

# workers power

★ **Can Northern Irish workers unite?**

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★ *The British left and the peace deal*

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British section of the LRCI - League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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## IRELAND

# No peace under British rule!

**IN JANUARY 1972 British paratroops shot dead thirteen unarmed demonstrators on the streets of Derry, Northern Ireland.**

Not a single soldier was disciplined or charged for the "Bloody Sunday" massacre. The British justice system whitewashed this act of cold-blooded murder and laid the blame on the Civil Rights protesters themselves.

Last month two British soldiers walked free from a Belfast court after being acquitted of murdering an unarmed Sinn Féin member at an army checkpoint. One of Ireland's no-jury courts had decided that the soldiers' cooked-up stories were enough to ensure "reasonable doubt" about their intentions when they pumped twenty bullets into Fergal Caraher as he drove away from the checkpoint.

Nothing changes in Northern Ireland, and nothing will change until the murderous, sectarian six-county state, and the British troops who uphold it, are swept away for good.

The Major-Reynolds' declaration has been hailed as a great step forward towards peace. But Major and Reynolds are not at war with each other. It is the British state which is at war with the anti-unionist population of Northern Ireland. And the peace deal that is being crafted behind the backs of the anti-unionist masses is designed to guarantee surrender, on British imperialism's terms.

The Major-Reynolds' declaration is a two faced, cynical exercise. It grants nothing concrete to the anti-unionist working class, but promises the loyalist population the continued right to veto a united Ireland.

Its main purpose is to provide the Republican leadership with a form of words under which they can cease the armed struggle and take their place, like so many other middle class nationalist leaders, from Palestine to South Africa, at the negotiating table with imperialism.

So the Downing Street agreement nods in the direction of "self-determination for the whole of Ireland". What use is that when the loyalists are guaranteed the right to veto self-determination.

The document claims Britain has "no economic or strategic interest" in Northern Ireland. That may be true given the decline of Britain's navy and the need to introduce "market forces" into the heavily subsidised, Protestant dominated industries.

But Britain has a strategic and economic interest in preserving the imperialist social order in Ireland, north and south. That is why its 18,000 troops are on standby to launch a new offensive against not only the IRA, but the entire anti-unionist population, if their peace con-trick fails.

Every year Irish Republicans and anti-imperialists in the British workers' movement march to commemorate Bloody Sunday. This is not because of sentiment, or because we are obsessed with the past. It is because as long as British troops remain in Ireland, innocent people will be killed and our bosses will be able to develop an arsenal of repression which they can use against the working class in Britain.

The Republican movement's strategy—the bullet and the ballot—could never bring victory. It was based on a refusal to mobilise the working class, north and south, in a combined struggle against imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation. But the way out of the stalemate does not lie through an illusory peace deal with the British state.

It lies through a mass political struggle to force British troops out of Ireland, a struggle which workers in Britain and Ireland should do their utmost to develop and maintain. This year's Bloody Sunday march must be a massive show of defiance, against both the Major-Reynolds' con-trick and the threats of increased repression which lie behind it. ■

**NO MORE BLOODY SUNDAYS! TROOPS OUT NOW!**

**DEMONSTRATE:**

**29 JANUARY 1994 • 12 NOON, HYDE PARK, LONDON**

**JOIN THE TROOPS OUT NOW CONTINGENT!**

ON 10 SEPTEMBER 1993, hundreds of people held a vigil outside the London Hospital in Whitechapel in the East End. Nine of those people, all young men, are currently facing charges of riot which could lead to long terms of imprisonment.

The vigil was for Quddus Ali who had been rushed to the hospital after a vicious racist attack. Quddus was in a coma after being beaten and almost killed by a gang of racist thugs.

The vigil was held to show support for the family of Quddus and to draw attention to the increasing number of such racist attacks in the area. The police were doing nothing about the racist attacks, but this was no surprise to the local black youth who have suffered police harassment and racism for years.

## TOWER HAMLETS NINE

# Drop the charges!

The police response was to break up the vigil. As the demonstrators, mainly local Bengali youth, attempted to defend themselves, nine were arrested and many others were injured.

