

Workers News



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NEW TORY ATTACK ON BENEFITS

By Jim Dye

THE STENCH of decay and corruption hangs over the Tory government. Again and again the Tories have been exposed for the greedy parasites that they are. While his MPs are prepared to accept backhanders for asking questions in parliament on behalf of their rich business friends, and ex-ministers take directorships in the industries they have privatised, John Major stumbles on without any real idea of how to get out of the mess.

But it would be wrong to see the Tories as being powerless, and the one thing they agree about is that the working class must continue to pay for the crisis of British capitalism.

Public sector workers and the un-

employed are in the front line of the new attacks. Railworkers are already confronting the effects of privatisation, and disputes are erupting in the Post Office as managers attempt to curtail union rights in the run-up to privatisation there. With an initial projected loss of 50,000 jobs, the latest Tory plans to dismantle and privatise the civil service will place every department under threat.

At the same time, those already out of work are seeing their meagre existence come under increasing pressure as the Tories continue the task of taking from the poor and giving to the rich. In the wake of Major's sick attack on 'beggars' on the streets of our cities – people who have been forced to beg because of Tory policies – instructions have been issued to the DSS to reduce the

accommodation will mainly be in the private sector, the proposals will be given a warm welcome by owners of cramped, unhygienic and dangerous bed-and-breakfast hostels everywhere.

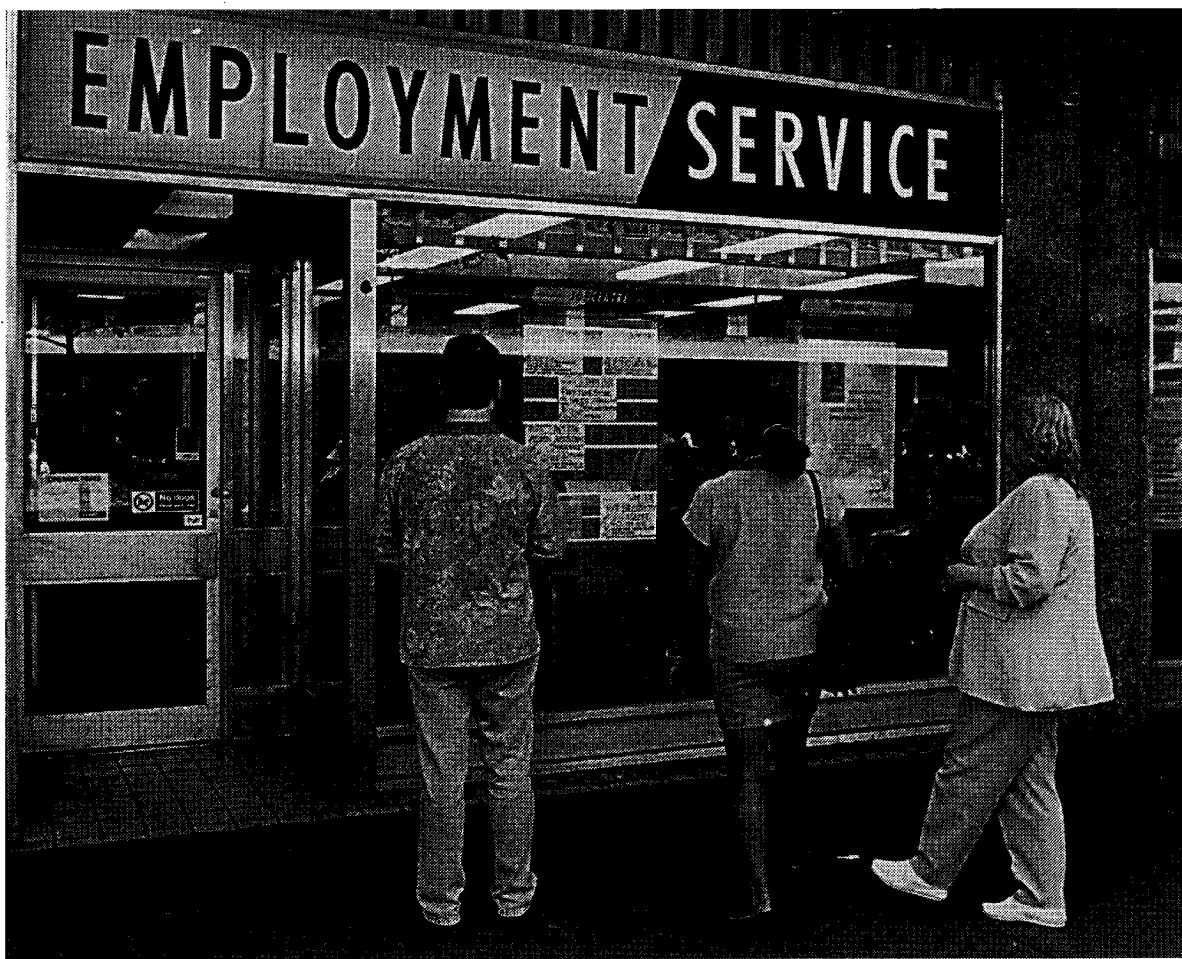
Taken on its own, this would appear to mean a rise in the housing benefit bill. But another savage attack is being prepared. The amount of housing benefit that a local authority is obliged to pay is to be reduced in order to force the poor into 'more appropriate accommodation' – in the words of a government report. The effects of this will be to increase the numbers of homeless people and of those living in slum accommodation. At the same time, the Tories plan to scrap unemployment benefit and replace it in 1996 with the Job Seekers Allowance. The JSA will last for only six months instead of the current 12, and will be linked to even harsher 'available and actively seeking work' tests. It will be administered by the Benefits Agency and paves the way for the destruction of the Employment Service, which currently pays unemployment benefit. The Tories hope that 11,000 jobs will be lost as a result of this change.

The most urgent task for activists is to mount a campaign in defence of both jobs and benefits which will unite workers in the civil service with the unemployed. However, for this to be successful, the reactionary leadership of unions such as the CPSA must be overcome. The bureaucrats in control of the CPSA, who live on fat salaries far removed from the poverty wages endured by their members, are acting openly as Tory stooges. They have done absolutely nothing to protect their members, preferring to mount witch-hunts against union activists. They spend their time promoting a rotten pay deal which actually means a cut in living standards, and which is based on the performance marks awarded by managers.

Union members must make a start now by linking up with unemployed groups in their communities, and by fighting to build rank-and-file bodies in their unions. Within the CPSA, the Benefits Agency section executive is controlled by the Militant-dominated Broad Left, while the majority of the Employment Service section executive consists of Militant supporters and their allies in BL84. These leaderships must mount an immediate joint struggle in defence of the membership and against the Tories and the CPSA right wing, by arguing now for co-ordinated national strike action. We must also expose the Labour Party leaders for their complete lack of commitment to defending the right of the unemployed to a decent standard of living, and for their refusal to support the restoration of benefits to the 1979 levels.

The potential exists for a massive fightback within the civil service and the rest of the public sector. But only if activists attempt to develop the anger of these workers into a strong rank-and-file leadership committed to the essential task of organising the fight will the Tories be defeated.

PUNISHING THE POOR!



amount of severe hardship payments to 16- and 17-year-olds. It is not enough, it seems, to simply withdraw the rights of almost all youth to benefits. Now the meagre £40 million paid to the most vulnerable section of young people – for example, those who have been thrown out of their homes or have left because they have suffered abuse – is considered a waste which should be going towards more tax cuts for the rich.

At last year's Tory party conference, government ministers claimed that significant numbers of young women were deliberately getting pregnant in order to 'jump the housing queue'. Every statistical study showed that this was complete nonsense. Nevertheless, in July the housing minister, Sir George Young, announced measures designed to make it much more difficult for single mothers, and many others besides, to get housed by the council. The waiting list system is to be changed to stop people who are homeless from getting priority, and local authorities will only be obliged to provide a homeless family with temporary accommodation for one year, two years at the most, after which there will be a 'fundamental review' of their case. Since this temporary

INSIDE: 15 years of the Islamic republic in Iran – centre pages

EDITORIAL

Close down Campsfield

WITH ITS cameras, high walls and mirror windows, Campsfield House detention centre is a fitting symbol of the Britain awaiting asylum-seekers. Bearing physical and psychological scars from torture and repression in the Middle East or Africa, asylum-seekers are 'welcomed' with an intimidating interrogation at the airport and are then confined to places like Campsfield while their applications are 'processed'. The choice of this rural setting – it is just outside Oxford – cannot be accidental; it isolates asylum-seekers from legal and welfare support, from community, friends and family. The only surprising thing about the uprising and break-out in June is that it didn't happen sooner.

There are about 700 asylum-seekers currently being held in 41 prisons and detention centres around the country. From October, they are to be concentrated in six 'specially-designated centres', of which Campsfield is one. The Tory government was possibly trying to clean up its image when it opened Campsfield, but what it has done is focus attention on the appalling treatment of asylum-seekers under Britain's racist immigration laws. Campsfield has now become a centre of protest. After a successful demonstration of 500 or more people outside Campsfield on June 4, it was agreed to continue holding demonstrations on the fourth Saturday of every month.

All socialists should support the campaign for the immediate closing down of Campsfield and the scrapping of the immigration laws. The Labour front bench has been silent on Campsfield. It says it is for 'fair' immigration laws, but how can laws designed to discriminate against other nationalities, and particularly black people, ever be 'fair'? This rotten, racist position must be exposed and fought against in the ranks of the trade unions and the Labour Party.

Campsfield is only the latest in a catalogue of racist brutality against refugees, asylum-seekers, and indeed against any black people who wish to enter the country for any reason at all – such as the Jamaicans visiting Britain for Christmas who were turned back at the airport. In the last year, two women have died as a result of British state racism – a Bosnian refugee committed suicide because her family was kept split up, and Joy Gardner was murdered by police who applied masking tape to her mouth as they tried to deport her.

Campsfield, and these tragic deaths, show that the Tories are eager to play their part in building the 'Fortress Europe' envisaged by the reactionary Maastricht Treaty. It is up to us to campaign in the labour movement to stop them.

- Close down Campsfield!
- For the right of asylum for all refugees!
- Automatic asylum rights for all those fleeing the war in ex-Yugoslavia!
- Scrap all immigration laws!
- Down with the Maastricht Treaty! For a Europe of open borders!

Hands off North Korea

THE DEATH of Kim Il-sung on July 8 at the age of 82 has removed the longest-serving Stalinist head of state in the world. It followed a sustained campaign by US imperialism to portray North Korea as a terrorist state – the same kind of propaganda offensive as that which preceded the Gulf War. Ironically, it was rumoured that Kim Il-sung had been on the verge of striking a deal with the United States, having taken personal charge of the dispute over North Korea's nuclear programme.

