



Fight the right wing on all fronts

STOP BLAIR'S SDP MARK 2!

By Phil Watson

TONY BLAIR's honeymoon as Labour leader is definitely history. The political events of recent months have exposed the pressures and contradictions felt by the Labour bureaucracy. While the leadership carried out one retreat after another – over independent schools, the Jobseeker's Allowance, NHS trusts and railway privatisation – there have been stirrings of revolt from the rank and file over the proposal to scrap Clause Four of the party's constitution.

The New Year began with a humiliating climb-down for education spokesman David Blunkett over plans for a future Labour government to put VAT on independent school fees. Blair and shadow chancellor Gordon Brown forced Blunkett to publicly rule out such a move. What lay behind this was Blair and Brown's concern not to offend middle class Tory voters. It was welcomed with open arms by the Tories, who are well aware that Blair's grovelling to 'middle England' allows them to set the boundaries of political debate.

The fact that a weak, divided and deeply unpopular Tory government has been allowed to continue dictating the political agenda shows Blair up for what he is – a right-wing airhead who has obviously learnt nothing from Neil Kinnock's failed leadership. Kinnock's 'strategy' meant that the electorate was offered a Labour programme similar to that of the Tories in the 1992 general election. It was hardly surprising that it failed to win people over. Blair's readiness to adapt Labour policy to the latest in Tory thinking gives a good idea of what a Blair government would be like.

The debate over railway privatisation and the 'through ticketing' system has caught Blair on the hop. On January 9, he said: 'I am not going to get into the situation where I am declaring that the Labour government is going to commit sums of money to renationalisation several years down the line'. This was a clear break with the pledge made by deputy leader

John Prescott at last year's Labour Party conference.

But it caused such a storm of protest in the Labour Party and the trade unions that Blair was forced to change tack. Prescott was wheeled out again to confuse the issue. Labour would fight privatisation every inch of the way in parliament, he claimed, and put pressure on rural Tory MPs; in any case, the private sector had shown little interest in running rail services.

Nobody should be fooled by this 'campaign'. There is no pledge to renationalise the railways, and Blair's reliance on parliament and Tory backbench revolts is the same useless strategy which failed to save a single

miner's job. It's no accident that the Labour leadership has quietly shelved any idea of returning the 30 former British Coal pits, which were handed over to their new private owners on December 30, to the public sector.

In fact, opinion polls show that a commitment to renationalising 'natural monopolies' such as water, gas, electricity, telecoms, and railways would be popular – even with disaffected Tory voters. But the Labour leadership is opposed to raising taxation on the rich to finance the operation, and is terrified of enraging the City by buying shares back at their original cost.

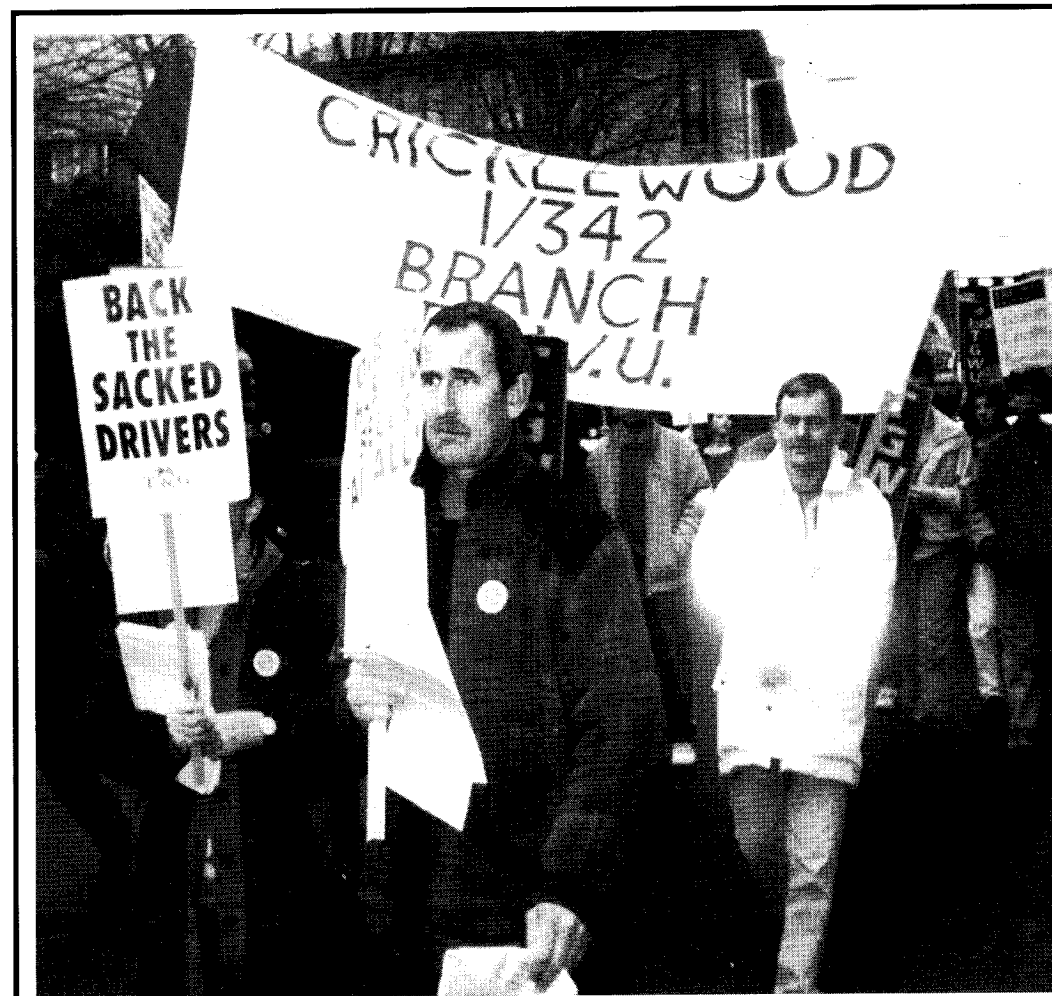
Nevertheless, Blair has been

forced to make some noises to avoid further alienating the rank and file. Hence the storm over top people's pay, and the cautious endorsement of some measure of public ownership. Activists must not allow themselves to be taken in by this. Blair and his team remain the biggest obstacle to fighting the Tories.

Blair has repeatedly stressed that a Labour Party unwilling to abandon the outdated traditions of socialism will not win power. But the opposition that the attempt to scrap Clause Four has encountered among Labour activists has obviously rattled the leadership. And the fact that a majority of Labour MEPs oppose Blair shows

that some sections of the party bureaucracy are unwilling to alienate the activist base which Labour's electoral machine relies upon.

The campaign to retain Clause Four has the potential to expose the anti-working class nature of the leadership and build a fighting opposition to Blair's team. Most Labour Party rank-and-file members who support Clause Four do so because they recognise that Blair's attempt to dump it signals another shift away from defending workers' interests. For this reason, the defence of Clause Four must be combined with a broader attack on the retreats of the Blair leadership.



Privatisation in practice

Demonstration in Chelmsford on January 14 in defence of 105 Eastern National bus drivers sacked for striking against longer hours – page 3

EDITORIAL

Bosnia – new dangers ahead

THE FOUR-month cease-fire signed at the New Year will not bring justice to the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina. It threatens to set in concrete the dismemberment of the country at the hands of right-wing Bosnian Serb nationalists, who now control 70 per cent of Bosnia. Once again, it is they who come up smelling of roses.

The truce, if it holds, will prevent the now better armed and better organised Bosnian army from recovering lost territory. It commits all sides to further peace talks, but fails to mention the previous plan drawn up by the five-nation 'contact group', which was rejected by the Bosnian Serbs even though it awarded them 49 per cent of the country. The new agreement does not even mention Bosnia-Herzegovina by name.

Bosnian forces are now obliged to vacate positions on Mount Igman, overlooking Sarajevo, in return for 'safe' routes in and out of so-called 'Muslim' enclaves. The Bosnians know from bitter experience exactly how safe the 'safe' areas are!

The latest cease-fire is yet another demonstration of the contempt of the West for the people of Bosnia. Neither Western governments, nor NATO, nor the UN are interested in defending Bosnian self-determination or in protecting its people from ethnic cleansing, still less in helping them return to their homes.

Although promoting itself as some kind of international referee with an essentially humanitarian mission, the UN's role throughout the conflict has been to assist the break-up of the Yugoslavian deformed workers' state. Its intervention has been aimed primarily at brokering peace deals between the contending nationalist forces, in order to provide more stable conditions for the creation of viable capitalist economies in the region.

To this end, it has deprived the Bosnians of arms with which they could defend themselves, maintained a niggardly drip-feed of aid to demoralise Bosnian civilians without actually starving them to death, and for months refused to allow the re-opening of Tuzla airport – a vital supply-line for this multi-ethnic workers' centre. The imperialists do not view the Bosnians as being key players, and for this reason have always been prepared to accept the partition of their country.