But the police were determined to go further and punish the local community for daring to protest against racism. The area was swamped by police wearing riot

gear who then allowed over 50 fascist thugs from the British National Party to attack shops and terrorise local people in Brick Lane, close to the hospital.

Of course, it is not the police or the BNP who are facing charges of riot. It is the nine young men who were arrested on the vigil. We must demand that these charges are dropped immediately.

A campaign has been set up for the defence of the Tower Hamlets Nine. They urgently need support.

What you can do:

- Organise meetings in your trade union or student union and get a speaker from the campaign
- Organise a collection and send a donation to the campaign
- Affiliate to the campaign
- Support pickets of the court

For further details and to send donations, write to:

TOWER HAMLETS NINE DEFENCE  
CAMPAIGN  
PO Box 273  
London E7

**Tower Hamlets Nine are  
Innocent!  
Drop the Charges Now!**



Charged with riot after police attack

## JAMAICAN DEPORTEES

# Racist visas on the way

THE BRITISH state did more than just dream of a "White Christmas". They enforced one when they detained 190 Jamaican nationals on a charter flight at Gatwick airport.

Their only crime was being black. No white visitors on this or any other flight to Britain were detained over the holiday period. As Labour's immigration spokesman, Graham Allen, pointedly asked, "Can we expect Concorde flights from New York to get the same treatment?" The answer is no.

Fifty-seven Jamaicans were held for up to five days at the recently completed Campsfield Detention Centre in Oxfordshire. The conditions at the centre, which is run by Group 4, are prison-like.

The detainees were denied con-

tact with the outside world and lawyers, deprived of food, sleep and medical attention for long periods and forced to bed down on concrete floors. The 500 friends and relatives who had come to greet their visitors were treated to a wall of silence and lies by immigration officials and police. After 16 hours of waiting with no news they were moved on at gunpoint.

At 9.35pm on Christmas Day, 27 detainees were deported. TV cameras were stopped from filming the plane's take-off for fear of outrage. Under the new asylum laws, they were denied all legal rights and cannot appeal against the decision itself. If they lose their appeal that illegal procedures were employed they will be barred from Britain for life.

This was just one incident amongst many. One in four Bangladeshis who arrive in Britain are deported. Like the Jamaicans, the vast majority have no criminal record. They are deported because they are black.

New European Union laws announced this month will impose visa regulations on 31 black Commonwealth countries. Predominantly white countries like Canada and New Zealand will remain exempt.

Racist bigots were heartened by this sickening outrage. Tory MP Terry Dicks said the government should be "applauded". The response of the labour and trade union movement has been patchy.

Some like the racist Gerald Kaufman have used the opportunity to condemn Jamaica's human rights record!

Others like Bill Morris of the TGWU and Keith Vaz MP have called for public enquiries and reforms to the immigration laws.

But these laws cannot be reformed. They are racist through and through. We need a labour movement campaign to smash all the immigration controls. ■

## GAY AGE OF CONSENT

# Abolish it!

NEXT MONTH MPs will get a "free vote" on the question of the age of consent for gay men. At present gay sex is illegal for men under the age of twenty-one. Yet there are thousands of sexually active gay men under the age of 21. The current law is being flouted on a mass scale. Last year 169 men were convicted of the "crime" of sleeping with a man under the age of 21. Stupid and unjust as every one of these convictions were, this relatively low figure shows why even the moralistic Tories are prepared to sanction some reform of the gay age of consent.

But what should the new law say? MPs will be given the chance to vote for a variety of options, including the status quo, or reduction of the age of consent to 18 or to 16. Since only 12% of voters support the equalisation of the age of consent at 16, and with a wave of moralism sweeping the Tory party, it is touch and go whether there will be any change at all.

Labour MPs should be forced, through an official party whip, to vote for equalisation.

But that must be only the start of a fight to remove all age of consent legislation, for heterosexuals as well as gay men.

### Function

The age of consent laws were brought in at the end of the nineteenth century, supposedly to outlaw child prostitution. But their main function has been to give the state the right to legitimise the oppression of youth. The argument behind all age of consent laws is that there is a certain age before which young people aren't qualified to make decisions about their sexuality. Anybody who has sex with a young person below this age is supposed to be guilty of rape.