With his death, however, fears began to be voiced that his successor might be more under the wing of the military, and more likely to defy imperialism. The apparently inevitable fall of one of the last bastions of cold war 'communism' might not go so smoothly.

Any capitalist re-unification of Korea would be far more catastrophic than the re-unification of Germany. The North's economy has all but collapsed, with its 22 million people facing dire poverty and possible famine if the present situation continues. Both China and Russia have withdrawn all aid and preferential trading terms. Although the output of the South Korean economy is 14 times greater than North Korea's, it could not sustain the burden of capitalist restoration in the North.

For US imperialism, Korea is of vital economic and strategic importance to its project of competing with Japan for domination of the Pacific Rim. War is still possible – especially if the huge military establishment in North Korea proves unwilling to accept its fate quietly.

North Korean Stalinism has conquered new peaks of nepotism. Where other Stalinist regimes were content to provide jobs for the boys, it looks as if a hereditary Stalinist monarchy has been created with the succession of Kim Jong-il to most of his father's posts. Whether the handover continues in an orderly fashion will largely determine the future of the scheduled talks between the North and South.

When Kim Il-sung's death was announced, striking workers in South Korea called off their action in the interests of confronting the 'national danger'. Despite this, the southern working class has the potential to fight for a revolutionary re-unification of the country. Revolutionary socialists in Korea bear a heavy responsibility to give leadership to this fight.

In the meantime, in spite of the monstrous deformities that Stalinism has given the North Korean workers' state, it must be defended against the current round of provocations and against all attempts at reunification on a capitalist basis. It is up to North Korean workers to settle accounts with the successors of Kim Il-sung. Workers should reject US imperialism's attempts to portray itself as the guardian of democracy and nuclear non-proliferation with contempt. The US has an unparalleled record in propping up the blood-stained military regimes in the region. It also possesses the biggest nuclear arsenal in the world. Hands off North Korea!

BEFORE THE discussion had begun in the Labour Party and trade unions – before John Smith had even been buried – the Tory media had held the coronation of Tony Blair. It shouldn't surprise us that he is their choice. As the right wing's arch moderniser, he most clearly expresses the kind of leader of the Labour Party its enemies want – a product of the public school system and Oxford, a barrister, a devout Christian and upholder of family values, a crusader for law and order, the Labour leader most identified with distancing the party from the trade unions.

Party members and trade unionists have a clear duty to do everything in their power to stop Blair. To do so would be a serious blow to the right wing, and would encourage a wide-ranging debate in the party on the direction the modernisers have taken it since the election of the Kinnock-Hattersley 'dream ticket' in 1983. A Blair victory would mean more witch-hunting of socialists, a further shift to the right and a further weakening of links with the unions.

Tony Blair, if elected, would be the most right-wing leader since Ramsay MacDonald – and that's going some! The idea put about in the press that Blair is the candidate most feared by the Tories has led numbers of party members to argue that 'at least he'd win the election for us'. But the same was said about Kinnock!

Not only will Blair not guarantee success at the polls – after all, the last three attempts to mimic the Tories have failed miserably – but the notion that it doesn't matter what programme Labour gets elected on, so long as it gets elected, must be rejected for the reactionary rubbish it is. A Blair government which attacked the trade unions and the unemployed, fostered racism by failing to tackle the housing crisis, strengthened the racist and anti-union police and pursued economic policies barely distinguishable from the Tories would be no victory at all. In fact, it would be the shortest route to discrediting Labour in the eyes of workers.

What about the other candidates? Neither Margaret Beckett nor John Prescott represents a genuine fight against either the Labour right wing or the Tories. They represent different strands of the spineless 'soft left', which has accepted and adapted to the right wing's agenda with few qualms.

Beckett has come a long way since she denounced Kinnock as 'Judas' in 1981 for handing the deputy leadership contest to Denis Healey. Within two years, she was voting for Kinnock in the leadership election, who rewarded her by making her Shadow Social Security spokesperson. By the late 80s she had resigned from the Campaign Group and was voting for Kinnock's witch-hunt. As Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury she was suitably conservative, and as deputy leader she happily played second fiddle to Smith. Despite being opposed to One Member One Vote (OMOV), she retired quietly into the background when it was decision time last September. Her much publicised but highly cautious support for some amending of the laws governing secondary picketing are, as her campaign stresses, in keeping with mainstream party policy. And while she has made veiled overtures to the

Defeat Blair and the modernisers

On July 21, Tony Blair was elected as the new leader of the Labour Party. Below we reprint the text of a Workers News leaflet issued during the contest

left, her previous record shows how hollow these appeals are.

As for Prescott, for all his macho 'man of the people' posturing, he was the figure the right wing relied upon to deliver OMOV, thus strengthening its drive to weaken links with the trade unions. In the scales of labour movement history, this weighs considerably more than Prescott's endless accounts of the role he played in the 1966 seafarers' strike. Like Beckett, Prescott has no record of principle in relation to any of the major questions of recent years – the Gulf War, the witch-hunt and the poll tax, to name but three. His campaign, while tailored to look like an appeal to grass roots workers, and particularly trade unionists, is empty rhetoric. He refuses to commit himself to the key demand for the restoration of trade union immunity before the law. His position as transport spokesperson has enabled him to build an image as a caustic opponent of the Tories. But this is no great achievement, since the Tories' transport policy, irrespective of Prescott's sound bites, has managed to alienate almost the entire country, including a broad swathe of commuting Tory voters.

All three candidates have glibly talked about full employment – as if this is simply some kind of policy option. But without steep taxation of the rich, the renationalisation of industries privatised by the Tories and a major programme of public works, the only jobs created under a Labour government would be those made possible by an upturn in the economy.

Our motivation for voting against Blair is not based upon support for Beckett's and Prescott's policies, but rather on standing alongside those who sincerely want to fight the modernisers and oppose Blair's 'vision' of Labour as a 'classless' party. Given the failure of the Campaign Group to stand a candidate, or even take a clear stand on the contest, their votes will inevitably be split between Beckett and Prescott – and it is difficult to put a wafer between the two. Because of the transferable vote system, so long as the first two preferences are for Blair's opponents, it doesn't matter which order they are in.

That being said, rank-and-file members and trade unionists must not lower their horizons to just putting crosses in boxes. Many are deeply alienated by the media-led circus – and rightly so. Members have been treated to the spectacle of a contest in which differences are kept to a minimum and none of the candidates will even be drawn on whether they support the signal workers' strikes or not! One trade union

leader described his members' attitude to the contest as one of 'yawning indifference'. With one MP's vote being equal to those of 200 ordinary members, and with MPs having up to six other votes, it is little wonder that many see the election as a fix. The fact that the rules governing nomination effectively prevent a left candidate from running shows the contempt the leadership holds for elementary party democracy. The entire process is grossly undemocratic and must be overturned.

The left must not confine itself to waiting around for the next leadership contest. It must launch a fight across the constituencies and throughout the unions to rebuild rank-and-file opposition to the modernisers, who will only lead more defeats. Nor must it confine itself to a shopping list of 'commitments' which an incoming Labour government is supposed to honour – upholding the right to strike, rebuilding the welfare state, creating full employment, reducing defence spending, etc. Such demands are so vague that even Blair could probably endorse them. All they have built is a small and ineffective periphery for the ever-unreliable Campaign Group. What is needed is a fighting programme of demands to defend workers' rights and advance the struggle for socialism. Key elements must include:

- Repeal of all anti-trade union legislation. No state interference in the unions. Restoration of full legal immunity, the right to strike, and to carry out secondary picketing and solidarity action. Full support to all workers in struggle.
- Renationalisation of all industries privatised by the Tories, with compensation only to small shareholders. Nationalisation of all companies threatened with bankruptcy.
- Abolition of VAT on fuel. Replace the council tax with a graduated property tax. Steep taxation of the rich and the big private companies to fund an increase in public spending.
- Renationalisation of the NHS. Restoration of all cuts in health, welfare, education and other local authority spending.
- For an emergency programme of low-cost public housing and renovation, and the introduction of rent control in both public and private sectors. Nationalisation of all building and development land.
- For an integrated subsidised public transport system, backed by a major investment programme. All new roadbuilding to be reviewed by committees drawn from local communities affected.
- For an immediate 35-hour week, without loss of earnings, and a living minimum wage.
- Restoration of full benefit rights at 16, and an end to discrimination against under 25s. An immediate increase in all benefits and state pensions to a living rate.
- Reverse all Tory measures to create a two-tier education system. Abolish all private schools. Mandatory grants for all students. Proper training and apprenticeships for the unemployed and school leavers at trade union rates of pay.
- Active opposition to all forms of racism and fascism. Abolition of all racist immigration laws.
- Troops out of Ireland now. Abolition of all nuclear weapons.
- Abolition of all 'public order' legislation and the Criminal Justice Bill if it is passed.
- Stop the witch-hunts of socialists in the party. Restore full rights to those members who have been suspended or expelled.



John Prescott, Margaret Beckett and Tony Blair

SIGNALS DISPUTE

Go for all-out strike action!

By an RMT member

AFTER six one-day strikes and one 48-hour strike, the time has come for signal workers to insist that the RMT leaders launch indefinite action. Under instructions from the government not to break the public-sector pay policy, Railtrack managers are attempting to undermine the strike by forcing inspectors to operate signal boxes. They are hoping that the drawn-out nature of the dispute will turn public opinion against the signal workers, and force them to settle on the company's terms.

Signal workers are claiming an 11 per cent pay rise with no strings, to make up for a decline in their wages relative to other railway workers and an increased workload due to job losses. Railtrack is insisting they accept a so-called restructuring package. This would encompass huge job losses and the introduction of new

management techniques, in return for what Railtrack claims would be a three per cent rise in earnings. However, it is admitted by management that under the deal 25 per cent of signal workers would be worse off. Railtrack chairman Bob Horton is insisting that the package be self-financing and that no pay rise would be forthcoming without guarantees of increased productivity or redundancies from the workforce.