Of course, there are tactical differences among the imperialists and their Russian allies based on geography, historical spheres of influence, and the sheer enormity of the task to be accomplished. The German government supported the breakaway of Slovenia and Croatia while the other imperialists still held out hope that Serbian leader Milosevic could oversee the orderly restoration of capitalism throughout the whole federation. Britain, France and Russia have closer ties to Serbia.

No one should be fooled by the calls from the United States for the lifting of the arms embargo on Bosnia. This is partly domestic politics, partly an attempt to further US interests in the Balkans by currying favour with the pro-capitalist Izetbegovic government. It does not mean that the US is seriously out of step with its allies. It was, after all, ex-US president Jimmy Carter who steered through the latest peace plan, which makes even greater concessions to Serb territorial gains than the last one.

The new plan underlines the fact that the Western governments are anxious to maintain Serbia as the dominant, although not the exclusive, power in the region. Sanctions against Serbia and the limited air strikes against Bosnian Serb positions have acted merely as a brake on Serbian ambitions. We oppose these measures, but we do not see them as the precursor of a wholesale imperialist attack on Serbia, nor have we ever thought such a scenario likely. Milosevic was a declared restorationist prior to the start of the civil war, and has reportedly called for a union between Serbia, Macedonia and Greece.

There are some sections of the left which have refused to support Bosnian self-determination and have taken a pro-Serb position on the grounds that the imperialists are pro-Bosnian, or are using Bosnia as a way of attacking Serbia. As we hope we have shown, this is utterly wrong. There is also the connected argument that Serbia remains a deformed workers' state and must therefore be supported against imperialism. This, too, is misconceived. Serbia has a restorationist government which seeks to integrate the country fully into the global capitalist economy, while grabbing the largest possible area in which to exploit the working class. It no longer defends a system of planned economy based on the state ownership of the means of production.

However, this latter argument is something of a red herring. The fact that Serbia is now a capitalist state would not prevent us from defending it in the event of an imperialist attack. And even if it were a workers' state, we would still oppose its predatory actions in Bosnia. Dividing the Bosnian working class along ethnic lines weakens its ability to defend past conquests, let alone make new ones.

We give no political support whatsoever to the pro-capitalist Bosnian government, but we unconditionally support the right of self-determination for the Bosnian people. We are for the lifting of the imperialist arms embargo and the military defeat of the Bosnian Serb aggressors by the Bosnian army. We call on rank-and-file soldiers in the Bosnian Serb militia to turn their guns on their right-wing officers and recognise Bosnia's right to exist. The precondition for building a united workers' movement is to recognise other workers' national rights.

To the advance guard of workers in both Bosnia and Serbia we say, resist every attempt by your leaders to privatise state industry. Fight for independent workers' republics! Capitalism offers no solution for the workers of former Yugoslavia. Imperialism out of the Balkans! For a voluntary federation of workers' republics in the Balkans based on national equality!

CLAUSE FOUR

Defeat the right wing!

By Andrew Mills and Richard Price

THE PLAN to ditch Clause Four of the Labour Party constitution has succeeded in one thing. It has breathed life into rank-and-file activity in a way that no campaign since ratercapping in the mid-80s has done. Many on the left had assumed that the forward march of the modernisers was irresistible, and that work within the Labour Party was either impossible or a waste of time.

Hundreds of meetings of activists have been held up and down the country, many of them under the auspices of the Defend Clause Four, Defend Socialism campaign. It was established in November, following Blair's announcement at Labour Party conference in October that he intended to scrap Clause Four and replace it with

a bland statement of 'values', centred on 'partnership' between the public and private sectors.

Backed by the Campaign Group and the NUM, together with numbers of MEPs, constituency parties and trade union bodies, the campaign has until April 29, when a Labour special conference meets, to defeat Blair's rule change. The date of the conference was fixed by the modernisers to ensure that it took place before the trade union conference season, thereby disenfranchising rank-and-file trade unionists. So inept has been Blair's handling of the trade union leaders, who were prepared to back him in return for a suitable commitment to public services and a pledge to renationalise a small part of the Tories' sell-offs, that a rebellion of some sort seems likely.

Nor can Blair have anticipated the extent of opposition among the traditionalist centre and right, who, for

purely opportunist reasons, think that by unnecessarily rocking the boat he could jeopardise Labour's best chance of election victory in years. The more acute traditionalists also know that further Tory privatisations of rail and the post office are highly unpopular, and that Labour has at least to make a veiled class appeal to workers if it is to win.

The Clause Four campaign is proving to be a thorn in Blair's side. Its stress on the continuing relevance of 'common ownership' has proved more effective than the modernisers' accusation that their opponents are 'prehistoric', and has struck a chord among party members.

In response to the consultation document sent out by Walworth Road to all branches, CLPs and affiliated union branches the campaign has set out its own model responses reaffirming support for Clause Four.

So far so good. You don't have to be an admirer of Sidney Webb to grasp the tactical sense of defending the constitutional status quo. The campaign should be supported and built by those who are serious about defeating the Blairites. Some 'Marxists' in the Labour Party, however, have gone much further and have tried to render Clause Four more profound – as a kind of socialist catechism. (They should take time out to read Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme*.)

The main problem with the campaign is that it *limits* itself to the defence of the status quo. While the campaign should be open to all those who want to keep Clause Four, it should link its defence clearly to the defence of jobs and services, of workers in struggle, to fighting cuts and the anti-union laws and to renationalising privatised industries. When supporters of Workers News put this position forward at the campaign's inaugural conference they were accused by various 'hard left' groups present of being ultra-left sectarians intent on narrowing the campaign.

We see no problem in tactically blocking with the traditionalists to vote down Blair's proposal. However, it is clear that such a bloc will break down as soon as it comes to taking any concrete steps forward. Labour councillors who habitually vote for cuts, MPs and union bureaucrats who uphold the anti-union laws – which side of the fence will they stand in any serious confrontation with the Tories? In order to hold the bloc together it would be necessary to abandon any serious class struggle methods and any consistent fight against the right wing.

And although defeat for Blair would undoubtedly be significant, it is no guarantee of a continuing radicalisation of Labour's rank and file. Nor would it necessarily deflect Blair from carrying out a right-wing programme in office.

This 'hard left' (!) caution misses the opportunities that the issue of changing Clause Four has raised in the labour movement. Many of those who voted enthusiastically for Blair on the grounds that he was a surefire election winner now have their doubts. The left has a chance, which it has not had for over a decade, to prepare a serious fight against a weakened right wing. All the more reason not to cement an alliance with the traditionalists. If they want to support the campaign, fine. But the left must not fall into the trap of letting them dictate the way forward.

We urge activists to affiliate their CLPs and trade union branches to the campaign. Details from: Defend Clause Four, c/o NUM, 2 Huddersfield Road, Barnsley S70 2LS.



Former Lambeth council leader Ted Knight addressing a Camden Labour left meeting on Clause Four on November 28

CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT

Fight must continue

By Mark Boon

THE HATED Criminal Justice Bill has now become law. Despite mass opposition this was always likely to be the case, thanks in particular to the disgraceful behaviour of the 'law and order' Labour leadership. But this does not mean that campaigning against the act must stop; on the contrary, it must be stepped up. The act can still be scrapped provided that a mass campaign of defiance is built.

Militant Labour has been active in the campaign, hoping for a re-run of the poll tax. In Scotland, a number of demonstrations have taken place in defiance of the law, showing that the potential exists for continuing the fight. But while the campaign must be as broad as possible, it is essential that it is taken into the labour movement and that it mobilises working class youth and the specially oppressed, who must play a key role.

For a start, the CJA will be used against the unions, giving the police powers to break up mass gatherings and pickets. It will also be used against the left, particularly when organising against the fascists. For these reasons it is necessary to argue in the labour

movement for a fightback. A campaign of defiance should link up with the fight against the anti-union laws.

The granting of new powers to the police, including powers to stop and search, means that lesbian, gay and black communities will undergo increased harassment. The abolition of the right to silence is a further erosion of civil liberties. It will mean more cases in which innocent people are framed. Militant's idea that the police can be made accountable is wrong. An essential task is to organise community self-defence, both against fascists and the police.

Police powers will also be used by the state to attack youth. Parties and raves can more easily be attacked. The homeless living in squats will be criminalised. Youth opposition to the CJA must therefore be central.

Those under attack from the CJA are many. Add to the above: rambles, road protesters and hunt sabs. But it is essential that such a campaign has an orientation towards the labour movement if it is not to evaporate as the anti-poll tax movement did. A campaign of mass defiance can win, but only if it is taken into the organisations of the working class can it have any lasting effect.

Self-defence is no offence Free Satpal Ram!

By Pete Bloomer
Free Satpal Campaign
(in a personal capacity)

NEARLY 20 black people have been murdered in racist attacks in Britain over the last ten years. In November 1986, Satpal Ram suffered a murderous, racist attack in Lozells, Birmingham. A group of six white people threw plates and glasses at him in the Bengali Sky Blue restaurant. One racist twice 'glassed' Satpal in the face. Satpal was trapped in a corner, bleeding and in fear of his life. He took out a knife (which he used in his job) and tried to warn off the racist, who came at Satpal again. Satpal stabbed the racist, who died after refusing medical treatment.