But there are other laws to deal with rape and child abuse. The denial of young people's sexuality is one of the bedrocks of youth oppression in capitalist society, and the age of consent one of the cornerstones of that oppression. It is used to criminalise both gay and heterosexual teenagers' sexu-

ality. The only reason lesbian sex is not outlawed is because the Victorian moralists who dreamed up the age of consent couldn't bear to think of its existence!

Many young people, gay, lesbian and straight, have sex before the age of sixteen without doing any more harm to each other than people twice their age. The average age at which gay men first have sex is sixteen! Since many gay men don't discover their sexuality until well after this age, this means that there are a lot of young men having sex before they are sixteen.

One argument that often comes from people who don't consider themselves moral bigots is, "shouldn't young men be given time to work out their sexuality?" But how does an age of consent law, at 16, 18 or 21, do that? It leaves gay youths in fear of prosecution for "working out" their sexuality.

### Moralists

As for stopping child prostitution—does anyone who watched *Prime Suspect III* think the current age of consent has stopped it? Gay youth prostitution is a thinly hidden big business in London and other large cities, under the very noses of the Tory moralists.

Those who are so concerned about the plight of rent boys should start addressing the poverty and violence that has driven them onto the streets, not criminalising them and their clients with the age of consent.

There should be laws and punishment for anyone who forces anyone else into sex against their will. Such laws, linked to a massively improved programme of sex education in schools and the further extension of children's legal rights (it is only in the last few years that children's evidence was accepted in court in abuse cases!) can protect children and youth from oppression and abuse.

The arbitrary age of consent legislation is irrelevant to this. It is, and always has been, an excuse for the bosses' state to veto the sex lives of ordinary people, especially youth. ■

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## EDUCATION

Towards the  
two-tier system

ANYONE LISTENING to the outpourings of Education Secretary, John Patten, over the last few weeks might have been reminded of the words of Shakespeare (who is ironically compulsory reading in the National Curriculum): "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing".

But beneath the meaningless blather, Patten's words do signify something, which is not good news for students, teachers and parents. Since the days of Thatcher, the Tories have had a clear goal for their education reforms. The 1960s and 1970s are seen as the decades when the left won the ideological battle over education. Thatcher came to power determined to change all that. Education had to meet the needs of capitalism more closely, both ideologically and practically.

During the long economic boom, British bosses needed workers able to master the skills needed by new technologies. But now, Britain has a low-skill, low-wage economy. The most academically able students need to be identified and taught in selective schools to be technicians or bosses. Meanwhile most working class youth are to be "trained" in the skills required in the factories and taught the values of subservience and timidity which are needed for long periods on the dole.

To do this the Tories needed greater centralisation, taking control of schools away from local government and strengthening the powers of the Secretary of State for Education. They could then attempt to control what is taught in schools through the imposition of a National Curriculum.

**Tests**

To achieve a two-tier education system they encouraged schools to opt out and select their pupil intake. Finally in order to make the bosses' task of recruiting workers a little more straightforward, they would set tests and use the result to label every child with a number from one to ten.

This remains the overall plan for education. But the Tories have run

into a number of problems implementing it. These problems lie in the limited success of opting out, the content of the National Curriculum, and resistance from teachers.

**Bribes**

The system of schools opting out of local authority control has come to something of a standstill. Despite generous bribes in the form of additional government funding, relatively few state schools have opted out. A new approach was needed to kick start the process.

On 29 December the Department for Education published draft guidelines dealing with the establishment of new schools. They suggest that parents, businesses and religious groups should be able to establish their own grant-maintained schools. They would receive 85% of the building costs from the government. There are in fact "too many places" in current schools and a number of state schools (nine in Sheffield alone) are faced with closure. But the government is encouraging new schools to break up state education further.

These new private schools would be able to select their own students. Obviously such schools would operate like old grammar schools, cream-

ing off the academically able and leaving state schools to deal with the "rejects".

This month saw the publication of the Dearing Report. Sir Ron Dearing was appointed by John Patten to look at the content of the National Curriculum in the aftermath of last summer's teachers' rebellion. It was clearly impossible for schools to teach everything in the curriculum. There was no consultation with teachers and schools quickly found that there were simply not enough hours in the day to get through everything. The final straw came when tests were added to the burden.