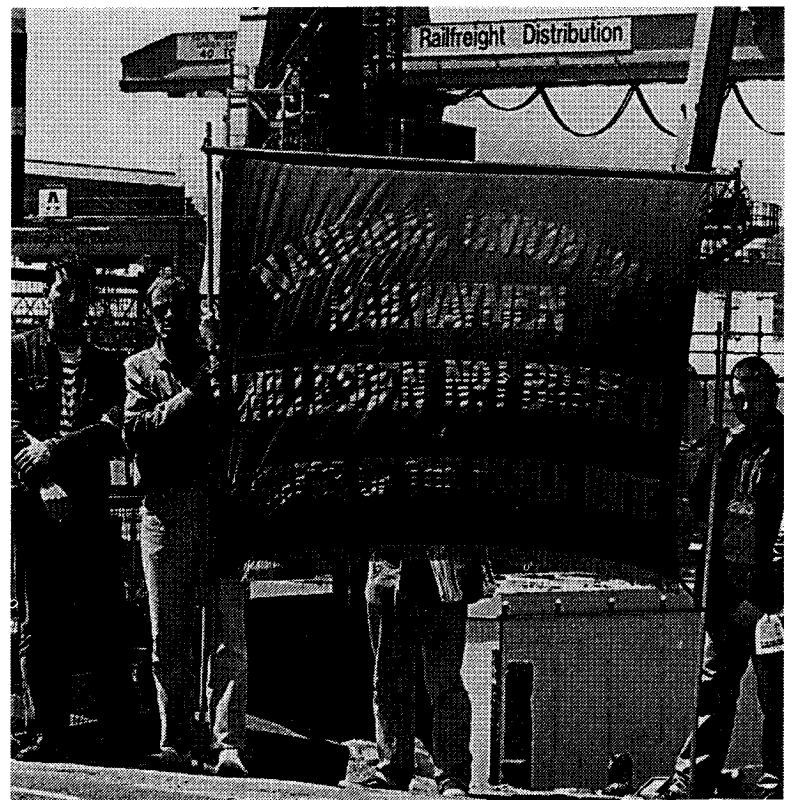
The restructuring offer contains such niceties as 'annualised hours', which allows an individual to contract for anything up to 57 hours per week. This dramatically cuts down the number of hours which are paid at overtime rates and makes Sundays part of the normal roster at flat-rate. Also included are annual assessments, role flexibility – allowing the company to roster signal workers to cover jobs which they do not normally do – the abolition of seniority in promotion, and different rates of pay for

workers doing the same job. Weekly cash payment of wages will be replaced by four-weekly bank credit transfer.

When the RMT balloted signal workers, there was a massive four to one in favour of strike action on an 80 per cent turnout – even though it was a fully postal vote. The union leaders called a 24-hour stoppage and Railtrack responded with an offer of 5.7 per cent backdated to April 1 – the date it took over the track and signalling from British Rail under the government's privatisation programme. The offer, however, was dependent on the RMT agreeing in advance to enter talks on restructuring. It was due to be faxed to RMT headquarters the next day, but never arrived. What did arrive was an announcement from the then Tory Transport Minister, John MacGregor, that the offer breached the government's 1.5 per cent public-sector pay ceiling. Railtrack managers then withdrew the offer, and claimed it had never been made.

The RMT leadership has been dragged into this dispute kicking and screaming. It has met every attack on its members with complete prostration, and has refused point-blank to mount anything other than verbal protests to rail privatisation – despite massive opposition to the scheme throughout the country. All it would do was beg so-called Tory 'rebels' to vote for meaningless changes in the Rail Privatisation Bill on its way through parliament.

Having accepted that restructuring is inevitable, Jimmy Knapp and



RMT signal workers' picket line at Willesden Junction, north London, on June 15

the RMT right wing seek only to influence the process in order to guarantee their own future role. They fear that restructuring will mean an end to all national agreements with Railtrack, and that this could lead to de-recognition of the union. Union membership is already declining steeply due to redundancies and the ending of the check-off method of collecting subscriptions, and its financial crisis is spiralling out of control. De-recognition would be the final blow.

Given the anger of rank-and-file signal workers, it was necessary for the RMT leaders, very reluctantly, to lead some kind of struggle in order to maintain their credibility. At the same time, they would keep a brake on the action to remind management of their important role in disciplining the workforce. But right-wingers on the

executive are looking for the earliest opportunity to put the Railtrack offer to the membership.

The signal workers now find themselves in the front line of the fight against Tory policies, saddled with a leadership that has decided to cut and run. The task of winning this dispute falls to union activists, who must build on the solid support for the strike among the rank and file. They must demand that the 'lefts' on the executive, currently entrusted with the running of the dispute, immediately launch all-out strike action – the only way to deliver a real blow against the government and Railtrack. At the same time, they must attempt to draw other railworkers – all of whom are faced with sweeping attacks on their jobs and conditions – into the struggle against privatisation.

Why vote Labour?

Dear Workers News,

I read with astonishment your article calling for a 'class' vote for Labour in the local elections. What is the 'class' here supposed to stand for? I mean, how exactly do you think it is in the interests of the working class to vote Labour?

I'm asking this because none of the Trotskyist press spells out this basic issue so that the working class has a coherent position to follow. But you seem to be the only avowedly Trotskyist party in Britain which continues to call for a Labour vote. Can you explain why you have decided to stand out in this way?

Yours sincerely,
Charlie Brady
London NW6

Workers News replies: First of all it's necessary to clarify one point that comrade Brady raises. Workers News is far from being the only left paper calling for a Labour vote. At present the left is divided into three main camps in its attitude towards electoral policy. There are a number of sectarian groups (RCP, RCG, CPGB, ICP, Spartacist League, etc) who operate a 'No Vote to Labour' line.

Then there are other organisations which call for a Labour vote, but do so with varying degrees of opportunism. These include Militant, the SWP, *Socialist Outlook* and *Socialist Organiser*. Finally, there are a few like ourselves who attempt to develop the positions of Lenin and Trotsky on the Labour Party.

They advocated a policy of critical support to the Labour Party, which they characterised as a bourgeois workers' party – a party based on the working class and its organisations but with a reformist, pro-capitalist leadership. For Lenin and Trotsky,

voting for the Labour Party did not mean a vote of confidence in its leadership or its programme.

On the contrary, it meant an opportunity to expose its leaders in practice by demanding that they carry out a range of anti-capitalist measures. In this way, they aimed to counterpose the rank and file of the labour movement to the rotten bureaucrats leading it. So long as no significant revolutionary party existed, to refuse to vote Labour – and therefore to put it on a par with the Tories – could only serve to discredit Marxists in the eyes of the mass of workers, who regarded Labour as 'their' party.

We don't make demands on the Labour leadership – or on the trade union leaders, for that matter – because we think they will carry them out. On the contrary, we want to prove to the millions who have illusions in people like Tony Blair that they won't! There is a long tradition on the left in Britain which holds – in spite of all evidence to the contrary – that the working class can be broken from Labour by pure propaganda, rather than by making its own, sometimes bitter, experiences.

Anger and frustration at Labour's wretched record are absolutely understandable. But advocating an abstention, or support for left candidates without any base in the working class, can only seem to be a form of direct assistance to the Tories – the open party of the ruling class. After all, we don't refuse to support a strike, even if it is led by the worst bureaucrat in the TUC. By voting Labour, we aim to strike a blow at the main enemy, the Tories, without giving an inch to the reactionary Labour leaders.

We don't suggest to workers that Labour will solve their problems. Only a revolutionary party can do that. But, despite its rapid shift to the right, Labour remains the mass party supported and funded by workers, and despite the modernisers, it remains based on the trade unions. And unless you take the SWP's claims of mass recruitment seriously, it is without a serious 'revolutionary' contender for the leadership of the working class. There is no shortcut to a struggle against the bureaucrats in their own backyard. We hope that you will read our new pamphlet, *Revolutionaries and the Labour Party*, and that its arguments will convince you!

MONKLANDS EAST BY-ELECTION

A shot in the foot

By Philip Marchant and
Richard Price

READING too much into by-election results is a notoriously dodgy business. The tendency of mid-term protest votes to evaporate once a general election looms has been seen again and again. But Labour's near loss of John Smith's old seat of Monklands East to the Scottish National Party on June 30, and the reduction of its majority from 15,712 to 1,640 could prove to be more than a nine-day wonder.

The sectarian divide in Scotland between Protestants and Catholics, which politicians of all parties normally skirt round with polite references to 'our different traditions', became a central issue of the campaign. And Labour's vulnerability to the SNP in its urban strongholds was once more demonstrated, on the back of a European election in which the nationalists polled a record 32.6 per cent.

Labour's attempt to fight the election on its usual staple diet of anti-Tory national and local issues was rapidly overtaken by the SNP hammering away at alleged local government corruption. Monklands District Council, which is based in the largely Catholic town of Coatbridge in the neighbouring Monklands West constituency, also covers predominantly Protestant Airdrie in Monklands East. It was accused of discriminating in its spending in favour of Coatbridge, as well as running a 'jobs for the boys' regime. On top of this, it was revealed

that all Labour's district councillors were Catholics.

The SNP was able to make capital out of Labour's near-total disarray over the issue. Once it became clear that the allegations were the major issue on the doorstep, Labour mounted a damage-limitation exercise, with candidate Helen Liddell calling for an audit of council spending. When the figures were released and appeared to substantiate the claims, she called on the Tory Scottish Office to mount an inquiry – only for Monklands West MP Tom Clarke to enter the fray on the side of the councillors.

On election night, Labour roundly condemned the SNP for playing the unionist (ie, Protestant) card. In fact, it was the Tories who most blatantly stoked sectarian divisions, while the SNP – publicly at least – strenuously denied that it was campaigning for the Protestant vote. However, there were reports of SNP canvassers pointing out that Liddell is a Catholic and that an SNP car on polling day flew a Glasgow Rangers scarf. One poll conducted during the campaign suggested that 65 per cent of Protestants were supporting the SNP, while 85 per cent of Catholics were backing Labour.

On the national issues, which Labour claimed the SNP avoided, the latter scored some points, with a more radical programme on job creation based on scrapping Trident. Despite the exceptional nature of the by-election, there is some underlying evidence that the SNP is continuing to gain ground among the poorest sections of workers, who are repelled by the right-wing Scottish Labour establishment. However, it is also clearly

the case that much of the increase in the SNP vote came from tactical voting by Tories.

The rising support among Scottish workers for the SNP shown in the regional and European elections, and again in Monklands East, represents a deep-running hatred of the Tories. At the same time, it reflects a frustration at Labour's apparent inability to defeat them and a growing alienation from the Scottish men in suits who lead the Labour Party in Britain as a whole. Any socialist perspective for workers in Scotland has to take this into account.

As for Monklandsgate, workers should resist any attempts by Labour, the SNP or the Tories to refer the matter to the Scottish Office. Instead, they should call for a trade union inquiry to investigate allegations of job and budgetary discrimination and draw up proposals for prioritising spending on the most run-down working class areas.