Lozells and adjoining Handsworth are the black areas of Birmingham which rose up against police harassment and extreme unemployment and poverty in 1981 and again in 1985. Reprisals by racists (both in and out of uniform) continued into 1986. Hundreds of black youth were criminalised in 1986-87 for allegedly taking part in the 1985 uprising.

In this context, the police, the Crown Prosecution Service, the trial and even the defence were stacked against Satpal Ram. Bourgeois justice, which claims that the state is neutral and that the judge directs the trial against prejudice, is a sham. It simply enforces class, racist rule. Criminal injustice for the working class (especially the black working class) allows the 'justice' of capitalism to continue.

The Judicial Review judgement,
December 21, 1994

The High Court stated that Satpal's defence barrister believed that the

racist was stabbed six to eight times, when the forensic evidence said two stab wounds. It believed that this mistake led him to direct Satpal not to plead self-defence. At appeal, another barrister accepted the trial barrister's 'advice' that a plea of self-defence was not possible because of the number of wounds. Through prolonged campaigning work, Satpal's case was taken on by Ian McDonald QC, who has exploited these and other facts.

The High Court refused to condemn the Home Secretary for preventing an appeal but invited him to look at the case again. It cited as a precedent a case in which a prisoner was released due to mistakes by the defence which prejudiced the conviction. Clearly, this is the legal escape route for the racist British state.

The real causes of Satpal Ram's eight years of false imprisonment are

racism and the British state's contempt for a working class youth who they wrongly believed had no ability to fight back. In fighting for Satpal's release, we are fighting for the right of self-defence – for black self-defence. We are fighting against the racist British state, which has created the conditions for violent racism to flourish, and illusions in its rotten instrument to enforce injustice, the criminal justice system.

We call on all working class people to fight for Satpal's release and to fight for unity with black communities in struggle against the common enemy – the racist/capitalist British state.

● For leaflets, petitions, posters and newsletters, send SAE to: Free Satpal Campaign, 101 Villa Road, Handsworth, Birmingham B19 1NH. Tel: 021-551 4518. Affiliations: £25 groups, £3 waged, £1 unwaged.

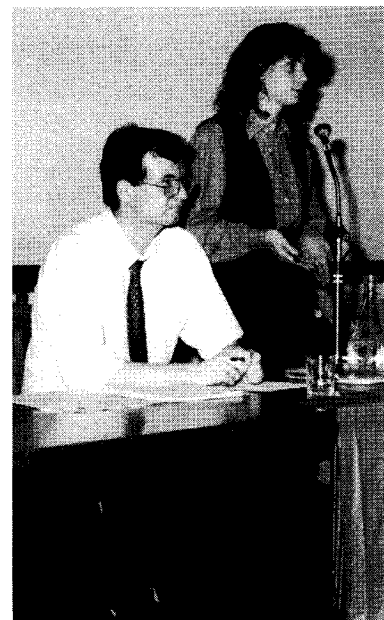


Picket of the High Court in London on December 15

Defend union democracy

By a CPSA member

IN RECENT years, the right-wing leadership of the Civil and Public Services Association has become notorious for its contempt for elementary union democracy and conference policy. In 1988, it suspended the largest branch in the country, Newcastle Central, and launched a vicious re-baiting attack on its branch officers.



Branch chair Rob Williams and defence campaign secretary Debbie Darracott

In October last year, the union's NEC, dominated by right-wingers, closed down the DSS Inner London branch – which also has a tradition of supporting the Broad Left.

No notice was given to the branch, the NEC took the decision without debate, and there was no consultation with members. Only the flimsiest of procedural grounds have been given: that some balloting addresses were inaccurate; that some members had not received circulars; that there could be a better branch structure; and that a former member of the branch, now transferred to the Contributions Agency, had attended branch committee meetings.

These pathetic reasons are a smokescreen for what is clearly a political attack on the branch and on the left in the union. As for the 'better structure' advocated by the NEC, the reality is that branch has been put under the sole charge of an unaccountable full-timer. Members have been disenfranchised from putting motions to conference. Four months on, and there has been no further response from the NEC.

Branches must immediately draw up motions to conference demanding the reinstatement of the Inner London branch, and organise for the defeat of the 'Moderates' under general secretary, Barry Reamsbottom.

● Inner London Defence Campaign, 17 Chestnut Close, London SW6.

Union-busting at Badgerline

By Tony Fox

IN NOVEMBER, Eastern National in Chelmsford sacked 105 bus drivers for going on strike for a few hours. The strike, in opposition to being rostered up to five and a half hours without a break, was carried out according to the legal procedures set down in the anti-union laws.

The parent company, Badgerline, used the notice of strike action to prepare a scab workforce. It brought in retired workers and inspectors from its operations in Devon and elsewhere and billeted them in local hotels.

In a unionised, privatised firm this is obviously a key dispute for all busworkers. The future for the union on the buses will be bleak if Badgerline succeeds in its union-busting. Nearly all buses are now privately owned following the sell-off of London's buses.

So is the Transport and General Workers' Union going to move heaven and earth to defeat this challenge? Well no. If tough talk was all it takes, the dispute would already have been won. Bill Morris, the T&GWU leader, has 'a huge war-chest' and is prepared to 'sell Transport House' to get his members reinstated. He said at the launch of the T&GWU free bus service in Chelmsford: 'We see this dispute as a watershed of the rights of people at work to take industrial action. The entire trade union movement will become involved. We will involve the TUC and Labour Party. It is not just about industrial rights but fundamental human rights. The

dispute has implications for Britain and Europe. If they can do it here they can do it in Germany, France and throughout Europe.'

Morris will rally the entire labour movement to do what? To donate money to the strike fund and support the free bus service designed to take trade away from Eastern National in Chelmsford. This is a tactic pioneered by bus unions in Europe and is fine for putting financial pressure on the company and gaining public support. But if it is the T&G's only tactic, it will achieve nothing but the demoralisation of the sacked busworkers.

How could the T&G force a huge national bus company like Badgerline to negotiate because it was losing a few pounds in Chelmsford? For Badgerline, it is a small price to pay for breaking the union in all its companies nationally. Furthermore, the 'very long haul' will result in sacked busworkers drifting off to other employment, so that after a few months Morris will be able to withdraw, blaming the members for not sticking it out.

Of course, every serious trade unionist knows that the dispute has to be spread to every other Badgerline company and T&G members must be called out in support of the Chelmsford drivers. The Badgerline logo on the side of Eastern National's buses makes it possible to argue that it is within even the present laws to spread the dispute. In any case, this is the only way forward.

● Messages of support and donations to Roger Welch, Chelmsford TUC, 87 Mildmay Road, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 0DR. Tel: 0245 263727.

Briefly

Teenage sex – new shock

IN JANUARY, the gutter press had a field day at the expense of Dawn Hendy, 16, and her boyfriend Mike Carey, 19, of Mid Glamorgan. Not only do Dawn and Mike have two children aged two and one, but a third is on the way. Apparently they live off the princely sum of £100 social security per week, and are hoping their local council will give them a larger house. The 'quality' *Daily Telegraph* added sniffily that they feel 'no shame'.

Salacious teenage sex, scrounging, and social deviance – it all added up to a heady tabloid cocktail. So that's what's wrong with the country! It didn't seem to count for much that both parents are devoted to their children, or that Mike is keen to find work – not that much work is around after what the Tories have done to South Wales.

When almost every day there are fresh reports of privatised industry bosses helping themselves to millions, of former Tory ministers getting their noses in the trough, and of parliamentary lobbying on public money, the idea that Dawn and Mike's £100 is undermining our economic wellbeing is a sick joke. Quite why their three kids are more significant than anyone else's was never explained – apart from the age of their parents.

Which brings us to another piece of tabloid hypocrisy. Sex at 14 – shocking! Three kids at 16 – scandalous! But were Dawn a year or two older she could turn up on page three without any hack turning a hair. One purpose such stories do serve is to draw our attention away from another mother with five children, all of

whom are unemployed and living at the taxpayer's expense. We refer of course to Elizabeth Windsor, the notorious tax dodger. The upkeep of her brood and sundry other hangers-on cost us a cool £60,000,000 last year, and yet the Windsors are reckoned to be one of the richest families in the world. Makes you think, doesn't it?

Bourgeois Norms of distribution

NEWS THAT Norman Wisdom is a big star in Albania shouldn't come as a total surprise. Those of us old enough to have been taken on childhood trips to see his films found them only slightly funnier than a visit from the secret police.

Less of a surprise in fact than the electors of Lambeth Central had in 1978 when they were urged by the candidate of the South London People's Front (Wolfie Smith?) to 'Rally round the People's Republic of Albania' and 'Oppose the revisionist Three Worlds theory'. He got 20-odd votes for his pains.

Norm's previously little-known status as the 'Toast of Tirana' tends to confirm our understanding of the cultural policy of the late Enver Hoxha. What's more, we can now grasp how influential Norm's famous 'collapsing on stage' routine was among eastern European Stalinists.

Ooh, aah, xenophobia!