The Dearing recommendations significantly lower the compulsory elements of the National Curriculum to around 80% of school time for 5 to 14 year olds and 60% of school time for 14 to 16 year olds.

**Basics**

It will now concentrate on the "basics" of English, science and maths. For 14 to 16 year olds there will be a greater emphasis on "vocational" education. By this the Tories mean training for the workplace. Most other subjects, including technology and languages, have been significantly cut. Needless to say, religious education, that extremely important subject which the Tory hypocrites insist is

needed to teach us "moral values", remains compulsory for all students. The use of the ten level scale to grade students in all subjects is retained by Dearing.

Dearing had another job to do—sow the seeds of division between the teaching unions over the tests. Last year's boycott of the tests was very solid. Only 5% of secondary state schools conducted the test. This was the result of a firm alliance between all teaching unions (even the headteachers) and parents. The boycott was a defeat for the Tories and a major personal defeat for John Patten who spent the rest of the summer ill in bed. For union members it was an important taste of victory after years of attacks on pay and conditions. It was vital for the Tories to find a way of stopping the action.

Initial reactions to the Dearing proposals for slimmed down tests show they may be successful.

As a smokescreen for their climbdown over the National Curriculum the Tories have launched a new offensive over discipline in schools. The poor teachers are being harassed by teenage terrors, Patten claims. Patten himself was beaten at school and regrets that this is now barred by European law. Since bashing the little terrors is out, what else should teachers do? Patten recommends more detentions, more school uniforms and more truancy officers. It is as easy as that!

But most teachers know that dealing with disruptive pupils is anything but simple. It requires time to resolve behaviour problems. Schools need trained counsellors, the possibility of offering alternative lessons or institutions, as well as effective but non-degrading sanctions. Being in a large class where the teacher is constantly having to deal with one disruptive student can be an incredibly frustrating experience, for the teacher and the other students. It is important to have additional teachers either in the classroom or supplying outside support. Smaller classes benefit all students, not just the disruptive ones.

**Behaviour**

Even so, you don't have to be a sociology professor to work out that most of the behaviour problems that lead students to be violent and disruptive originate outside the school gates. Family breakup, sexual abuse, poverty, drug and solvent abuse and the increasingly prevalent part-time work by school students are common factors. These are often exacerbated by petty, ideologically motivated school rules, like having to "tuck your shirt in". These have nothing to do with educational standards and everything to do with imposing capitalist work discipline on youth.

So long as capitalism carries on making the lives of working class youth a misery, teachers will be forced to combine educating children with the task of alleviating some of the worst side-effects of society's oppression of youth. The Tory offensive over discipline doesn't solve the problem of disruptive pupils. But it does form part of the ideological offensive



Patten

on the "liberal" teaching establishment, with the implication that teachers are "too soft".

Although they will never abolish the root causes of anti-social behaviour amongst a minority of youth, smaller classes, special units and more support teachers can have a big effect. So can nursery education. At the same time, teachers have the right to demand the exclusion from school of pupils who are consistently violent or sexually menacing.