Defend the Rochdale 3

DURING a demonstration in Rochdale on May 5 against the BNP local election campaign, three people, including an NUCPS steward, were arrested after defending themselves from attacks by the fascists. They are charged under Section 3 of the Public Order Act, which allows prosecution under the unjust concept of 'common purpose'. Please send messages of support and donations towards legal expenses to: Rochdale 3 Defence Campaign, c/o PO Box 83, SW DO, Manchester M15 5NL.

Workers News

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ITALY

Echoes of the 1930s

THE SPECTACULAR collapse of Italy's political establishment in 1993 left a void which has been filled by Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia. Financed by Berlusconi's enormous media and supermarket empire, and hastily thrown together from disaffected middle class elements and football supporters' clubs (Berlusconi also owns AC Milan), Forza Italia has come from nowhere to dominate the political scene.

Only a few months after forming Forza Italia, Berlusconi was able to put together a coalition with the far right National Alliance (of which the fascist Italian Social Movement - MSI - is the main component) and the Northern League. As the 'Freedom Alliance', this coalition swept to power in the March general election, with Forza Italia taking 21 per cent of the national vote and Berlusconi becoming prime minister. In the European elections in June, Forza advanced to 30.6 per cent, while the National Alliance dropped a point to 12.5 per cent and the Northern League dropped almost two points to 6.6 per cent.

Forza's leap to prominence indicates a very volatile political situation. Large sections of the middle class and skilled workers were disgusted by the wholesale corruption and Mafia links of the main parties, and turned to right-wing populism for a solution. Berlusconi, with his newspapers and three nationwide television channels was ideally placed to fill the vacuum, and he was shrewd enough to name his party after a football chant - 'Let's Go, Italy!'.

The ex-'communist' Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), which prior to the elections had been the only remaining nationally based party, signally failed to attract those alienated from the traditional ruling parties.

Before the rise of Forza Italia, there had been severe problems in constructing a right-wing bloc involving the mainly southern-based neo-fascists of the MSI and the regionalist Northern League. For the duration of the election campaign, Berlusconi managed to paper over these differences by concentrating on the issue of corruption and playing down the role of the fascists. But the populist anti-corruption drive had engulfed almost the entire political class of Italy. Former Socialist Party leader Bettino Craxi was on the run in Tunisia and seven-times Christian Democrat premier Giulio Andreotti was accused of being a full member of the Mafia. Thousands of other MPs, industrialists, civil servants and police officers were either in jail or under investigation. Berlusconi was faced with putting a brake on the campaign - some claim because it was getting too close to his Fininvest empire.

On July 13, a government decree was issued, effectively forcing judges to allow bail for corruption suspects. This led directly to a constitutional crisis and an outcry from those who had voted the coalition into power. The investigating judges demanded to be transferred to other duties on the grounds that their investigations would be seriously hampered, and Roberto Maroni of the Northern League, the deputy premier and interior minister, claimed he had been tricked into signing the decree. Berlusconi threatened to force Maroni's resignation; Maroni claimed that the decree would aid the Mafia and that he would resign if it was endorsed by parliament. The MSI also came out against the decree. After a six-day crisis, Berlusconi backed down and withdrew the measure, but not before some 2,000 suspects had been released.

Berlusconi has moved to completely muzzle the media. Already owning three of the 12 national television channels, he has sacked the board of directors of the RAI state broadcasting corporation, which controls three of the remaining channels, and appointed a new five-

By Tony Fox

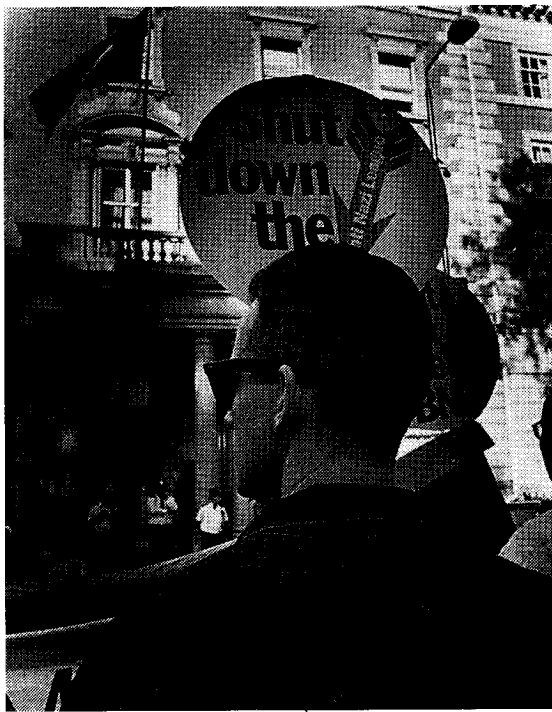
man board, four of whom are right-wingers. These six channels have some 92 per cent of the prime time viewing audience. Berlusconi's attempt to monopolise the media has had further repercussions. In a little reported move, armed police raided 60 Bulletin Boards Systems on May 10-12 and carried out searches of dozens of private houses under the pretext of cracking down on software piracy.

In foreign policy, too, the echoes of the 1930s have been apparent. Berlusconi offered to collaborate with France in sending troops to Rwanda, but was apparently turned down. Neo-fascists in the government have begun to demand compensation from Croatia for the expulsion of Italians from the Yugoslavian Dalmatian coast in 1946 - reviving Italian claims on Trieste, Istria and Dalmatia and preparing public opinion for possible intervention in a Balkan-wide conflict. And in an obscene anti-Semitic gesture, MSI leader Gianfranco Fini chartered the cruise ship Achille Lauro to take a party of Axis veterans to the battlefield of El-Alamein. A wheelchair-bound American Jew was murdered by followers of Abu Nidal when they hijacked the vessel in 1985. Fini has declared that 'Mussolini's regime has provided many valid pointers not only for today, but for tomorrow'.

The Italian heritage minister, Domenico Fisichella, a neo-fascist, intervened to prevent the staging of an event that film director Peter Greenaway was about to put on in Rome's Piazza del Popolo. Summing up his reactionary views on culture, Fisichella declared that he would 'attribute the status of art only to aesthetic forms which have existed for centuries'.

Capitalist governments worldwide have been quick to embrace Italy's new administration. On June 15, foreign secretary Douglas Hurd told the House of Commons that even the five members of the National Alliance in Berlusconi's government would be welcome in Britain since they had been 'democratically elected and properly appointed'. Two weeks later, Hurd met his Italian counterpart, Antonio Martino, in London to discuss the European Union. 'Britain and Italy share similar perspectives about the future of Europe,' Hurd later told journalists. During his visit to Europe in early June to commemorate the D-Day invasion, President Clinton attended a dinner party in Rome given by the Italian government, at which Gianfranco Fini was also present. German Chancellor Helmut Kohl has invited Berlusconi to a bilateral summit, although he barred Forza MEPs from joining the European parliament's Christian Democrat group, the European People's Party.

What are the prospects for a working class fightback? There has been recent



Demonstration outside the Italian Embassy in London on June 29, organised by the ANL and CAFE, against the visit of Italian foreign minister Antonio Martino

action by carworkers and air traffic controllers, and by school students against education cuts. The collapse of Stalinism has had a major impact in Italy, which had the largest communist party of any western European country. Certainly the PDS is in crisis and looks set to move further right. Following a further decline of more than a percentage point in the European elections, PDS leader Achille Occhetto resigned. His successor is Massimo D'Alema - Occhetto's second-in-command - who received 249 votes from the PDS national committee against 173 for the 'moderniser' candidate, Walter Veltroni. But the debate in the party suggests that most of the leadership see the way forward for the PDS as cutting even more ties with the working class.

Despite being a left split from the PDS, the Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC) continues to retain much of its Stalinist baggage. PRC leader Fausto Bertinotti responded to Berlusconi's takeover of the media by describing it as a 'democratic emergency' and calling for the intervention of the president.

In the elections, the PRC tail-ended the PDS-led Progressive Front, and even declared itself willing to accept ministries in a future PDS-led government. Shamefully, two of the three supporters of the United Secretariat (Usec) in the PRC leadership voted to support this position, while a third abstained. The Fourth International Association (AQI) - the Usec group operating within the PRC - subsequently reversed this position. Nevertheless, it demonstrates the willingness of at least some of the Usec leadership in Italy to accept a 'historic compromise' themselves.

At the PRC conference in January, three opposition groups came together to oppose the deal with the PDS, and their platform got a respectable 20 per cent of the vote. These included supporters of the AQI and the magazine *Proposta*, in which supporters of the International Trotskyist Opposition in the Usec participate. An article in *Irish Militant Labour* in February reported that the mood among oppositionists was to split from the PRC. But, with the majority of left activists and many trade union militants still loyal to the PRC, any such split would appear premature.

Despite the successes of the new right and its fascist allies, the position of Berlusconi's coalition is far from secure. The first act of the judges after the lifting of the decree curbing their powers was to step up the investigation into Berlusconi's business operations. The head of the construction arm of Fininvest, Paolo Berlusconi - the prime minister's younger brother - faces corruption charges. If the working class can be roused to fight the new political agenda, then the coalition could be swept away as rapidly as it appeared. The central task, however, is to gather the forces for building the mass revolutionary workers' party.

IRANIAN

In February 1979, a popular insurrection overthrew the Shah of Iran, but the masses were robbed of their victory and the clergy consolidated its rule through the viciously anti-working class Islamic republic. Today, after 15 years of the clerical regime, all forms of workers' organisation remain illegal.

But amid deepening economic crisis there are clear signs of discontent in the working class. Workers News spoke to a member of Iranian Revolutionary Socialists, a Trotskyist group which publishes *Workers' Socialist Notebooks*, about the present situation.

What analysis do you make of the Islamic regime?

The Islamic republic is obviously a capitalist regime, but one of a specific type. It is a clerical-capitalist regime. In order to understand its class nature, you have to examine the role played by the clergy in the ruling body of capitalism. From the beginning of this century, the clergy have in one way or another been part and parcel of the bourgeois state. They have played a prominent role as an intermediary between the monarchy, the landlords and the people, and during the 1906-8 Constitutional Revolution in Iran helped the bourgeoisie suppress the masses. However, during the period of the last Shah, who pursued a Westernising policy, the clergy were pushed aside from the centre of power - hence their opposition to the monarchy. Khomeini's opposition to the Shah in the 1960s was basically to demand more power for the clergy and for their involvement at the centre of the state.

In 1979, the clergy utilised the anti-despotic mass upsurge of the people and were able to mobilise an insurrection against the Shah and ride to power on the back of the masses. They were able to do so because of the absence of working class leadership in Iran. The pro-Moscow Tudeh Party did mobilise the masses against the Shah, but it also compromised with a section of the bourgeoisie. At the same time, the Fedaii's activities were running out of steam.