ARE SOCIALISTS in favour of the right of footballers to kick spectators? Normally, no . . . although in the case of Eric Cantona v Matthew Simmons we could make an exception. Simmons is a BNP supporter with a record of racist violence. He allegedly called Cantona 'a fucking French git'. Simmons on the other hand isn't French.

SOUTH AFRICA Reform or revolution?

The case against the RDP

The RDP – South Africa's new form of capitalist exploitation

I would argue that the RDP should be rejected by revolutionaries. My assumption is that if you see yourself as part of the left wing, you accept the need for a fundamental change in the social relations of your society. The quickest rejoinder to a rejection of the RDP is that it is left-wing childishness to reject reforms. But, to adopt the terms of its proponents, the RDP is an 'integrated programme'. It is not simply a 'shopping list of demands'. We would in no way reject the provision of houses, schools, jobs, etc. But this is not the issue when appraising the RDP. It is the programmatic content of reconstruction and development, its theoretical underpinnings, and the consequent political effect of this programme, which we take issue with.

The most damning aspect of the RDP is its political defeatism. It tells the working class that we are not in a position to challenge capitalist social relations at this point in time. Yet the struggle of the 1980s was an anti-capitalist struggle. We clamoured for control of the commanding heights of the economy; we wanted the state to have access to society's combined resources; we wanted the working class, the most powerful force of change, to control production. The RDP, by comparison, is a sop.

In the opening line of every section of the RDP, the story is 'apartheid is the root of all evil' – not capitalist social relations. By making apartheid the main enemy, we are now to believe that we can move forward. But we are still in the stranglehold of capitalist exploitation, which here and all over the world creates poverty and barbarism, even in countries with relatively high economic growth rates. The heart of the economy is left intact. The RDP is not even a decent reformist programme of taking from the haves to give to the have-nots.

The political impact of the RDP has been to lower the masses' expectations, thereby demobilising the working class where the apartheid state had failed. The RDP has succeeded in disciplining workers. It is based on respect for capitalist property relations. The capitalist ethic has been reinstated. For example, the attitude of not paying is irresponsible – 'the culture of non-payment must stop'.

The RDP will lead to division among the masses. Where the reforms do happen, they will be so limited that they will cause major internal strife in communities – what is now being called the 'queue-jumping' problem. Even some in government are now saying: 'Who will be first in line for the 50,000 houses?' The ANC-led government, by choice, will not have access to the collective resources of society to significantly deal with social problems. While it ties itself to a programme of economic discipline, along the lines imposed by the international bourgeoisie through the IMF and the World Bank, its options are too limited. Only marginal reforms will therefore be possible.

Mass action versus 'wait-and-see'

The antithesis of the revolutionary self-activity of the masses is the 'wait-and-see' attitude that is strangling our organisations. Youth, students and workers are being told to abandon their revolutionary impatience. It is our duty to tell workers not to wait for someone out there. Workers attend union meetings not to have

long discussions, but to hear how their wages are going to improve. Are they going on strike to push management? Mass action is the fuel in the engine of class struggle and organisational vitality. Class struggle sharpens the political senses of the masses better than a hundred words or a thousand forums.

The frequent answer to this criticism is: 'But we have said mass action should go alongside negotiations.' The RDP avoids almost all reference to mass action. It avoids almost all references to classes and class struggle. This is no mere question of semantics. Its message to the masses is that class struggle is for somewhere else. The role of the ANC is to counterpose national interests to class interests. Political stability and capitalist investment are defended as necessary for economic growth.

Both implicitly and explicitly, therefore, mass action is seen as bad for economic growth. Negotiations are the preferred route. Mass action is what Lenin referred to as the self-activity of the masses; the way in which workers are spontaneously able to demonstrate their anger against the miseries of capitalism and press their demands on the capitalist class. By stressing the advantages of negotiations, the myth is created that negotiations should be a preferred form of resolving conflicts.

'Exercise patience with the government; change will not come overnight,' we are told. But the government is already draining its coffers. Most departments have three parallel pay-rolls – one is for the useless, old, white bureaucracy; another is for the new black governmental elite (whose appetite for bourgeois comforts is frightening); and the third is for the advisors to the elected leaders and the affirmative action appointees – the strategic management teams. The so-called apartheid savings for the RDP are a joke! There will be no apartheid dividend, and even less money for the RDP.

The RDP tells us to submit economically and politically to the bourgeoisie. Politically, by allowing a climate of stability; economically, by not challenging the laws of private property – no land invasions, no housing development where it antagonises white property owners, no free houses. It constitutes a major retreat from even the Freedom Charter demands.

'Left-wing' confusions

Many SACP activists, undercover Trotskyists and populists say that we must fight for the soul of the ANC; we must fight to make the RDP our own. But comrades, I am afraid the soul has departed. The ANC is a bourgeois party that is managing the affairs of capitalists – the central concern of the erstwhile populists is 'How do we get investment?'; 'How do we get a better growth rate?'; 'Political stability is paramount', they argue, not 'How do we unite our very divided working masses?'

This is why the ANC-led government will say it supports the workers' right to strike, while it implements the 'neo-liberal' or 'bad points' of the RDP and gives bosses the right to lock out workers. So while it may seem to vacillate between two classes, in practice it will implement the 'bad points' of the RDP. Each concession will be like a scorpion. The creature looks beautiful when you look at its top half, but from behind it stings you. Affordable housing, yes, but pay your bonds, rents and services. Improved primary

health care and free care for pregnant mothers and little children, but when you fall sick after a lifetime of exploitation and need hospital care, you may not get it. This is what the World Bank wants – to alleviate poverty without eradicating its causes, and to take from the squeezed working class and middle class to pay for these 'basic needs' programmes. For all its nice words, the RDP will help to give capitalism and its structural adjustment programme in South Africa a human face.

Mandela claims that nationalisation is not an option at all. Taxation has been one of the most pleasant surprises for capitalists in South Africa – company taxes have decreased from 40 to 35 per cent, and there has been no increase in capital gains taxes. The government is negotiating a mortgage guarantee indemnity scheme where it will pledge state funds as guarantees if the people fail to pay. 'Macro-economic balance, fiscal discipline' – the impositions of the IMF/World Bank – have become like a religious dogma to the new ministers of the South African government.

Above all, no violence. If scabs take

ity. We should not boycott independent or mass-based RDP structures like civics or RDP local planning forums. We should even help to set them up. Rejection of the RDP will happen through an active process of class struggle, not through workshops. We should boycott the tripartite, corporatist forums which are useless talkshops – which is not to say we will not negotiate with capital and the state at any point. But we need to break the ideology of negotiations as a strategy.

We must intervene in mass organisations to expand the RDP demands, so that they challenge the capitalist ethic of making us pay for things so they can make profits. We must recast our programmatic content, in order to reinstate class struggle methods, put forward anti-capitalist demands and develop a transitional programme. We need to build a political organisation that is not tied hand and foot to the capitalist class. CWG is calling for a break from the Alliance and for the formation of a Workers' Party, which is what our comrades have advanced in NUMSA.

Conclusions

Of course, those who constantly caricature our arguments would say we are advocating that the working class must go out tomorrow and commit violent, bloody revolution, and provoke civil war. This is not what we are saying. Any struggles must be adequately prepared for. Every partial action of the working class must be supported and built upon, until we have a stronger national and international basis for working class action. Every partial struggle must be taken up in such a way that it overcomes the many divisions that exist within the working class. With a clear programme that brings workers back on to the anti-capitalist path, the potential for revolutionary transformation will be enhanced.

Immediate defence of the working class is what revolutionaries should be doing. You cannot speak of job creation through the pathetic Public Works Programme that is on the table. Every minor gain that you may make through the RDP is wiped away with every large-scale retrenchment. You have to halt retrenchments as and where they happen.

We must put our resources and our energy into building upon the bold steps being taken by the working class at this point in time. The impact of the RDP is not the result of some grand conspiracy by those who are there to sell the working class out. No, that is left-wing childishness. It is the consequence of the collapse of a system that for decades bore the mantle of communism while concealing an internal degeneration and rot. Our own SACP was not immune to that rot. The international demoralisation that has accompanied this collapse is perhaps comparable to the 1930s and 40s. Our historical opportunities are not endless. If we deepen the masses' disillusionment in a revolutionary alternative, they will end up turning to right-wing solutions, to petty-bourgeois individualism and alienation, and to the churches.

It does not help to agonize, as comrade Cronin does in his latest paper on Transition, about why our organisations are in the parlous state that they are, without going to the heart of the problem – the bourgeois programme of the ANC and the role of the left in convincing the working class that things are not so bad, that the RDP is a first step.

1. For the overthrow of capitalism!

We, socialists gathered here, stand for the overthrow of capitalism and its replacement with a world-wide federation of workers' states, based on workers' democracy and planned economy. We believe that workers will only be free once the unemployment, poverty, degradation and war, which is inherent in capitalism, is ended permanently by the overthrow of capitalism.

2. Against reformism, structural reformism and gradualism!

Ultra-left sectarians make the mistake of rejecting the struggle for immediate reforms while repeating that we must fight for socialism. Others use the term socialism as a moral statement about the future and push the goal of socialism into the distance.

