

BROWN OR CAMERON?

by Daphne Liddle

THE MAIN battle arena in the general election campaign will be the economy in the continuing aftermath of last year's banking crisis – whether to raise taxes or cut public services.

Both Labour and the Tories will be forced to use both measures to some extent but the arguments are over which is the most important tool to use to reduce Government debt.

And though Brown's Labour government is a long way from socialist the differences between the two approaches is running along class fault lines.

And to prove it Cameron last Tuesday wheeled out another 30 business leaders to say they did not approve of Brown's plans to raise National Insurance contributions for those earning over £20,000.

But since Cameron has been berating Brown for the slow pace of his plans to tackle the budget deficit, he would have to replace the NI cut by rais-

ing some other tax or making the sort of instant drastic cuts that would put more people on the dole and send the country plunging into further recession.

It seems most likely he would raise Value Added Tax instead. But this would raise prices and impact disproportionately on people on low incomes. Businesses would still lose as hard up customers cut back on their spending.

global crisis

The global economic crisis and the general mantle of the bourgeois state under which Brown, Cameron and Liberal Democrat leader Clegg operate allows little latitude for significantly different policies.

But those small differ-

ences are widening along class lines. Brown is raising taxes on the rich. Just this week the 50 per cent tax rate on people earning over £150,000 a year came into force. It's not much and many of the richest will "restructure" their finances to avoid it. But it is better than raising taxes on the poor, which is what an increase in VAT would be.

Brown is planning to spend to create more jobs in "green" industries and is allowing councils to build a few of the desperately needed council houses. It is not nearly enough but better than forcing the sale of the remaining council housing or raising council house rents to market level – average £80-a-week to £250-a-week – and ending secure tenancies, which the Tories are planning.

They claim that "low" council rents distort the housing market. In reality the dire shortage of council housing is keeping house prices artificially high. Over the last 50



• What you see is not always what you get!

years house prices have multiplied about several thousands times – way above the general rate of inflation – and housing now takes a higher proportion of workers' wages than it ever has.

Workers' wages reflect only a fraction of the

wealth they create for their bosses. But before they can spend any on their families they must enrich the bankers by paying instalments on their mortgages and other debts at high interest rates while the Government and Bank of England supply these finance institutions with money at a virtually non-existent interest rates. And increasing numbers of workers now also have to fork out high rents to private landlords from their meagre wages.

It's high time they got angry about it but too

many workers are working too long hours; they are tired and cynical and do not trust any political party. There will not be a revolution tomorrow but it will come, eventually.

In the meantime voting on 6th May to keep the Tories out is vital to stop our situation getting significantly worse than it is.

When filthy rich business tycoons publicly back the Tory party no one can be surprised. They are our class enemy and they are rich and powerful. If they are attacking Brown he can't be all bad.

Tory millions

The Tories have the might of the Murdoch press and media empire on their side – as Blair used to. And they have Lord Ashcroft's millions to back their election campaign – a man who chooses not to live or pay taxes in Britain but lives in his own fiefdom in Belize.

To him, Britain and the people of Britain are just something to make more and more money out of while giving back as little as possible; we are just a gullible and willing business opportunity. If we let the Tories back in that is exactly what we could become. We must keep them out.

FUND

Another month and another challenge – to hit our £3,000 fighting fund target and ensure that our communist voice reaches out to working people every week. The April fund kicks off with £489 in the bag including £48.60 raised at a meeting of the NCP Politburo last weekend, £20 from a supporter in Manchester and another score from the Metropolitan New Worker supporters group.

Now the election's been called we're going to get all the usual lies from the bourgeois parties about overcoming the slump. They want us to tighten our belts while they continue to live lives of luxury and ease. While millions are out of work or on short-time the rich carry on as if nothing has happened. And for them nothing has.

That's why we must expose the myths of capitalism and campaign for the communist alternative night and day to build the communist movement and struggle for peace and socialism. Raising funds to the New Worker is a crucial part of that struggle. All contributions, big or small, help so please send your donation to: New Worker Fund, PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ.

Carnage continues in Iraq

by our Arab Affairs correspondent

OCCUPIED Iraq has been rocked by a new wave of partisan attacks and bombings in Baghdad. The Green Zone came under mortar fire on Saturday; scores of people were killed and hundreds more injured in multiple and co-ordinated attacks on embassies.

Further blasts wrecked parts of the Shia neighbourhood, which was once the stronghold of the Mahdi Army, in the following days and Baghdad International Airport was closed on Wednesday morning for "security reasons".

Three explosions on Sunday went off within minutes of each other at about 11.30am outside the German, Spanish, Egyptian and Iranian embassies. The residence of the Ger-

man ambassador was wrecked and the Egyptian consulate severely damaged. A fourth bomber was shot dead by the security forces on his way to the diplomatic police HQ. On Tuesday a further eight car bombs devastated residential neighbourhoods in both Shia and Sunni Muslim quarters.

One partisan movement that works with the Baathist resistance, the Islamic Army of Iraq, warned of massive attacks to follow the deadly triple strike on Baghdad hotels in January. Deadly blasts destroyed four government ministries, two court houses and the Baghdad council building during three attacks in August, October and December.

No one has claimed responsibility for the attacks and the partisans claim that the hidden hand of American intelligence is behind at least some of the sectarian terror. But the puppet regime has

blamed them on Al Qaida and the Baathist underground. What is certain is that attacks, which the puppet police say were carried out by suicide fighters, were clearly targeted and that they were timed to embarrass the collaborationist political factions that are scrambling to form a new coalition, following the largely rigged general election last March.

gloating

Meanwhile families of Iraqi civilians, seen being shot and killed by US forces in a leaked video, are seeking justice for their deaths. The video released by the Swedish based Wikileaks website, showed American soldiers laughing and gloating as they killed twelve Iraqi civilians in Baghdad three years ago.

Earlier this week Wikileaks, a whistleblower website that publishes

anonymously sourced documents, released a video showing the US military in an Apache helicopter gunship firing at a group of civilians in Baghdad three years ago. Two of the victims worked for the local Reuters news office in the Iraqi capital.

The Americans claim the aircrew had acted appropriately and followed the rules of engagement and that they had reason to believe the people seen in the video were anti-government fighters

The Pentagon, which has authorised compensation payments to some of the families, says it had no reason to doubt the authenticity of the tape, but that two investigations into the incident cleared the aircrew of any wrongdoing despite the footage showing some of the victims unmistakably holding camera equipment.