From the start of the new regime, two opposing tendencies emerged in the clergy. One was for holding power in a clerical sense - through a 'semi-feudal' capitalist state with numerous centres of power. It favoured the strict implementation of Islamic law whilst putting forward anti-Western slogans and sentiments. The second tendency wanted to establish a modern, centralised capitalist state, similar to the Shah's, which would be pro-Western and in which the bourgeoisie would run affairs. So from the outset the conflicts and contradictions were based on this issue: what form of bourgeois state should be re-established? And after 15 years, the conflict between the tendencies remains and the crisis has not been resolved.

What stage has the struggle between the various factions in the regime reached?

In the British press, the pro-Western tendency is usually referred to as 'moderate' or 'pragmatist' and the clerical tendency as 'radical' or 'hardline'. Of course, the leaderships of both tendencies have changed over the last 15 years, with some leaders shifting from one tendency to the other. At present, the 'moderate' tendency is led by Rafsanjani, the president, and the 'radical' tendency by Khomeini, who succeeded Khomeini as the spiritual leader of the Islamic republic. Generally speaking, the 'moderate' tendency has been gaining ground by building links with the West, encouraging foreign investors and establishing a more centralised state. It has centralised the army, the police and other units.

However, after the mass upsurges in Mashhad, Shiraz and other cities in Iran in May 1993, the power of the 'radicals' has increased because they have been able to blame the 'moderates' for not controlling the masses, for not resolving the economic problems, and for closely allying with the West. In the past two months, there have been some shifts at ministerial level from the 'moderates' to the 'radicals'. For example, Rafsanjani's brother, who was head of the state broadcasting service, has recently been dismissed by Khomeini and replaced by a 'radical'. The pretext, apparently, was the showing on television of an episode of the *Miss Marple* series! However, in spite of these shifts and the attacks of the 'radicals', the general trend is in favour of Rafsanjani and the 'moderates' and towards normalising relations with the West.

How do you assess the economic situation in the country?

Because of the unstable political situation, Rafsanjani's policy has not been fully implemented, and therefore the economic situation, in spite of approaches to the West, is getting worse every day. For example, Rafsanjani has been seeking loans from the IMF and from German, Japanese, Italian and other Western banks. So far the regime has received in the region of \$30 billion, but has not been able to pay back even the first instalment. By 1993, the arrears were in the region of \$8 billion. According to the governor of the central bank of Iran, this will reach \$18 billion by the year 2006, and it is estimated that the annual interest on this amount will be \$700 million.

Official sources estimate that by the end of this year, unemployment will reach half of the working population. Inflation is approaching 60 per cent, and the prices of basic foodstuffs like rice, meat and eggs have trebled in the last two years. As a result, workers and even the middle class are forced to get second jobs in order to survive, while the unemployed are left to fend for themselves. Especially in the last two years, Islamic rules and regulations relating to the economy have been replaced by the 'readjustment' policy of Rafsanjani - basically, a pro-Western economic policy in line with satisfying the terms of IMF loans. There have also been changes in the banking system. It was reported in the *Financial Times* on June 15 that private banks are to be allowed for the first time since the revolution. Under pressure from the Western banks, nationalised industry is moving rapidly towards privatisation and foreign investors are allowed to be major-

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ity shareholders. One of the planks of the readjustment policy was to establish a unified exchange rate for the rial, but this was abandoned last month.

How do you see the efforts of the regime to rehabilitate itself with Western imperialism?

The relationship between the Iranian regime and the West also has to be seen in the light of the faction fights within the regime. The Rafsanjani tendency has done its utmost to establish a normal relationship with the West, but progress has been slow and there have been many setbacks because of repeated interventions by the 'radicals'. One of the major issues blocking better relations is the Salman Rushdie affair. The 'radicals' have consistently stressed that Khomeini's *fatwa* calling for Rushdie to be killed should be implemented. But Rafsanjani has been trying to find ways out of this impasse, and we have recently been informed that at Friday prayers in June one of his supporters, Ayatollah Meshkini, pointed out that there is a possibility in Islamic law that the current spiritual leader can reverse the *fatwa* of a previous one. If this problem is resolved, it seems that there won't be any stumbling block in the way of normalising relations with the British government. The recent tit-for-tat expulsions of diplomats was quickly resolved, with both governments saying it will not harm their relationship.

What can you tell us about the growing collaboration between Iran and Turkey?

The present relationship between Iran and Turkey is a continuation of the traditional one between the capitalist states in the region: they are united in their opposition to the struggle of the Kurdish people. We witnessed this at the end of the Gulf War in relation to the mass upsurge by the Kurds in the north of Iraq. Although Iran and Iraq had been at war only a couple of years before, they met with Turkey to reach a common position on the Kurdish question.

Turkish-Iranian relations are influenced by the conflict between the Turkish government and the PKK, the unrest in the Kurdish areas of Iran, and the Iranian government's fight against the Iraqi-based Mojahedin. The deal between the Turkish and Iranian governments is as follows: that the Iranian government should hand over Kurdish refugees, in particular PKK supporters, some of whom are refugees in Iran, and that in return Turkey should hand over Iranian political refugees. At present, Turkey is one of only three countries that Iranians can go to without a visa. Many Kurdish militants and Iranian workers whose lives are in danger as a result of opposing the regime have been able to easily get to Turkey by bus. They have been demanding political refugee status from the UN and to be transferred to a third country.

Therefore, we have a large number of Iranian political refugees based in Turkey waiting for a response from the UN. But the Turkish government, in order to get PKK members back from Iran, is arbitrarily arresting any Iranian political refugees it can get its hands on and deporting them to Iran. For example, on June 16, according to the official Iranian press, 16 political refugees were handed over to Iran – and most probably they will be executed. This is why we have organised a series of demonstrations in front of Turkish embassies in various parts of the world.

What struggles are workers and the poor masses engaged in at the moment?

First of all, I'll deal with the struggles of the working class since the end of the war with Iraq. Clandestine strike com-

mittees have been formed and over 400 large and small-scale strikes have taken place. This shows that there is considerable discontent among sections of the working class, as well as the youth who returned from the war. We call this layer which has been involved in organising these committees and strikes the new vanguard of the working class. They have done so without the involvement of the traditional Stalinist organisations (Rahe Kargar, the Fedaiin Minority, the Tudeh Party, the Maoists, etc). However, these activities have been mainly spontaneous, and the workers have not been able to form a centralised organisation or develop a revolutionary political programme.

As far as the recent upsurge of the urban poor is concerned, it has been due to the economic crisis which has hit the poor, and particularly the youth, hardest. However, the uprisings in various cities have been staged in an organised way. For example, eye-witnesses pointed out that these actions had clearly been planned in advance by clandestine committees, which in the course of events were directing the masses to occupy key buildings. This shows that even within the spontaneous activity of the poor masses there is an embryonic leadership in existence.

Could you summarise what Iranian revolutionaries should do in this period?

One of the main tasks of Iranian revolutionaries at the present time is to try to win over this vanguard to a revolutionary programme, based on the concepts of the permanent revolution, the transitional programme and the Leninist organisation. All the traditional Stalinist organisations have failed. Programmatically, they support the two-stage revolution, the division between a minimum and a maximum programme, and a Stalinist rather than a Leninist method



The first of a planned series of pickets of Turkish Embassies around the world by Iranian left-wingers took place in London on June 24. It was called to protest against the new security agreement between the Iranian and Turkish governments under which opponents of the two regimes are being extradited to their home countries to face long terms of imprisonment, torture and, in some cases, death

of organisation. They have failed to orient towards the working class, and therefore they have not attracted any vanguard workers to their organisations. Now, with the collapse of Stalinism, the majority of the organisations which supported the Soviet Union (like Rahe Kargar, the Fedaiin Minority, the Fedaiin Majority and the Tudeh Party) are themselves in deep political crisis and on the verge of collapse. The tasks of Iranian revolutionary socialists are becoming doubly important at this particular moment – to build a Leninist organisation and to develop a revolutionary pro-

gramme on the basis of the documents of the first four congresses of the Third International and the positive experiences of Trotskyist organisations on the world scale.

However, to win over this new vanguard is not a simple matter, as they have developed a strong anarcho-sindicalist trend. Our struggle at this stage is to win these elements politically and build a revolutionary organisation with them, rather than by-passing them – as practised by most groups. Revolutionaries must seek to establish workers' socialist cells with these workers,

around a journal, in order to establish an embryonic form of Leninist organisation by direct intervention within the present struggles of the working class. In exile, all organisations supporting the working class should enter into united front activity against the regime with the help of the left organisations in Western countries. The Iranian left cannot fulfil these aims on its own. It is important that the left in Europe and other countries becomes closely involved in solidarity work to defend the struggles of the Iranian working class.

Betty Hamilton: a life for socialism

Obituary by Jean-Pierre Goethuys

BETTY HAMILTON, who died on May 2 at the age of 90, was one of the last militants of our movement who had become active in politics as a direct result of the German revolution of 1918. I first met comrade Betty in 1977 or '78 when I was a cadre of the Belgian section of the Lambertist tendency, the OCRFI. At that time the OCRFI had two sections in Britain: the British Committee for the Rebuilding of the Fourth International, around Betty, and the Bulletin Group led by Robin Blick.

She was a very warm and open-minded comrade, who listened first and then made up her mind. However, she had very clearly defined political opinions and could be very persuasive. Although most of my memories of her date back to that time, we continued to meet every now and then after we had gone our separate ways, the last occasion being a little under two years ago. I got the impression that she was by this stage sympathetic to Stéphane Just's group, which aims to revive the 'good old traditions' of Lambertism.

Betty Hamilton was born Berthe Dutoit in Geneva, in the French-speaking part of Switzerland, in 1904. Her father had been actively involved in working class politics, and had met Lenin during his Swiss exile. Her first political activity was during Switzerland's one and only general strike, in 1919, which took place under the direct influence of the German revolution. She could re-

member the enormous esteem the murdered Rosa Luxemburg was held in at the time by Swiss and German workers. Betty took part in the founding of the Swiss Communist Party, but left shortly afterwards for France.

In the 1920s, she was an active member of the French Communist Party, doing various jobs including journalism to earn a living. In France, she met her future husband, Willie, and developed a passion for contemporary dance. She was inspired by Isadora Duncan, who, following the Russian Revolution, wanted to liberate dance from the strictures of classical ballet. When she settled in Britain for good, Betty went into working class areas to teach children to express themselves through this avant-garde medium.