An apparently new idea is that there is a third way to socialism. The false belief is that this 'negotiated road to socialism' will ensure that the structure of capitalism will be changed progressively through a process of structural reform (sometimes called radical reform or structural transformation). At no point is it stated what kind of socialism these reforms have as their goal; neither is it explained how the bourgeoisie will collaborate in their overthrow. This is the new way in which Stalinism is subverting the working class struggle.

The strategic task facing socialists is to advance a method of struggle that links the day-to-day demands with the task of overthrowing capitalism, because these same basic needs cannot be met on a consistent basis under capitalism. This conference accepts the absolute need to fight for all the demands of the working class, even partial ones, on condition that the methods that are used strengthen workers' organisations and propel the working class into action. A programme such as the RDP is problematic because it seeks to confine workers to a timetable and set of demands that capitalism can afford.

We reject the idea that capitalism can be changed gradually by an accumulation of reforms. For every reform given, another is taken away – wage increases are quickly wiped out by rocketing costs of basic foods, medicines and the general cost of living.

3. Against the government of national unity!

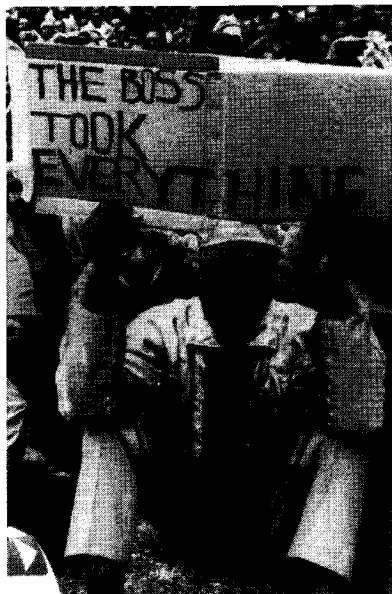
The ANC-led government appears to stand as a referee between the masses and capital, but in practice (and often in words too) it defends capitalism as the most desirable system, but in a softer form. Socialists are duty bound to expose the bourgeois nature of the present government and oppose it.

4. For a workers' united front, a workers' party and a workers' government!

If we accept the need to fight for basic issues in a revolutionary way, then the need for a fighting 'unity of the left' becomes an urgent question. The concrete form of organisation must be a workers' united front. To fight capitalism we need unified action and alliances between workers' organisations. A workers' united front should comprise all workers' organisations (unions, civics, youth, women's and socialist political organisations).

Second, and in line with the fact that the ANC now openly stands for the capitalist mode of production, we propose the formation of a Mass Workers' Party which is organisationally, financially and programmatically independent of the state imperialism and bourgeois nationalism. COSATU, NACTU, the independent unions and civics and youth need to be in the forefront of forming a Workers' Party.

The Workers' Party should advance an immediate defensive struggle against retrenchments, wage decreases, high prices as well as for socialist measures in crucial sectors of the economy such as housing, electricity, water supply, health. A crucial task in the present period is to break the union movement out of the stranglehold of partnerships with the state and the bourgeois nationalist idea of national consensus and patriotism. The ANC alliance will demobilise workers by putting the national economic interests against the workers' interests and expect



your work station, speak to them nicely. In the meanwhile, union organisers tell of continuing retrenchment programmes, with companies relocating to China, or even to areas like the Midrand where they can draw their own dollar-a-day workers from Ivory Park squatter settlement. Workers are being savaged on the factory floor, and the suffering of the unemployed – whom the RDP offers almost nothing in the short to medium-term – is bitter to witness.

The ANC will not be able to discipline the South African bourgeoisie; it will not be able to make decent nationalists out of our bourgeoisie. The writing is on the wall, for those who foolishly advocate that the RDP is a centrist programme that the 'optimists' must lay claim to.

The ANC inside government impacts on the ANC/SACP outside government. In the PWV region, the Alliance structure has been all but dumped, as the COSATU Regional Congress Report of July 16 shows, in this critical period of transition.

How to break the hold of the RDP on the masses

In so far as the masses haven't seen through the capitalist core of the RDP, to the extent that they have massive expectations of the RDP, revolutionaries need to develop tactics in relation to this real-

Fighting for socialism

DRAFT DECLARATION FOR THE SOCIALIST CONFERENCE BY COMRADES FOR A WORKERS' GOVERNMENT (CWG)

On November 5-6, the much-postponed Socialist Conference was held in South Africa. Originally proposed by the metalworkers' union, NUMSA, in 1991, it was finally convened by COSATU and the South African Communist Party. The SACP was represented by a top-level delegation. COSATU's leadership remained in the background, while the ANC, although not formally represented, sent observers.

The bulk of discussion was divided into four topics: neo-liberalism, gender, democracy and the government of national unity, and internationalism. The SACP effectively undermined the conference by announcing in advance that it had no mandated positions on these issues. Most of the smaller left groups present had little constructive to contribute. Some like the Workers International (linked to the WRP in Britain) concentrated on propagandist exposures of Stalinism, while others like the Workers Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA) made few contributions.

Comrades for a Workers' Government was represented both as an organisation and through trade union delegates. CWG attempted to commit the conference, and the SACP in particular, to practical campaigns in defence of jobs, living standards and workers' rights. The failure of the various left groups to collaborate even on this level, however, meant that the SACP was able to block almost all concrete proposals for action, and effectively derail any conclusions. As part of its intervention, CWG put forward the following draft declaration.

ing workers to make the sacrifices for the reconstruction of capitalism.

5. For full democracy and a revolutionary constituent assembly!

One of the key problems of the negotiated 'solution' is that the main content of the new constitution has already been agreed upon by the ANC and the National Party. The constitutional guidelines and the 'Bill of Rights' are, however, thoroughly capitalist in character and are being used as an excuse by the ANC not to fulfil its election promises and to discipline the masses when they call for radical reforms.

We stand for the calling of a revolutionary constituent assembly (RCA) — meaning that no prior limitations and restrictions must be placed on the Constituent Assembly, and it must have full powers. The 'Sunset Clauses' must be scrapped; it is such agreements that undermine the winning of reforms. While calling for a sovereign RCA and for the fullest democracy, we must not forget that elections, and the CA itself, do not solve the question of power. Representatives elected by and accountable to mass-based workers' councils should convene a constituent assembly to write a proper constitution.

6. Class-struggle trade unionism!

We must fight for the complete and unconditional independence of the unions from the bourgeois state and from governmental parties such as the ANC. We say no to all binding agreements which restrict the working class to accepting the rules of capitalist exploitation. We call for a return to 'adversarial', 'us and them' trade unions and, therefore, the ending of the anti-apartheid alliance. Capital is still the enemy.

7. Stop retrenchment! Demand job-sharing, with no loss of pay, jobs for all, and a decent public works programme!

Already eight million people are unemployed. As the capitalist economy daily grinds down the working class and weakens its organisation, so the task of bringing about a socialist revolution becomes more urgent. Retrenchment and unemployment limit the ability of the working class

to fight, diminish the number of workers in unions and demoralise workers.

The right to work is the only serious right left for workers in a society based on exploitation. All available work must be shared among workers with no reduction of pay. We demand a universal moratorium on retrenchments as a prerequisite for any discussion on improving productivity.

A campaign for the unemployed to report to the factories and demand work must be launched. The unemployed must be organised with the active help of the unions.

We call for the creation of a system of public works (electrification, building schools, parks, halls and roads) under workers' control. The unemployed must be drawn into socially-useful work on the basis of a living wage. To those who will repeat the objection that this is not realisable, we say: 'This is the neo-liberal agenda: to force workers into accepting a miserable programme of demands that takes forever to come.'

8. For a living wage tied to inflation!

Organised workers have been called 'factionalists'. Mandela attacks workers, saying that they do not think about the six million unemployed. Many of the ANC-COSATU leaders and their experts openly say we need wage restraint. We totally reject the lowering of workers' wages. We demand a living wage. Capitalists point to the fact that wages are lower elsewhere and that South Africa is therefore uncompetitive. We reject the idea that the South African economic system is 'our system'. We do not own the factories and capitalism is not a system for workers. We reject the logic of making 'our' economy competitive, and competing on a capitalist basis with workers of other countries. This simply means that we are siding with our own bourgeoisie, and we are oiling the wheels of our own exploitation.

9. For open democratic debates, no political intimidation!

Left-wing militants are being driven out of the unions. Revolutionary militants must observe the rules of union democracy, while fighting to spread socialist ideas, policies and a programme of ac-

tion; building the confidence of rank-and-file members by example, argument and leadership.

We defend the right of all union members to be free and active in the political parties of their choice, while at the same time noting that there is nothing wrong in principle if unions align with a particular political organisation. What we oppose are unions which tie themselves to pro-capitalist parties.

10. For nationalisation without compensation!

Our fight is for nationalisation under workers' control of the banks and monopoly corporations, with no compensation for the minority class. Factory committees are the best instruments for the exercise of workers' control.

On no account must the call for workers' control be understood as the same as the capitalist-sponsored ideas of workers' participation, co-determination or profit-sharing schemes. Nor is it aimed at providing a means for alternative planning, based on the 'regulation' of capitalism supposedly in favour of the interests of workers.