**Cuts**

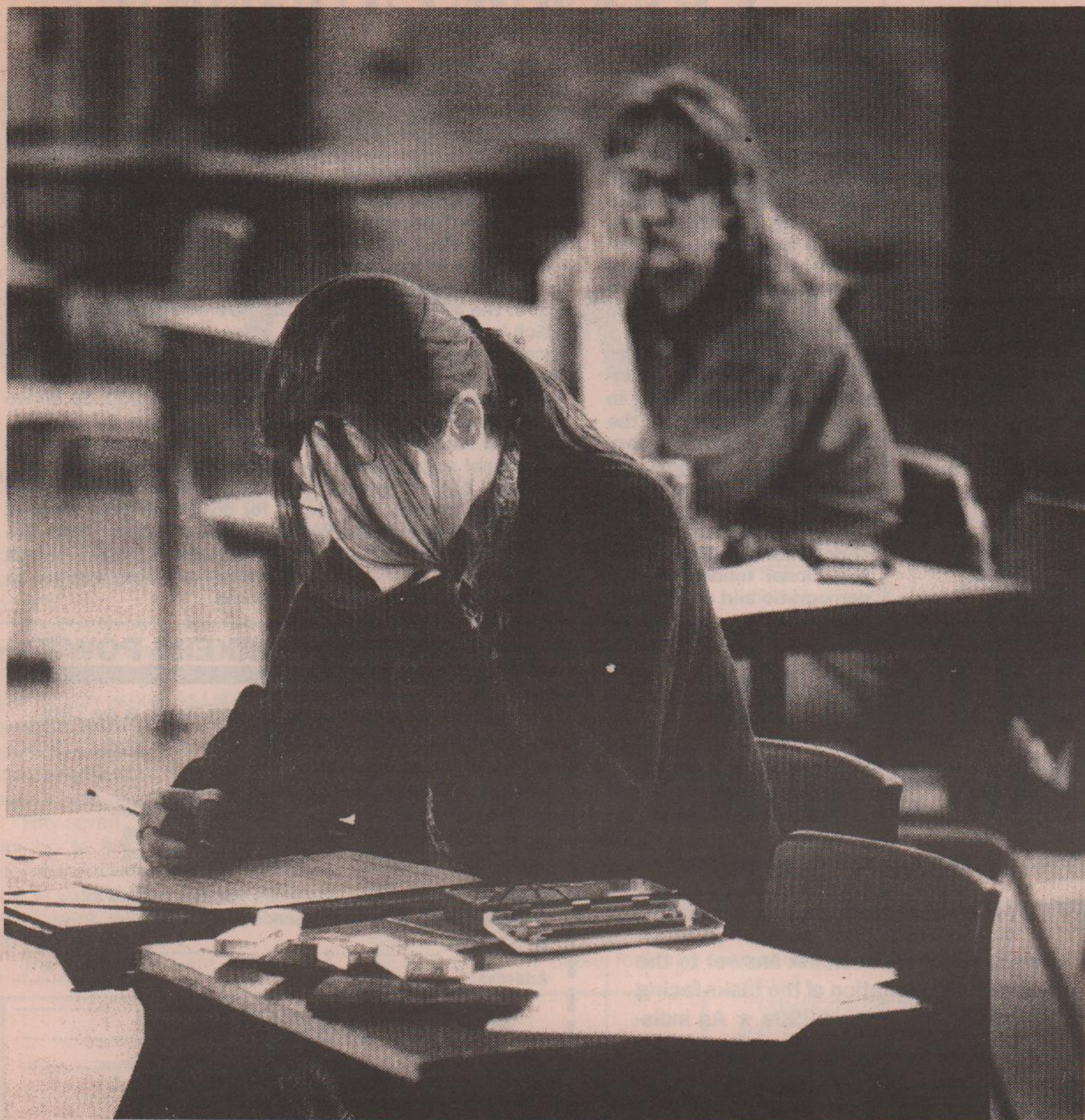
But Patten's government is the one which has introduced drastic cuts in funding for all these special educational measures. The Tories have done nothing to further nursery provision, and their local government spending cuts have led to the abolition of the few nurseries provided for public sector workers' children. At the same time, Patten is insisting on a maximum quota of eighteen "exclusion days" for disruptive pupils in any term.

The real purpose of Patten's "discipline" offensive became clear when he spent £2 million on a leaflet to parents. Teachers and parents, not Tory policies and youth oppression, are to blame for bad behaviour—this is the message behind Patten's leaflet. He lectures parents on the need to give their children a healthy breakfast, ensure they do their homework and turn up at school properly dressed.

Try buying a "healthy breakfast" on the dole. Try finding the time to cook it if you're working a split shift for a clock-watching employer. Try finding the money for new school uniforms when your wages are being frozen and massive tax increases are loaded onto everything you buy.

It is not difficult to poke fun at such a useless politician as Patten. But we must not forget that behind this fool is a clear class strategy for education. It is not concerned with the education of youth but the needs of capitalism. It is a strategy that we must resist.

We have to demand a secular, comprehensive, state education for all. We have to fight for a National Curriculum that is not dictated by the bosses and their political representatives but is agreed upon by parents, students and teachers. We need adequately funded schools and free universal nursery education for the under-fives. And right now teachers have to maintain the test-boycott until all compulsory testing is abolished. ■



After Dearing ... still too many tests

**T**HE UNION of Communications Workers' (UCW) General Secretary, Alan Johnson, and £214,000 a year Post Office chief executive, Bill Cockburn, are working hand in glove.