At the same time, she was politically active, carrying out work among miners. For a woman to discuss politics with men who were washing after coming off shift was unheard-of in those days! She joined the Workers International League and came into contact with leading members such as Ted Grant and Gerry Healy. She also kept in touch with the French Trotskyists, including members of Molinier's minority group, the POI. She told me she had even been expelled from the WIL at one stage for refusing to break links with the POI. She then tried to build a group herself, by recruiting several shop stewards.

Later, after the fusion of the British groups in 1944, she became a member of the Revolutionary Communist Party. From then on she aligned herself with Gerry Healy. Betty played an important role in the international movement, and



Betty Hamilton 1904-94

became the first secretary of the International Committee, which was founded in her flat near Victoria Station in 1953. She knew almost all the second generation of Trotskyist leaders, including Nahuel Moreno, Guillermo Lora, Joe Hansen, Jim Cannon, Pierre Frank and Pierre Lambert. Together with her husband, she set up a business which provided the international movement with badly-needed funds. Because the business also facilitated international work, she had a low public profile.

She admired Healy's organisational abilities, and regretted his departure from the 'good old days' of the Socialist Labour League. She also respected the young Mike Banda, who, in her opinion, had been pushed in the wrong direction by the party regime. By the early 1970s, she had largely withdrawn from activity in the SLL in order to nurse her sick

husband. She neither agreed with the launching of the daily *Workers Press* in 1969, which she considered to be a noose around the organisation's neck, nor with the 'transformation' of the SLL into the WRP.

She broke with Healy in 1971-72, to support Lambert and his co-thinkers. Although never formally expelled from the organisation, she was barred from its conference, with Healy standing at the door screaming 'get that French agent out of here!'. She remained an active member of the Labour Party and strongly believed that Trotskyists should carry out work in the mass organisations of the working class.

Some of her advice I will always keep in mind. Trotskyists, she thought, should be as critical of themselves as they are of anyone else. She encouraged comrades to regularly study the Marxist classics and to learn the lessons of the history of the Third and Fourth Internationals, so as not to repeat the same mistakes. And she disapproved of 'leaders' who have no consideration for the so-called personal problems of members of the movement.

Betty was an example of unwavering dedication to the working class and to revolutionary politics. She will be greatly missed. Although we sometimes had sharp political differences, she always impressed me with the patient, open-minded and comradely way she would discuss them. We have the duty of keeping her memory alive and continuing her lifelong struggle for socialism. We send our condolences to her family and friends.

The rise and fall of Gerry Healy

An assessment of the political career of the former WRP leader by Bob Pitt

PART TWENTY-SIX

UNTIL shortly before the WRP broke apart in October 1985, Sheila Torrance had shown considerable personal hostility to Healy, even going so far as to tell her own supporters that she would 'never have him as a member of the organisation again'.¹ Yet the WRP minority conference of October 25-26 denounced the Banda-Slaughter faction for having conspired to 'frame and expel the founder-leader of our movement, Comrade Gerry Healy' and declared itself 'proud to proclaim him as a member of the Workers Revolutionary Party'.²

To the rank and file, Torrance either denied Healy's sexual corruption outright or, alternatively, claimed that his 'private life' had nothing to do with his politics. This latter argument certainly contrasted sharply with the author's own experience as a WRP member in the late 1970s, when he tried to ward off Torrance's inquiries into his own private life on precisely these grounds, only to be told firmly that no such separation of the personal and the political was possible. 'Everything,' Torrance had insisted, 'is interconnected.' It now appeared that Torrance was proposing a quite startling revision of dialectical materialism. The new version read: 'Everything is interconnected - except Gerry Healy!' The dialectical processes which operated throughout the material universe apparently ground to a halt as soon as they approached the great Master of Dialectics himself.

All this appeared to justify the WRP majority's accusation that 'the entire anti-party group of Torrance, Mitchell and the Redgraves is being centred around Healy's charisma'.³ In reality, Torrance regarded the cover-up for Healy purely pragmatically, as the price to be paid for maintaining her bloc with his personal following, which included the two International Committee sections - in Greece and Spain - who had sided with the WRP minority mainly on the basis of support for Healy the individual.⁴ She had by no means abandoned her objective of removing Healy from the leadership. Her line, as Richard Price summarises it, was that the Banda-Slaughter faction had attacked the entire tradition of the movement Healy had built, and that it was therefore necessary to 'preserve the corpse of Healy, if you like, stuff him and put him in a glass case'.⁵

When a new Central Committee was elected at the WRP 'Eighth Congress' in January 1986, Healy was nominated by little more than half the party branches.⁶ Torrance having let it be known to her supporters that he should remain in retirement. The nominations Healy did receive would, all the same, have been sufficient to ensure his election to the CC. So pressure was put on him behind the scenes to withdraw, and Healy, presumably aware that he commanded insufficient forces at the congress to defy Torrance, was obliged to acquiesce. Ray Athow then announced on behalf of the standing orders committee that Healy was retiring from the leadership due to ill-health, although he would be able to attend CC and PC meetings as a 'political adviser'.

This compromise - identical to the one that Torrance and Mike Banda had cooked up back in September 1985 - was seen by loyal Healyites as

a disgraceful snub to their beloved leader. The day after the congress, Corin Redgrave arrived at a PC meeting accompanied by Savas Michael of the Greek section to demand that Healy should be restored to the party leadership. Paddy O'Regan, supported by Torrance and most of the PC, told them bluntly that this was a 'split issue', and sent them away empty-handed. Michael later met with Alex Mitchell and Ben Rudder in an attempt to gain their support for Healy's reinstatement, but got nowhere with them either.⁷ Even among the WRP minority, it is clear, Healy had been reduced to an isolated and discredited figure.

Meanwhile, Torrance was having some success in getting the show back on the road. Whereas the WRP/Workers Press was in a deep political crisis and already beginning to break up, Torrance's group staged a tempo-



Sheila Torrance

rary recovery. Despite losing almost all the WRP's material assets to the Banda-Slaughter faction, the minority resumed publication of the *News Line* on a twice-weekly basis in November 1985, and then raised the money to relaunch the paper as a daily in February 1986. With Healy shunted to one side and the minority bloc apparently holding together, it looked as though Torrance might have carried the day.

This soon proved to be an illusion. A capable organiser, Torrance had never had an original political thought in her life and, although there was initially some critical discussion within the minority concerning the politics of the old WRP, she and O'Regan proved unable to develop any new perspectives or policies. The WRP/News Line remained committed to Healy's view that Britain was in the grip of economic catastrophe and revolutionary crisis, and the party's intervention in the long printworkers' struggle at Wapping was characterised by the familiar call for an immediate general strike combined with the usual opportunist adaptation to the existing union leadership.

Not only was Torrance lumbered with Healy's politics, she was still saddled with Healy himself. For, in the long run, there was little chance that Healy would meekly accept the

humiliating 'advisory' role imposed on him, and it was only a matter of time before he tried to reimpose his political domination over the organisation. Indeed, when the beginnings of *glasnost* and *perestroika* became apparent in the Soviet Union, Healy demanded that the WRP/News Line should support the Gorbachev wing of the bureaucracy, which he claimed was launching the political revolution.⁸

Lacking any ideas of her own, Torrance had no objection to using Healy as a source of political advice, and at first was quite ready to go along with this. But the emerging pro-Stalinist line was challenged on the PC by Richard Price, who rejected the identification of bureaucratic reforms with the political revolution, arguing that these developments were an expression of Soviet Bonapartism in crisis. At one PC meeting Price condemned Healy's line that a section of the bureaucracy was playing a revolutionary role as 'Pabloism', which reduced Healy to apoplexy.⁹ Accustomed to an organisation in which his every word, however mad or mundane, was treated as the tablets from the mountain, Healy was unable to live with this kind of thing.

'For supporting *perestroika*,' Vanessa Redgrave recounts indignantly, 'Gerry and I were accused of "capitulating to Stalinism". We realised that the split we had made before had been incomplete.'¹⁰ But to carry out a further split a pretext had to be manufactured. From August 1986 onwards, therefore, Healy began to provoke a series of confrontations with the WRP leadership. First of all he demanded the expulsion of Alex Mitchell, who had disappeared to Australia in May and resurfaced as a journalist with the Murdoch press. Then Healy objected to a series of articles written by Athow and O'Regan ('G. Healy: Fifty Years a Fighter for Trotskyism'), which appeared in *News Line* in late August. And he resumed his complaints about being excluded from the party leadership the previous January.¹¹

After the end of August, Healy and Vanessa Redgrave refused to attend CC and PC meetings, and relations with the WRP leadership were from this point carried on by letter, with Torrance-O'Regan demanding that Healy and Redgrave resume their responsibilities in the organisation, and the latter insisting that their differences should be circulated in an internal bulletin. Seeking a factional weapon to use against Healy, Torrance now shifted her line on the USSR, arguing that while the political revolution was indeed under way, Gorbachev was trying to restore capitalism. Healy supporter Mick Blakey then produced a document outlining the Healyite position. This completely ignored the possibility of capitalist restoration, and asserted that a 'left moving section of the bureaucracy' under Gorbachev was 'de-Stalinising the bureaucracy'.¹²

Rather than carry out a serious discussion on this issue, Torrance responded with an organisational manoeuvre, calling a party congress at a mere ten days' notice, which of course gave no time for the circulation of documents. When the congress opened on October 31, Corin

Redgrave, acting as spokesman for the absent Healy, disputed the legitimacy of the proceedings on the grounds that the party constitution required a two-month pre-congress discussion period. He was able to win the support of nearly half the delegates for his challenge to standing orders, leaving Torrance and O'Regan stunned. They responded by adopting a conciliatory approach towards Redgrave and Healy in a vain attempt to keep them in the organisation.¹³

Richard Price recalls that he and a few other WRP members had discussed whether they should intervene at the congress 'as a third force and open the attack on both sides, because by this stage we were really beginning to think . . . that we had to get out of this mad organisation and were trying to think how to proceed. We decided on balance that the best way was to be . . . the sharpest critics of Healy, as against the rather soft line that was put at the congress by Torrance and O'Regan. So we waded into Redgrave and Healy at that congress, on the question of Stalinism basically'. Under the impact of this attack, Redgrave's support was reduced to about a quarter of the delegates. Healy now broke with Torrance, taking with him perhaps 40 out of the WRP/News Line's total membership of around 150.¹⁴ The Healyites formed a new organisation, the Marxist Party, in 1987 and began publishing a journal called the *Marxist Monthly*.