The call for workers' control is aimed at constituting a dual power in the factory, and eventually at industry level and nation-wide. It must sharply pose the question of who rules in the economy and society: the bosses or the workers? Immediate targets for defensive nationalisation are those monopolies that have been retrenching workers, privatised parastatals, the banks, the mines and all monopoly industry, all corporations that have gone bankrupt or are threatened with bankruptcy, and the housing, electricity and health industries. Down with business secrets! For collective workers' control!

11. For the formation of price committees of workers and consumers!

Meagre wage increases are wiped out by price increases. Therefore workers cannot confine their demands and action to wage increases; price committees must be formed to monitor and resist price increases.

We demand the scrapping of VAT and all other forms of indirect taxation. Make the bosses pay! Increase the taxation of

the big monopoly capitalist corporations!

12. Housing and the civics

Seven million workers and their families are forced to live in self-built squatter shacks. Hundreds of thousands of workers live in single-sex hostels. It is intolerable that thousands of white capitalist families live lives of obscene luxury in huge mansions, with any number of spare rooms, while the black masses are denied basic shelter. The only serious step to solving the housing question is the immediate nationalisation of the building industry, the creation of a single bank under workers' control, the launching of a crash building programme of decent houses for workers and their families, and the redistribution of existing housing stock through the expropriation of the mansions of the rich.

Civic organisations, trade unions, squatter committees and action committees must intensify the struggle around housing in the coming period. Rent and electricity must be free for the unemployed and a sliding scale of charges should be implemented.

13. Health

Black working class families are worse off today. We demand the free provision by the state of good quality health care for all: the complete nationalisation of the health service under the control of workers and patients. Popularise an economic plan for a national health service with the drug companies under workers' control!

14. The land question

We reject the interim constitution's clauses on land and 'private' property. We call for the organised occupa-

tion and expropriation of land, executed by the organs of struggle of the working class and suffering rural people. We will take up a fight in alliance with the rural masses for land, cheap credit for agricultural machinery, training and extension services.

15. Farm workers

An end to casual labour and job insecurity! A living wage, decent housing, adult education and literacy classes, and a 30-hour week for farm workers! An end to abuse and violence, especially of women workers, by the farming bosses.

16. Women

We demand: the right to work and training for all women; state-provided workplace nurseries and creches, and socialised laundries and canteens! Equal pay for equal work! A living wage for women workers — full maternity and paternity rights! Full employment rights and job security for part-time workers! The right to free abortion on demand! An end to domestic violence against women! An end to sexual harassment in the workplace and in society at large — anti-sexist education and media! The scrapping of all sexist and patriarchal practices! Sexism and women's oppression cannot be ended within the circumscribes of capitalism. The fight to end women's oppression is inseparable from a fight to unite the male and female sections of the working class to smash capitalism. The fight for an end to women's oppression is a fight for a workers' government and socialism.

17. Youth

The youth must join the proletariat in the united front of action for democracy and socialism. A consistent fight must be conducted in SAYCO, COSAS, SASCO and all other youth and student bodies for this struggle to be taken up. Paid, state-run training schemes for the youth! For the hundreds of thousands who leave school and want to acquire skills and earn a decent living, we demand training on a living stipend, equivalent to a living wage. The proletarian youth in the urban townships, on the farms and in the bantustans must be rallied behind this demand and all other demands of the unemployed.

18. Revolutionary internationalism!

Our immediate aim is workers' power in South Africa. But victory in one national battle cannot win the war against the bourgeoisie and its system internationally. The world-wide struggle against global capitalism requires a powerful international coordination of political and economic struggles. This means that a centrally-organised international party must be built. We are for a socialist federation of Southern African states. We must be part of the reconstruction of a world party of revolution and a world-wide federation of workers' states.



By the Leninist
Trotskyist Group of
Canada

Defend Chechenya!

IN SPITE of its military superiority, the Russian army invading the small republic of Chechenya is facing heroic resistance by Chechen fighters. Why did Yeltsin decide to invade now, when the Chechen nationalist movement has existed for three years?

It is not only the question of oil facilities in Chechenya, but of politics. On November 7 last year, hundreds of thousands of workers marched in Moscow to commemorate the October Revolution, albeit under Stalinist banners. In spite of the miserable bureaucrats, whose misrule and oppression brought about the collapse of the Soviet Union, this demonstration was a very important event. The sight of workers marching behind red flags sent a strong message to Yeltsin's local bandits, and to their imperialist masters.

The message is clear and simple. Workers' patience with the 'heroes' of pro-imperialist democracy is wearing thin, and a healthy class hatred seems to be replacing submission and despair.

But Yeltsin does not trust the Stalinists to control the growing class movement, and is using one of the oldest tricks in the book of bourgeois politics: diverting the class struggle into nationalist fervour – in this case by declaring war on Chechenya. As a result, Grozny, the capital city of Chechenya, has come under heavy air and artillery attack. The rain of bombs has caused more than 300,000 civilians – 75 per cent of city dwellers – to flee for their lives. Many hundreds have died, and Grozny is covered in thick smoke. Yet the war is far from over. Chechenya may yet become the ex-Soviet Union's Bosnia.

Yeltsin is using the war not only to murder Chechen workers, but to strengthen his own absolutist power as president. His concern for any kind of democracy was graphically expressed in the shelling of the Russian parliament in 1993. The difficulties

of restoring a functioning capitalist economy to Russia are causing untold hardship for workers who previously had some confidence in Yeltsin. With an eye on his waning popularity, he is playing the nationalist card.

Yeltsin's imperialist backers have a similar disregard for the basic democratic rights of the Chechens. While making some feeble protests at the scale of the onslaught, they have made it clear that they 'recognise Russia's right to secure its borders'. They fear that the restoration process would be even more difficult if the pro-imperialist Yeltsin were overthrown. 'So long as he is the standard bearer of reform, we will continue to support him,' Britain's Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, said on January 20.

The interests of workers lie in the defeat of Yeltsin and his clique of thieves. Therefore we say to Russian soldiers: Turn your weapons in the

other direction! Victory to Chechenya! Only a united class struggle based on national equality can solve the problems facing workers throughout the ex-Soviet Union. This means recognising Chechenya's unconditional right to secede. At the same time, we do not give an ounce of political support to the reactionary nationalists in the Chechen leadership. While it may be true that they are in part backed by the local 'mafia', Yeltsin's regime is linked to far more significant criminal elements. The real issue at stake is Chechenya's right to self-determination.

As Marxists, we believe that the only practical solution is a workers' revolution, as part of a world socialist revolution. But how do we move in this direction in the real world? The task of revolutionary socialists in the ex-Soviet Union is to put forward an action programme, starting from

workers' defensive struggles, and pointing the way to the defeat of the emerging capitalist class. This means opposing Great Russian nationalism, by defending small nations, so as to unite the multinational working class.

Such a programme would aim at exposing the Stalinist misleaders, who, in the absence of revolutionary leadership, have regained some measure of trust from large numbers of militant workers. It would include demands for the defence of jobs, welfare services and nationalised property, and for inflation-proof wages and benefits. Against Yeltsin's increasingly dictatorial regime, it would counterpose the call for a constituent assembly. It would demonstrate the need for a revolutionary internationalist government based on workers' councils, which would restore the monopoly of foreign trade, reverse the restoration process, and fight for a democratically planned economy.

- Down with Great Russian chauvinism!
- Self-determination for the Chechen people!
- For an independent workers' state in Chechenya!
- For a voluntary federation of workers' republics in the ex-Soviet Union based on national equality!

LENINIST-TROTSKYIST TENDENCY

Statement by the Leninist Trotskyist Group of Canada

1. The Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency and the Leninist Trotskyist Group of Canada announce their fusion after a period of political discussion, exchange of written documents, and a visit to England by members of the LTG.

2. The LTG emerged after a faction fight in the ICL (Spartacist) in July 1994, having fought in particular over the character of the ex-Soviet Union and the need to intervene in the crisis of Stalinism, an orientation to the South African working class during the elections by reaching the worker base of the ANC/SACP and COSATU, in opposition to the hysterical ultimatum/sectarian method of the Spartacists.

3. Since the LTG left the ICL our comrades have struggled to break with the ICL's Stalinophilia and its rejection of the Marxist approach to the national question and to the Leninist united front tactics, including an orientation to the New Democratic Party and the trade unions. Unlike the ICL, the LTT does not uncritically support James P. Cannon and his SWP of the 1940s and 50s as the American wing of the 'healthy' IC which falsely claimed continuity with the revolutionary Marxist tradition. The IC and the USec were two centrist currents, neither of which represented the historical continuity of Trotskyism.

4. Of the main international tendencies existing today which claim to be Trotskyist, none represents a real continuity with the Fourth International of Trotsky, the world party of the working class vanguard. They all reflect various forms of adaptation to Stalinism, social democracy and 'third world' nationalism. Today, in response to the 'new world order', the 'Trotskyist' movement is in deep crisis. All tendencies that seek the solution in a 'golden age' of their parent group are condemned to reproduce similar centrist mistakes. Fusions

between such tendencies lacking any revolutionary foundation can only create larger federated centrist organisations. The LTT reaffirms the need for principled regroupment as the way forward to rebuild the Fourth International.

