'guidance should be developed around the most appropriate way to move a wheelchair user should it become necessary' rather than condemning Jody's treatment outright.

We demand an independent inquiry involving disabled people's organisations, the trade unions and young people's organisations. As well as investigating Jody's treatment such an inquiry should also challenge the policing and subsequent charging of student protesters.

Fast news

Children's homes axed

In what must be one of the low points in local authority cuts, Tory-controlled Essex county council will consider a proposal at its next cabinet meeting in June to close all its children's homes.

The 'externalisation of children's homes' will involve about 120 staff losing their jobs and 36 vulnerable children being found alternative placements.

This decision will also destroy the cumulative professional knowledge which this service has built up over decades. It was recently praised for piloting a pioneering approach to child development called 'social pedagogy', including a three-year staff training programme.

Whilst some children may be found placements in foster care this does not suit every child. One of the children affected has written to David Cameron and told him he had 15 foster placements before settling in his current home.

The real danger though is that children find themselves in the private residential sector where profit is the main focus.

The Tory council is a 'corporate parent' with a legal responsibility to safeguard children and young people in council care.

The public sector unions supported by Essex residents need to remind the Tory councillors what this means and stop this disgraceful proposal before it is implemented.

By a Unison member

Tory MP cashes in

'We're all in this together' was the Tories' slogan to justify austerity. But some of us are more in it than others.

Alun Cairns, the Tory MP for Vale of Glamorgan, has just trousered a £29,000 pay-off for losing his seat in the Assembly. The "resettlement grant" is intended to help defeated Assembly Member (AMs) be weaned off their pampered £54,000 salaries before being released back into the real world. Except Cairns didn't lose his seat - he chose not to take it up after winning in Vale of Glamorgan in the general election.

Cairns deliberately hung on as an AM until the Assembly election so that he could claim the £29,000 pay off.

It's not the first time Cairns' snout has plunged into the trough. As an AM he claimed £12,500 a year for a flat in Cardiff near the Assembly despite living just 30 miles down the M4. He even had the cheek to demand the Assembly change its rules to allow him to continue to claim it when boundary changes made him ineligible for the pay-out. The Assembly duly obliged.

Socialist Party Wales

Government priorities

The government regularly tries to soften up public opinion to its vicious cuts in disability benefits. Ministers' latest headline grabbing ruse is to publish some of the more unusual excuses used by people found guilty of benefit fraud, even though these people are a minuscule percentage of the total number of claimants - 0.8% of total benefit expenditure.

Moreover, what the government fails to point out is that tax evasion (excluding tax avoidance) amounts to £70 billion, according to the PCS union. This compares to £1 billion in benefit fraud.