Torrance had successfully repelled Healy's challenge to her leadership, but all that was left for her to lead was one small, politically disoriented national grouping. (The Greek and Spanish sections inevitably sided with Healy, although he and Savas Michael split shortly afterwards.) Most of those WRP/News Line members whose capacity for political thought had not been completely destroyed - and, surprisingly enough, there were some - joined the group which broke with Torrance in February 1987 to form the Workers International League. A further group around Ben Rudder and Jean Kerrigan walked out in December the same year. Today, Torrance retains no more than a few dozen followers in the WRP/News Line, which still devotes itself to producing the smallest circulation daily paper in the world, and calls incessantly for a general strike.

Healy's own organisation underwent a further split after his death when the Redgraves expelled Corinna Lotz, accusing her of acting as an agent provocateur. Outraged by this attempt to frame an innocent person as an agent - a practice which was, of course, entirely unprecedented in the Healyite movement - Lotz, Paul Feldman and other Marxist Party members broke away to form the Communist League. These days they produce a journal named *Socialist Future* which upholds the memory of their dead leader by parroting the most ludicrous of his political pronouncements.¹⁵ The Redgraves and their associates have since moved away from anything remotely resembling revolutionary politics - in October 1993 they even supported Yeltsin's crushing of the Russian parliament - and have lapsed into a sort of humanitarian liberalism. Further rifts in the Marxist Party have all but finished off the organisation.

As for Healy, up until his death in December 1989 his political hopes remained pinned to Gorbachev who, he was convinced, intended to 'slash the bureaucracy's grip . . . by returning "all power to the soviets"'.¹⁶ According to Corinna Lotz's account,¹⁷

he spent his twilight years working quietly on 'philosophy' in his study at the house in West Road, Clapham, which Vanessa Redgrave bought for him, and commuted regularly between London, Athens, Barcelona and Moscow delivering incomprehensible lectures in his unique brand of pseudo-dialectical gibberish. Surrounded by his small band of sycophants, Healy was probably contented enough. But it must all have seemed a bit of a come-down for a man who had laboured for decades under the delusion that he was destined to be the British Lenin.

Concluded

NOTES

1. Interview with Richard Price, November 22, 1993.
2. *Marxist Review*, April 1986.
3. *News Line*, October 31, 1985.
4. The Australian, German, Peruvian, Sri Lankan and US sections of the IC sided with the WRP majority in October 1985. All of them subsequently broke with the Slaughter group.
5. Price interview. This is confirmed by Healy supporter Corinna Lotz, who accuses the minority leadership of wanting to 'use Gerry as a figurehead, and have nothing to do with the flesh and blood human being, or indeed anyone who was then politically close to him' (C. Lotz and P. Feldman, *Gerry Healy: A Revolutionary Life*, 1994, p.38).
6. Alex Mitchell topped the list with nominations from 55 branches - Healy was nominated by only 29 (Panels Committee report, WRP internal document).
7. *Workers News*, May 1987; Lotz and Feldman, pp.36-7.
8. Back in 1956, Healy had initially taken a similar position in response to Mikoyan's attack on Stalin at the CPSU 20th Congress, arguing that Mikoyan represented a 'revolutionary' wing of the bureaucracy. See part 8 of this series.
9. *Workers News*, April 1987; interview with Richard Price, June 8, 1994.
10. *Vanessa Redgrave: An Autobiography*, 1991, p.262.
11. 'A political adviser,' Healy complained bitterly, 'has no constitutional rights, apart from being able to attend meetings when the "adviser" has no vote - not even on branch issues. He is debarred for all time from being a delegate to Party Congresses. He is in fact a political "unperson" in the Party.' This and other material relating to the split in the WRP/News Line was later published in *The Marxist*, June-July 1987.
12. *Marxist Review*, April 1987.
13. *Workers News*, April 1987; *The Marxist*, June-July 1987.
14. Price interview, June 8, 1994; *Workers News*, April 1987.
15. For example, the first issue of *Socialist Future*, which appeared during the 1992 general election campaign, argued in all seriousness that the election was merely a facade behind which the ruling class was plotting to impose a police-military dictatorship! Given that the class struggle at that time was at its lowest for about a century, this could only be regarded as an act of extreme self-indulgence on the part of the ruling class.
16. *Marxist Monthly*, September 1988.
17. Lotz and Feldman, pp.1-192.

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A game of two halves?

**Stunned by Stoichkov?
Bedazzled by Baggio?
But there's more to the
beautiful game than
meets the eye, argues
Mark Boon**

AFTER initial scepticism from the media, the 1994 World Cup was declared an unparalleled success. Television coverage bombarded us with the idea that it had exceeded all expectations, and that perhaps it would be the best World Cup ever.

Despite a tedious final, the quality of the football was certainly high, although not as good as that of Mexico 1970 – widely regarded as having been the finest tournament. But it was not simply the football that the image makers promoted. A full-scale American dream was being marketed, turning what the Americans consider to be a boring sport into an entertainment package sold to the biggest audience in history.

To promote such a package to the footballing world, the Americans had to be seen to be putting on a show. Crowds had to be large with a good

atmosphere. Action and excitement had to be encouraged. The home team had to do well and the public at least seem to be interested. The promoters of USA '94 sold football to America in order to sell things American to football. To put it simply, American capitalists realised that football presents the greatest commercial possibilities of any sport. While most of the opportunities exist outside the USA, Americans had to be seen to be taking football seriously if they were to take advantage of a one billion-strong world audience. Hence the desperate attempts to manufacture an American footballing culture through the media.

Attendances, we were constantly reminded, were the highest ever. Interest, if only out of curiosity, was widespread. Crowds, if not knowledgeable, were shown to be excitable. And to make the game more appealing, the rules were changed: injuries were abolished, and a lightweight ball introduced which could do funny things – less controversial, admittedly, than the initial attempt to enlarge the goals. Domestically, American promoters are going much further and suggesting a zonal football with three periods, ice hockey-style substitutions and points instead

of goals. All this suggests an emphasis upon quantity rather than quality.

Despite the huge marketing operation, only 30 per cent of Americans had heard about the World Cup before it began. Of course, interest was bound to be generated by such promotion and television ratings increased during the tournament, although still far less than elsewhere. Crowds were larger than before, but only because stadiums in the USA are bigger and because the population has many football-literate ethnic groups and communities. Those who say that interest in the World Cup in the USA was sufficient to justify the staging of the finals there are effectively placing commercial considerations over the genuine popular interest in places such as Brazil or Morocco – two countries which were denied the chance to stage the finals.

Those who run football chose the USA purely out of commercial interests. They will do so again in eight years' time when the tournament is held in either Japan, South Korea or China. This is not surprising when you consider that undemocratic bodies like FIFA are run by multinational executives and sportswear companies. A similar situation exists with the Olympic Games, cynically awarded

to Atlanta for equally commercial reasons. These events are now run for the benefit of the sponsors and the television companies, who dictate that matches kick off in the midday heat in order to get maximum viewing figures. Such intrusion can also be seen with Sky TV's coverage of the English Premiership, which pays no consideration to the fans who wish to go to the matches.

But then the football authorities desire a new type of fan. Saturation coverage has created the armchair fan who can afford satellite television – bad luck for the others. And the grounds themselves now require middle class nuclear families who don't swear or chant and are prepared to pay for the entertainments package. The new all-seater regulations are not designed to make stadiums safer – for a start, it takes longer to evacuate a seated area. Rather, they are an attempt to financially expel the working class from grounds and to break up the terrace culture – one of the few aspects of working class self-expression. This is the main reason why the 1994 World Cup is being regarded as the future for football. The black working class of North America was totally excluded. The USA is seen as the last chance to create football anew as a middle class spectator sport.

This is not to try and paint some sort of glorified picture of football that was. Football culture is not all that pretty, as Nick Hornby's *Fever Pitch* shows. It has often been violent, sexist and racist. But, like it or not, this is precisely because it is organically linked with an aspect of working class consciousness. Trotsky,



Italy's Roberto Baggio

when talking about the organisations of the working class, frequently cited sports clubs. For Marxists, the point is not to reject this culture, but to intervene into it.

The future of football, like that of the working class, is not bleak. There have been many setbacks with commercialisation and administration. But at least fans have started to organise to defend their own interests. Supporters' associations and fanzines have sprung up around the country, aimed at tackling not only the way the game and its clubs are being run, but also the racism and sexism among supporters. In the 1970s, supporters at clubs such as Leeds organised to tackle the spread of racism, and the efforts of the National Front to recruit football hooligans. These campaigns have developed into the self-organised supporters' groups of today, which often draw upon wider political issues. Through such organisation, the culture of football can be defended against the increasing drive towards profit and respectability. With a bit of luck, we might even be able to look back and say that USA '94 was a good World Cup.

Inside the Balkan cockpit

**War in Eastern Europe:
Travels through the
Balkans in 1915**
By John Reed
Phoenix, £9.99

Review by Phil Watson

JOHN REED will be familiar to most as the author of *Ten Days That Shook the World*, the classic eye-witness account of the October 1917 revolution. This book, reprinted for the first time in 75 years, is the product of Reed's travels through war-torn eastern Europe two years earlier, in his capacity as a talented and highly-paid journalist.

It is not merely a military book. As Reed states in the preface, 'it seems to me that the most important thing to know about the war is how the different peoples live'. What he offers us is an often bewildering kaleidoscope of

characters, peoples, social conventions and landscapes.

Despite this, it is the war which is the book's focal point. The reader is left with an overwhelming impression of the misery and chaos of war. Reed's description of a Serbian typhus hospital is a typical example: 'As the Serbian doctor opened the doors... a sickening stench of dirt, filthy clothing and airlessness came out. The windows were all closed. The sick – mostly soldiers in the wreck of their uncleaned uniforms – lay packed closely, shoulder to shoulder upon foul straw spread on the floor. There was no sign of disinfectant.' It is Reed's humanist approach, his depiction of the horrors of war through human suffering, that continually grips the reader.

Such experiences led many soldiers towards sentiments far removed from the traditional accounts in school textbooks. At one point, Reed encounters a group of Austro-Hungarian prisoners. A young Polish volun-

teer tells him bluntly that 'all we want is peace and quiet and rest... why should this useless butchery go on?'. It was soldiers like this who took part in the revolts against the capitalist order in the post-war period. Reed also details the savage indifference with which officers sent rank-and-file soldiers to their deaths. Asked about his army's retreat in Galicia, a Russian captain says 'what do we care – so long as England gives money and the earth gives men'. It is not hard to see why the Russian army was ripped apart by the revolution of 1917.

A drawback to this text is Reed's questionable use of language in relation to Jewish people. His imagery appears to reflect something of the anti-Semitism of the Russian officers he was mixing with.