5. While the LTT stands on the documents of the Communist International under Lenin and Trotsky and on the Transitional Programme of Trotsky, these documents are not sufficient for intervening into contemporary class struggles, but must be developed by Marxists against the opportunist and sectarian centrism of the main 'Trotskyist' currents. Marxism is not a dogma, but a scientific method in the hands of revolutionary socialists to analyse and intervene in the living class struggle with the aim of replacing capitalism with world socialism through world proletarian revolution.

6. In Canada, a junior imperialist state, the LTG is struggling for a workers' state as part of the socialist federation of North America. Canada is composed of two nations, Québec and English-speaking Canada. It is necessary to struggle for the recognition of the right of self-determination of the Québécois people up to and including secession. The Canadian state is also based on the historic oppression of the native peoples, and it is necessary to support their struggle for legitimate rights, including the right of the various First Nations to self-government, land rights and equal rights in all spheres. Only the working class and its allies are capable of solving the crisis of humanity, which, in the final analysis, is the crisis of leadership. To solve this task it is necessary to intervene in the crisis of the traditional bourgeois workers' parties and other mass organisations of the masses. We commit ourselves to this task.

November 20, 1994

Down with Proposition 187!

The US mid-term elections on November 8 resulted in sweeping gains for the Republicans. On the same day, Californians voted to deny the estimated 1.7 million undocumented immigrant workers and their children in the state the right to education and non-emergency health care. **Earl Gilman** reports from San Francisco on the racist Proposition 187, which was promoted as the 'Save Our State' referendum

ALONG the border between California and Mexico, starting at the Pacific Ocean, is a metal wall that extends for 15 miles into the desert. This wall was erected by the 'liberal' Clinton administration to keep out so-called 'illegal immigrants'. The only problem is that the border between Mexico and the United States is 2,000 miles long, so that this new 'Berlin Wall' just encourages immigrants to go round it.

Until 1848, California, Texas, New Mexico and Arizona were part of Mexico. The year before, the US army had occupied Mexico City, and the Mexican government was forced to cede half of its country to the US. Today, American tourists and businessmen cross the border into Mexico without need of passports or visas, though Mexicans entering the US are required to have a visa despite the North American Free Trade Agreement.

The financial pages proclaim 'prosperity', but the median earnings of middle class white Americans fell from \$55,000 in 1972 to \$41,898 in 1992. Last March, five multinational companies announced layoffs totaling 324,650 employees. Unemployment is down, but most workers are not earning much more than the minimum wage, or are working as temporaries.

The right wing – divided on the issue of abortion – has united disparate groups ranging from Zero Population Growth to the National Review in a paranoid anti-immigrant campaign which has fascist implications.



Demonstration in Los Angeles last November against Proposition 187

Reporting on the mid-term elections, the newsletter of the right-wing Federation for American Immigration Reform said: 'Governor Wilson of California won re-election to a second term (after falling to a record low approval rating) by making immigration control the highlight of his re-election platform.'

Wilson's Democratic Party opponent, Kathleen Brown, claimed to oppose Proposition 187, which requires public employees in welfare, health and education to report 'illegals' to the Immigration and Naturalisation Service. However, in her election statement she said: 'We must cut off jobs for illegal immigrants by raising fines on employers. We must do a better job protecting the border and preventing the illegal immigrants entering into this country.' A slight

difference of emphasis only.

Many liberals are urging less mass mobilisations and more legal actions, with the hope that the Supreme Court will declare Proposition 187 unconstitutional. The mass marches of entire high schools, joining together with radicals, has frightened many self-appointed community leaders.

Immigrant groups are planning consumer boycotts of Disney and Nabisco, who finance the Republican Party and therefore Proposition 187. However, these companies have responded by saying that they also contribute to the Democratic Party, and therefore against Proposition 187. A boycott campaign could have educational value if it explained that these companies are behind both parties, which differ little on the issue of racism.

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Rebellion on the docks

A wasted opportunity

They Knew Why They Fought

By Bill Hunter

Index Books, 1994; £7.95

Reviewed by
Al Richardson

THIS IS an interesting if one-sided book, for in spite of its rich detail, its core is not so much a history of rank-and-file dockers' struggles in general as a justification for the breakaway of a minority of the northern dockers from the T&GWU in 1954, and the part played in this by the Healy group. The struggles of the dockers in London and elsewhere hardly figure in it at all.

The facts of the breakaway are easily summarised. By the mid-50s, the T&GWU, which organised the overwhelming majority of the dockers, was appallingly bureaucratised and well out of touch with the needs and aspirations of the northern men. A small craft union, the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers, organised some 4,000 stevedores and 3,000 dockers in the port of London (p.31). Impatient with the Arthur Deakin regime, some 40 per cent of the

T&GWU's dockers in Birkenhead, Liverpool, Manchester and Hull left and joined the NAS&D, triggering a series of recognition disputes and a destructive inter-union conflict. Craft prejudice fuelled the bad feeling between the 'White' and 'Blue' unions. 'The T&G was a vast organisation and we felt we counted for nothing,' comments Gerry Edwards (p.115).

Apart from in Hull, none of the NAS&D stewards won negotiating rights. For the first time in over a generation, non-union labour appeared in the northern ports. Moreover, a little more than a year later Deakin was gone, his successor Tiffin had died suddenly, and Frank Cousins was general secretary of the T&GWU, swinging the union leftwards (p.47).

Three years afterwards, it placed its block vote at the Labour Party conference behind the motion for unilateral nuclear disarmament proposed by the Trotskyists, who by this time were unable to take advantage of it for the influence of the Stalinists among the rank and file, particularly among the dockers, had immeasurably increased. By the time the two unions finally amalgamated in 1983, there were some 200 members of the NAS&D left in the port of Liverpool.

The Healy organisation saw the breakaway as a golden opportunity to get round the formidable position built up by the Communist Party in the T&GWU, and make a quick breakthrough into an important organised sector of the working class. 'Yes, there were "politically motivated men" who supported the Blue Union,' writes Hunter. 'We, Trotskyists, who later became the Socialist Labour League, supported them' (p.121).

But meanwhile in the main union, the ban on Communists occupying official positions was about to be lifted. CPGB leader Harry Pollitt had condemned the Hull men for leaving and called for 'unity in the fight to democratise the Transport and General Workers' Union'. 'To say the least, that demand was but an abstract generalisation,' comments Hunter. 'The very choice made by these dockers posed the question of workers' democracy in a new way. They had a right to make their choice' (p.42).

Hunter condemns the policy of the Communist Party as an 'opportunist one of making moves at the top and using the support of a section of the bureaucracy', a policy of 'building "pressure movements", not in fighting to build an alterna-

tive leadership' (p.42). But the Healy group had the eternal justification of all sects, that it was constructing 'a principled Marxist alternative leadership', which could only be built by participating in historic movements such as that of the Blue Union break' (p.121).

So Hunter has no regrets about the part played by his organisation, because 'it was not an adventure, neither was it an artificial movement' (p.121). 'It is significant that among those who were in the leadership of the Blue Union in the north during those years there are none who have ever expressed any regret at the role they played,' he writes (p.114), quoting Peter Kerrigan to the effect that 'the reasons for the big break from the T&G were overwhelming and it was a viable undertaking' (p.116).

An attempt is even made to justify those dockers who refused to belong to either union. 'It is true that a number of men in the northern ports became non-unionists. The state of mind of these dockers should be understood. Their attitude can be summed up as: the T&G won't serve us and the Blue Union can't. What put the question in perspective is the consideration that, during this period of the 1960s, unity of all dockers was possible, as was shown most clearly in the strike of 1967, and could have ended non-unionism. The majority of the dockers who were in neither union were not anti-union, but readily came out during strikes... The responsibility for non-unionism rested firmly on the shoulders of the bureaucracy of the T&GWU who had put their own narrow interests before the interests of their docker membership' (pp.50-1).

Far from understanding that breaking from a big and powerful union bureaucracy in order to set up a small and impotent one is a blow directed at workers' unity as a whole, it is even claimed that the split had a beneficial effect upon the larger union. 'The break to the NAS&D - an eloquent testimony to the extreme discontent with the T&GWU - served as a warning to the T&GWU bureaucracy of the explosive potential that existed within all sections of the union' (p.47), which 'shook the bureaucracy and forced them to retreat and give shop stewards in 1967' (p.117).

Nor is any greater understanding shown of the necessity for workers' unity on the political plane. For in spite of its claims of 'always seeking unity in struggle' (p.131), which must be news to those who were around at the time, the Healy organisation had not only helped split a minority of the dockers from the rest of them, but had prematurely isolated itself from what was shortly to become the trade union backbone of the left in the Labour Party into the bargain. And when we recall that they were about to leave the Labour Party and go off on the adventure of the Socialist Labour League as well, it is little short of amazing that we read that 'We were absolutely correct to seek to link it with the left wing movement in the Labour Party which was a central political phenomenon at the time' (p.123). And while Jack

Jones was becoming involved with the Institute for Workers' Control (condemned with the usual sectarian device of putting quotation marks round it on page 85), the Healy organisation was putting the finishing touches to its own isolation within the trade unions by setting up the All Trades Unions Alliance in 1968.