Earlier this month the Post Office's company rag, *The Courier*, carried articles by Cockburn and Johnson side by side, both urging the Government to allow the Post Office to conduct commercial business like any private company. This, claims Johnson, will boost profits and save jobs. Unfortunately, you get no marks for getting things half right.

Cockburn is a hard-nosed boss by any standards. Over the past four years he has cut jobs by 5% while the amount of mail handled has increased by 16%. Thirty thousand more jobs are threatened over the next five years.

Working conditions have been savaged while profits have continued to rocket to a record £283 million this year. Any co-operation with the plans of Cockburn and his cronies will cost postal workers more jobs and work speed-ups. It is totally out of order for a union leader even to suggest it.

But for Johnson, this is par for the course. His mates on the NEC have sabotaged almost every postal dispute in the last 12 months. Most recently, the fight against the miserable 1.5% pay offer has been jettisoned. Despite a clear majority of members voting in the branches to reject the offer, the NEC sent out a leaflet with the ballot papers recommending acceptance saying, "industrial action will do more harm than good. . . you will lose money and in the longer term work and jobs will be lost." Maybe Cockburn wrote the leaflet in return for Johnson's article in *The Courier*!

The argument that strikes always lose is a tired old piece of bosses' propaganda. It is patently untrue. Members in Oxford and Bridgwater in Somerset recently threatened to walk out. "Longer term work" in the shape of second deliveries was protected in one instance and a sacked member's job was saved in the other.

The 11,000 who voted for action represent a large number of UCW members in the post who are angry and want to fight. The problem is that this militant minority is not organised to fight against the misleadership of the NEC majority.

From Newcastle to Somerset, UCW members have time and again dis-



Cardiff postal workers strike

POST

# Union leaders sabotage action

played their willingness to fight back. Last month, UCW members in BT voted by a massive 85% for strike action to stop the erosion of unsocial hours payments. Even though BT backed down, Johnson has now said he is willing to negotiate over the issue!

The problem is not that UCW members are unwilling to fight, nor that BT and the Post Office management are invincible.

The problem is the spineless leadership, who will negotiate away members' pay, jobs and conditions, in

return for a congratulatory pat on the back for the latest article in *The Courier*.

The most immediate danger, if the UCW leadership are not challenged, is that the campaign for a shorter working week will result in trade-offs for even greater flexibility and even more draconian conditions, as happened in many engineering plants in 1989. In the longer term the idea of increased "commercial freedoms", which Alan Johnson is toying with, will lead to semi-privatisation or worse. Rank and file UCW activists need to

launch a campaign now to force the NEC to oppose any such move and to back a national all-out strike for an immediate 35 hour week with no strings.

The Bournemouth conference at the end of January offers activists an opportunity to start this fight. A clear lead from a communications workers' rank and file organisation is needed if the campaign for a shorter working week is not to be sold short. If the lead is given, the UCW can win dramatic victories. But there is no time to lose.

## SOCIALIST TEACHERS' ALLIANCE

# Seedy manoeuvres

**T**HE BIGGEST group of organised left wing teachers in the National Union of Teachers (NUT) is on the verge of a split. The leadership of the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA), around National Executive member Bernard Regan, is seeking ways to part company with teachers from the Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

This is surprising since SWP members have been loyal and uncritical footsoldiers for the Regan leadership for some years. The row has come to a head over the SWP's insistence that one of their members should have stood on an STA slate in a recent election. Regan objected on the grounds that the SWP teacher did not have enough "experience" in the NUT to stand, but he lost out.

As a result Regan has made overtures to the other main left grouping in the NUT, the Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union (CDFU). He proposed discussions on uniting the STA and CDFU, attempting to isolate the SWP.

Meanwhile inside the STA, Regan was organising behind the back of

the SWP. He made plans for a meeting which would be open to everyone except the SWP, who were not to be told that this was taking place! Clearly no socialist teacher interested in open and democratic debate could have any truck with such a manoeuvre. It is therefore to their discredit that teachers belonging to Militant Labour planned to attend this clandestine meeting.

What is crystal clear is that none of this organisational dishonesty and political manoeuvring has anything to do with the vital issues facing teachers in the union.