The reasons why this book will be read in the present period are the parallels which can be drawn between the current conflict in the former Yugoslavia and those of the First World War. It is true that Reed does portray a fair amount of ethnic antipathy within the multi-national Austro-Hungarian army and between Serbs and Hungarians, as well as Russian anti-Semitism. The problem is that such parallels tend to lead to the conclusion that ethnic strife is the inevitable product of human existence in the Balkans.

The bloodshed in each of these periods is the outcome of differing political circumstances. Ethnic tension in the Balkans prior to and during the First World War was intensified by imperialist manipulation of Balkan nationalism (through imperialism's own 'junior' partners of Russia and Austro-Hungary). The present struggle in the former Yugoslavia is a product of the disintegration of Stalinism, although imperialist manoeuvring has not been absent.

Despite the need for a measured interpretation of its contents, this book is a welcome addition to the rather scant literature that exists about the Eastern Front in the First World War. In addition it is also a detailed account of some of the experiences that contributed to the making of John Reed the Bolshevik.

Workers International League

The WIL is the British section of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency. Together with comrades in South Africa, Belgium and Germany, we fight to rebuild Trotsky's Fourth International. We are for the overthrow of capitalism and its replacement with a worldwide federation of workers' states, based on workers' democracy and planned economy. Only by workers taking power can the unemployment, poverty, starvation and war bred by capitalism be ended.

In Britain, it is necessary for revolutionaries to fight within the mass organisations of the labour movement, as well as participate in the struggles of all those oppressed by capitalism. We aim to build rank-and-file opposition to the trade union and Labour bureaucrats who stand in the way of any serious struggle to defeat the Tories. Only in this way will a genuine revolutionary party, rather than a sect, be built.

We support all struggles against imperialism, without endorsing the politics of any nationalist leaderships. In wars waged by imperialist powers such as Britain against oppressed countries, and in inter-imperialist wars, we are for the defeat of our own ruling class.

In the countries of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, which are no longer deformed/degenerated workers' states, we are for the defence of those gains of the working class that still exist. The remaining deformed workers' states in Cuba and Asia must be defended against imperialism, and the Stalinist bureaucracies overthrown before they too open the door to capitalist restoration.

For more information about the Workers International League and the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency, write to: WIL, 1/17 Meredith Street, London EC1R 0AE

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SOUTH AFRICA

AIDS and poverty

By Ulrike Schultz

THE LAST few years have seen the mushrooming of organisations dealing with AIDS-related research, policy and education. Insurance companies, industrial consultants, and the construction industry are each involved in their own research on AIDS, and are making forecasts for specific branches of industry.

While they can all in some way be seen to be responding to the alarming increase in the number of HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths, few if any seem to address the problems in broader social, let alone political, terms. As more data on the incidence and distribution of the disease, and the rates of infection and life expectancy – as well as responses to treatment – become available, the research tends to become increasingly technical.

A good example of such research

is that which has become known as the 'Doyle model' of the spread of the AIDS epidemic. The claim to fame of Peter Doyle of Metropolitan Life (after whom the model is named) is to have reliably estimated the economic impact of AIDS on South Africa over the next 15 years, in terms of health service costs and lost production. Doyle's projections have been widely accepted among health policy planners, financiers and educators.

To evaluate the recommendations of this model and other reports based on it, let us take a closer look at Doyle's basic ideas regarding AIDS. He assumes that 'the epidemic is stratified according to a range of risk behaviour and also according to a gradual geographic and demographic spread of infection'. He classifies the typical 'community' into four 'risk groups', according to different kinds of 'risk behaviour' – ie, prostitutes, persons with sexually transmitted diseases, persons with more than one

sexual relationship, and persons who are either not sexually active or are in long-term monogamous relationships.

Doyle's statistical efforts culminate in a formula for calculating new HIV infections for each year and each risk group. In the conclusion to his report, he calls for the identification and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, education, and changes in sexual behaviour. He makes the predictions about the spread of HIV infections dependent on sexual behaviour.

The policy planners who endorse this report add to it their call for an investigation of the cost-effectiveness of different interventions to curb the spread of HIV in developing countries. They conclude that 'the responsibility [for urgent policy and research] lies with all the relevant State agencies, as well as with a range of private sector organisations, including trade unions and employers'. 'Progressive' as these planners make themselves

out to be, they mention factors such as 'migrant labour, disruption of family life and other legacies of Apartheid' in half a sentence, and are quick to add that they do not want to 'make explicit or expand upon them ... for reasons of brevity'.

This sort of preaching does more to hide the causes and patterns of the spread of HIV. Defining individuals and groups according to their risk behaviour, or according to their geographical distribution, does not ultimately tell us why some people are more at risk of contracting HIV than others, nor does it in and of itself prevent the spread of the disease. A closer look at the political economy of AIDS will reveal that it is the social situation of individuals and groups that is the single most important factor in the spread of HIV.

The figures for HIV infection rates in the United States show that the highest incidence is to be found in poverty-stricken inner-city slums.

AIDS is therefore following the pattern of other diseases of poverty which affect mainly the working class and the unemployed.

Unlike other infectious diseases, AIDS is not directly related to poor housing and sanitation, but primarily to patterns of sexual behaviour. In saying this, however, we must be cautious not to define sexual behaviour only in terms of individual risk behaviour. Lack of options for an income is often what drives people into prostitution; social and economic insecurity of new arrivals in the urban centres is often expressed in fleeting sexual relationships; social oppression of homosexuals has shaped the sexual behaviour of gay men. Where women are economically dependent on men, they are often unable to set any conditions on sex. Where women's oppression takes the shape of a lack of reproductive rights, the idea that all that is needed to prevent HIV/AIDS is a change in sexual behaviour is absurd. Any understanding of the pattern of HIV/AIDS therefore has to look at the interrelation of oppression, poverty and social norms.

On a global scale, the incidence of HIV/AIDS and the measures to combat it reveal a system of health care dictated by the law of value. Many health facilities in Africa are not in a position to screen all donated blood, or to buy sterile disposable equipment for injections and transfusions. This means that thousands of people are continuing to be infected with HIV in a way which is preventable.

The same applies to the availability of drugs and the development of a vaccine. There are as yet hardly any efforts under way to develop a vaccine that can combat African strains of the HIV virus, despite the fact that big drug companies are looking to conduct drug trials in African countries. In such trials, the supplies of the vaccine are free for the period of the study, but once the vaccine is licensed the costs become so high as to put it out of reach of those countries where it has been tested.

This is the price tag that health care has under capitalism and imperialism. It is not a matter of simply saying that 'Africa cannot afford' AIDS prevention programmes or that 'the Third World cannot expect First World health standards'. Many countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia are having to sap their resources to service their debts to international financial institutions, instead of developing a basic infrastructure with accessible and affordable health care. Another obstacle to the adequate provision of health care in those countries are the national bourgeoisie who stand to gain from deals with imperialism, and reinforce the class divide which deprives the majority of the population of much-needed resources.

A comprehensive policy on AIDS needs to tackle these obstacles. If we confine the analysis of AIDS to the classification of 'risk behaviour' or 'risk groups', we are supporting the trend to confine ill health to the oppressed classes.

ANC: caretakers for capitalism

By Vusi Makabane

IN MID-JULY, the honeymoon period of the new ANC government ended as police launched a violent attack on striking shop workers.

Over 15,000 employees of the Pick 'n' Pay supermarket chain, members of the commercial and catering union Saccawu, went on strike on July 12 for a 229 rand across-the-board increase and for the introduction of a bonus scheme. On July 13, in a carefully co-ordinated operation, police converged on the strikers' picket lines and broke them up using dogs and riot control weapons.

A statement issued to the press by police in the Witwatersrand region said that three stun grenades and 28 rubber bullets had been fired at strikers at two separate locations – the Norwood and Ormonde branches of the supermarket.

It was conservatively estimated that 1,000 workers were arrested and more than 20 injured throughout the country. The following day, police mounted a similar attack, using armoured vehicles to ensure that the strikers complied with a court order instructing all Saccawu members to stay at least 500 metres away from all the company's stores for one whole month.

The brutal behaviour of the police, familiar from the days of apartheid, will come as a shock to those who believed that an ANC government would defend the interests of the working class. But in the few months since the April election, the ANC leaders have shown that their allegiance is to the capitalist bosses and the international banks.



Cape Town, May 9: Nelson Mandela and his estranged wife, Winnie, shortly after they had been sworn in as members of the new parliament

The spectacle of Nelson Mandela's inauguration as the first president of a 'democratic' South Africa said it all. He took the oath of office surrounded by De Klerk and the white top brass of the South African Defence Force. His immediate audience overwhelmingly comprised imperialist leaders and representatives of other reactionary and conservative regimes. And on the lawn far below, behind a protective fence, were the masses on whose backs he had come to power. His message to them was clear: work hard, have faith in us – and, whatever you do, don't take action to back up your demands.

But in July there were at least 45

separate protests by workers in the catering, metal, paper and oil industries, the municipal and judicial sectors, and elsewhere. Though they have not yet reached the proportions of a national strike wave, they show that workers are more than willing to fight for their demands. On July 25, workers demonstrated in Johannesburg for a living wage and the right to strike and picket free from police intervention. And the potential for major strike action exists in the mining, steel and beer industries, with the NUM and Numsa currently balloting their members after a deadlock in wage negotiations.

The 'new' South Africa has al-

ready tied itself hand and foot to imperialism: \$1.9 billion of the previous regime's foreign debt is due in 1994, and this will increase by a further \$2.0-2.5 billion in 1995. The ANC has pledged to bend over backwards to pay these sums, and is also eager to run up some of its own debts with the IMF and the World Bank. With a huge and rising burden of internal and external debt, Mandela is pinning his hopes on foreign investment to finance the ANC's much-vaunted Reconstruction and Development Programme. In late July, he warned striking workers that they would 'frighten investors away' and slow down the RDP. He also accused some union leaders of finding it difficult to move from resistance politics to nation building.

Needless to say, the word socialism is now no longer used by the ANC leadership even for holiday speechifying. Yet the struggle for socialism could not be more urgent. Trade unionists in Numsa and elsewhere have already recognised that there would be a conflict with the ANC when it came to power and have called for the formation of a party to represent the independent interests of the working class. The present conditions are ripe for the campaign for a workers' party to be revived – millions hope to gain from the fall of apartheid while the ANC is daily more committed to the defence of South African capitalism.

Cosatu must be held to its promise to convene a conference on socialism. This would be a perfect opportunity to expose the tripartite alliance leadership and build support for a workers' party throughout the trade union movement.