Apart from wondering about the calibre of a 'principled revolutionary leadership' that did not even tell the men about the Bridlington Agreement (p.37), we can only ask ourselves how long ago it was that they read the *Communist Manifesto*, with its remarks that Communists 'set up no sectarian principles on which they wish to model the proletarian movement', and 'have no interests separate from the interests of the proletariat in general'.

Margaret Dewar 1901-95

IT IS with regret that we have learned of the death of Rita Dewar on January 26. With her passing, another link with the early Trotskyist movement has been broken. Born into a comfortable Latvian family, she was a school-girl when the Russian Revolution took place. In 1920, during the civil war, she left for Germany where she became a socialist. She joined the Communist Party in 1930, but the suicidal policy of the KPD led her to adhere to the Left Opposition in the spring of 1933. She remained in Germany, carrying out illegal work for a further two and a half years, before escaping to Czechoslovakia. She met Hugo Dewar, one of the founding members of the Balham Group, in Paris in 1937, and they were married in early 1938. During the war, they helped to produce the paper *Free Expression* in the ILP along with Reg Groves. Although neither Hugo nor Rita rejoined any revolutionary organisation, they remained sympathetic to Trotskyism. Her published works include *Labour Policy in the USSR, 1917-28* (1956) and her autobiography *The Quiet Revolutionary* (1989).

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The WIL is the British section of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency. Together with comrades in South Africa, Belgium, Germany and Canada, 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

FUNDS

News from Planet Blair. Socialism, it seems, 'is a belief about society'. What kind of belief, you may ask? It means 'a fair distribution of power, wealth and opportunity'. And since Blair doesn't intend changing anything very much, it follows that we must be well on the way to socialism already. Which is why he wants Labour to become more like the Tories.

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By Yossi Rad

IN SEPTEMBER 1993, Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO leader Yasser Arafat shook hands in front of the television cameras on the White House lawn. Rabin was reluctant to shake hands with the man who represented the victims of Zionism. He might even have reflected on the orders he issued to Israeli troops during the Intifada to break the limbs of protesting Palestinian children.

At that time a new accord known as the Declaration of Principles was signed by the two leaders, which called on both parties, oppressor and oppressed, 'to recognise their mutual legitimate and political rights and strive to live in peaceful coexistence and mutual security'. Elections were to be held on the West Bank in the summer of 1994. The PLO's armed forces were to take over in the populated areas, the Israeli army was to be redeployed, and a freeze imposed on further Jewish settlements.

The first taste of things to come was the Hebron massacre on February 25, 1994. A five-man committee of inquiry was appointed by the Israeli government, which exonerated the government and the army command from any responsibility for the massacre. It concluded, not surprisingly, that the killings were the work of a lone madman. Like previous committees, it was acting in line with its real remit: to whitewash those responsible for the crime.

Nor should it surprise anyone that, under the circumstances, the legitimate anger of the Palestinians against the United States, Israel and the PLO secular nationalists was channelled into support for the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas. On October 19, 1994, following the kidnapping of an Israeli soldier and the death of 22 Jews in a bomb attack – both actions carried out by Hamas – Rabin called for legislation to allow even harsher interrogation of suspects. The existing guidelines set out by the Landau commission, which permit torture, were apparently not good enough for Rabin. Furthermore, for the first time Palestinian guerrillas now face the death penalty.

There are historical echoes in Arafat's current role. He is a relative of Haj Amin Hussani, who was an infamous servant of the imperialists and the Mufti of Jerusalem under the British Mandate. Arafat has been trying his best to keep his part of the deal. On November 18, 1994, Palestinian police fired on a demonstration outside a Palestinian mosque in Gaza, killing 16 people and wounding hundreds more.

On December 10, barely three weeks after this latest massacre, Rabin, Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres and Arafat jointly shared the Nobel peace prize.

Arafat, however, like Israeli army commanders before him, has discovered that shooting down unarmed protesters is one thing; putting an end to the Palestinian uprising is another. Since he cannot deliver the goods, the Israeli government doesn't feel obliged to keep its part of the deal. During cabinet meetings on the eve of the trip to Oslo to collect the Nobel prize, Uri Seguy, the director of Israeli military intelligence, stated in his report that Gaza had become a 'new Lebanon', in which armed militia were directly challenging Arafat's authority. Following this report, Rabin gave

ISRAEL/PALESTINE



Israeli forces arrest young Palestinians in Bethlehem during the security clampdown following the January 22 bombings

Peace treaty in tatters

Arafat two choices: either hold elections later, or hold them under the control of the Israeli army. Meanwhile, Palestinian political prisoners will continue to rot in Israeli jails. As for the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland, Rabin will not allow them to undo his life's work of cleansing the 'land of Israel' of Palestinians.

Opposition to Arafat, even within his own organisation, Fatah, is growing. There have been growing tensions in recent months between the Palestine National Authority's (PNA) supervisory committee for the negotiations, headed by Mahamud Abbas and Abd Rabbu, and the Arafat leadership.

Arafat is caught between popular pressure against accepting Israel's terms for elections on the West Bank, and American-Israeli pressure to accept them. Deeper compromises will only further undermine the already discredited PLO leadership. The only real gain Arafat can point to so far is the role of the PLO as tax collector,

which has increased the PNA's revenues. By the end of 1994, the IMF had transferred \$245 million to the PNA, \$145 of which is to be spent on the salaries and offices of Arafat's administration.

Negotiations between Israel and Syria have yet to produce any agreement, since Israel is not ready to withdraw from the Golan Heights. Israel and Jordan, however, have signed a treaty which has created strains within ruling circles, and between the king and both secular and fundamentalist Palestinians. The question which comes to mind is whether the wily King Hussein has finally committed the same mistake as his grandfather, and whether he will pay for it in the same way.

The clearest indication that the so-called 'just, lasting and comprehensive peace' is turning bloodier and bloodier has been provided by the events of the last few weeks. On January 11, Israeli aircraft, tanks and heavy artillery attacked southern Lebanon, in retaliation, it was claimed, for guer-

rilla raids on its occupying forces. On January 22, two bombs exploded at a crossroads near Netanya, killing 18 Israeli soldiers, one civilian and two Islamic Jihad militants. The immediate response of the Clinton government, on January 24, was to outlaw fundraising in the United States by 11 Arab groups and the ultra-Zionist Kach organisation 'which threaten to disrupt the peace process'. The following day, there were further clashes in south Lebanon in which several Hezbollah members were killed by Israeli forces.

Meanwhile, on January 23, the Israeli government announced a plan for the 'separate development' of Israelis and Palestinians, which would involve the building of a new security border and the annexation of large parts of the West Bank by Israel. A committee of ministers was set up which is expected to give the go-ahead for the continued development of Jewish settlements within the projected new security zone.

A new war, rather than peace, is in

the making. Revolutionary socialists must demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the Israeli army and settlers from the West Bank and Gaza. An independent Palestinian state must be established in any part of the liberated territory. The PLO must end its criminal participation in the Pax Americana against the Palestinians. Militant secular nationalists who believe that Mahamud Abbas and Abd Rabbu oppose the shameful treaty should demand that they replace Arafat. A united Palestinian movement must struggle to end the occupation, and for the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland and be compensated for their stolen property.

Israeli socialists must fight for the same demands. Only alongside the oppressed Palestinians and against the Zionist state will Jewish workers be able to fight for their own freedom. The Arab states' negotiations with Israel can only prepare a new war, in which the demoralised Arab masses would face Israel backed by US imperialism.

Although the actions of Hamas against unarmed Jewish civilians in Israel are playing into the hands of the Israeli government, socialists must demand the immediate release of all Palestinian political prisoners, including Hamas militants. 'Socialists' who fail to do so are nothing more than veiled supporters of US imperialism, and of Israel – the main instrument of imperialist control in the Middle East – and they should be exposed as such.

The struggle against Pax Americana requires the building of fighting workers' parties which oppose the subordination of workers and peasants to US imperialism and its agents in the Middle East. While struggling in action alongside all those who oppose the occupation and imperialist domination regardless of their ideology, revolutionaries must maintain their independent organisation and programme in order to fight for the leadership of the mass movement.

- Down with Pax Americana!
- Down with Zionism!
- Israel out of all occupied territories, including southern Lebanon!
- Stop the capitulation to imperialism and Zionism in the name of the 'peace process'!
- Release all Palestinian political prisoners!
- For a bi-national Palestinian-Israeli workers' state, as part of a Socialist Federation of the Middle East!

London arrests

FIVE Palestinians were arrested in London on January 17 under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, three of whom have been released, while two have been charged with conspiracy to cause explosions. At the same time a number of leftist Palestinians who have studied in Britain were arrested in the Occupied Territories. All of those arrested are critical of the Israel/PLO deal. An organisation called Action for the Rights of Arabs in Britain (ARAB) has been set up to campaign against attacks on and the criminalisation of Arabs in Britain.