Workers Power teachers want an end to the organisational divisions on the left of the NUT. We have argued for a long time that we need a united, fighting rank and file organisation in the NUT.

There are no real political differences between the CDFU and the STA, yet they continue to divide the left vote by standing separate candidates and allowing the right to win important conference decisions.

But we are not for unity at any price. All forces on the left should

engage in a full debate about the sort of organisation and politics we need to fight the right wing and the bureaucracy in the union.

Both the STA and the CDFU have developed as typical "broad lefts". They both concentrate on putting pressure on the Executive to support particular actions, seeking to capture posts in the apparatus of the union for "left" candidates and intervening at the national conference of the union.

What they will not do is organise, initiate and lead action from below when the bureaucracy refuses to act, especially where this means unofficial action, and fight to place all union officials under the democratic control of the rank and file.

Because of this the current STA and CDFU leaderships remain a road block to the building of a genuine rank and file organisation. If they united on the basis of their current methods, which is unlikely given the personal antagonism that exists between them, this would be no step forward. For many years the SWP teachers have gone along with the

policies of the Regan leadership. Their old "downturn" theory led them to rubbish the idea of rank and file organisation. As a result they provided the STA leadership with left cover.

When Workers Power teachers called for unofficial school-based boycotts of the Tory tests in the face of NUT inaction, leading SWP teachers sided with the leadership of the STA in rejecting such action. Suddenly they found themselves being outflanked on the left by the "moderate" NAS/UWT which voted for a boycott. The NUT leadership had to rapidly follow suit when it became clear that rank and file NUT members were simply refusing to do the tests.

Possibly the SWP's change of line, its analysis of a "new mood" of militancy in the workers' movement, has finally shaken its teachers out of their pessimism. If so, well and good, but this means not abandoning the hundreds of teachers organised in the STA and CDFU but fighting to win them away from "broad leftism" and to the perspective of building a real rank and file organisation amongst teachers.

## COLLEGES

# Bosses tear up contracts

BY STUART KING

**E**MPLOYERS IN Further Education Colleges engineered a breakdown in national negotiations at the end of December. Their national organisation, the College Employers' Forum, (CEF) is now intent on pushing ahead with the introduction of new "flexible" contracts for all teaching staff.

The employers are working hand in hand with the Tory government whose aim is to expand further education while at the same time slashing costs. The Department for Education has announced a 2% hold back in college budgets, to be released only on the introduction of "flexible working practices".

Leaders of the lecturers' union NATFHE had called off industrial action last year in order to enter negotiations with the CEF. They immediately offered major concessions to the employers including an extra 2 hours teaching each week and an extra five to eight days work each year!

CEF leader Roger Ward scented blood and turned this "offer" down. Ward is demanding contracts without any written limits on teaching time and an even longer working year. The new contracts, originally proposed for new and promoted staff, are now aimed at everyone. Existing staff would be offered an "incentive" of £500 to abandon their old conditions, backed up with threats of dismissal if they do not accept.

Ward can still be stopped. Strike action in the spring of last year revealed divisions and weakness on the employers' side. They were forced to postpone the introduction of new contracts until 1994. Strike action in individual colleges, or the threat of it, forced some college managements to retreat last term.

The danger is that the NATFHE leadership will hand the employers a victory. It has refused to lead an effective fight right from the start of the struggle and has now shown itself prepared to abandon existing "Silver Book" conditions.

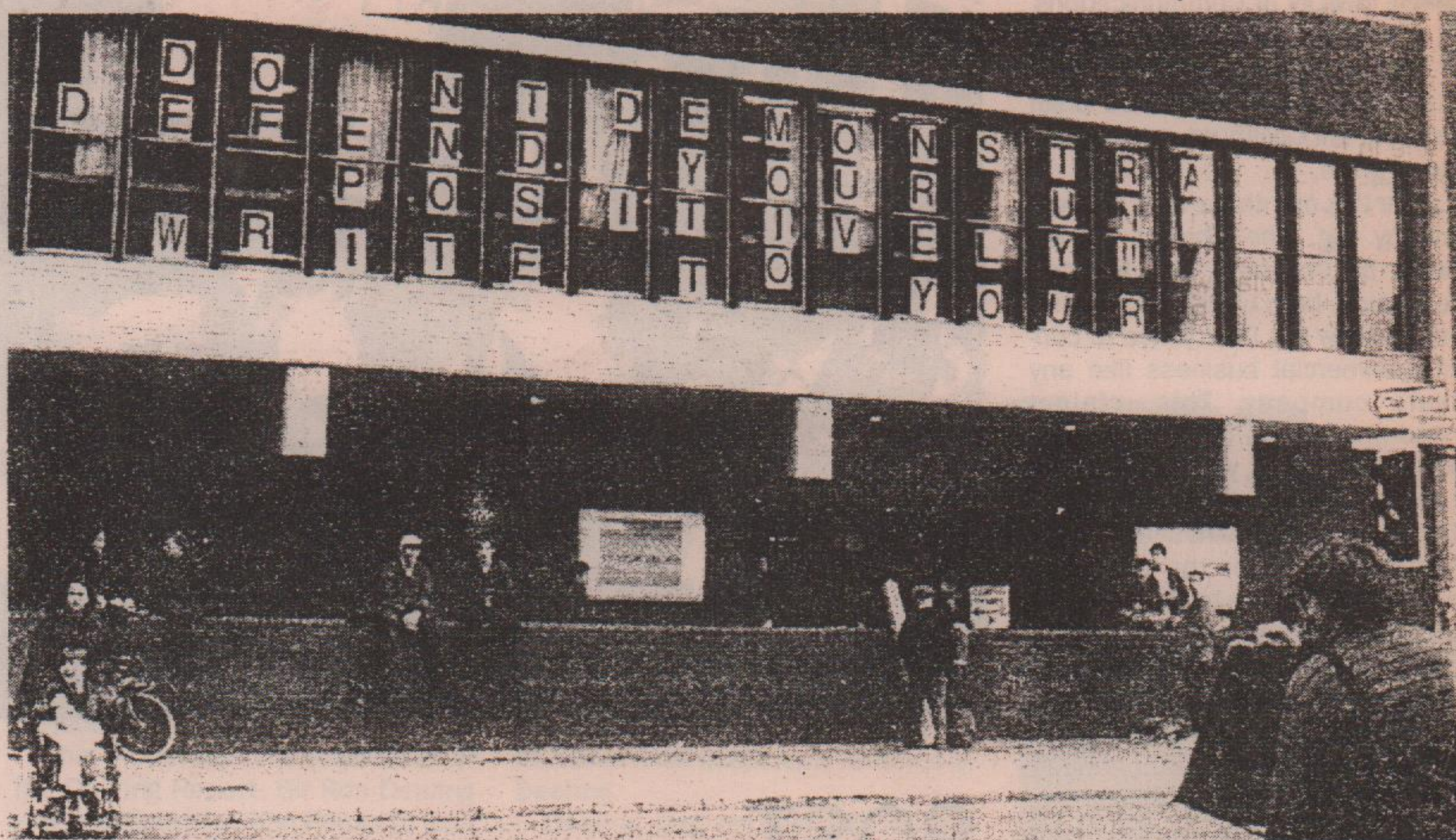
In the face of the employers' intransigence the NATFHE leadership has been forced to call another ballot for action. Again they are proposing a disastrous strategy. They want selective strike action, with just a handful of colleges involved. This will play straight into the employers' hands, encouraging isolation and demoralisation and paving the way for college by college deals, which are exactly what Roger Ward wants.

The worst deals will be CEF style contracts, the "best" ones close to the NATFHE negotiators' concessions. Every college will then be under threat of being undercut by those with worse conditions, paving the way for further redundancies and mergers.

NATFHE members must fight for:

- No retreat from the Silver Book
- National all out strike action until all new contracts are withdrawn
- Immediate all out strike action in any college introducing new contracts.
- Action committees at regional and district level to co-ordinate support for colleges in dispute.
- Joint Union Committees in the colleges to build united action with students fighting grant cuts and administration staff fighting new working practices.■

# Student grants under attack



Manchester Metro Students' Union officers say don't demonstrate—write to your MP

**S**TUDENTS ARE already on the breadline. Unless you come from a rich background, getting through college is a nightmare.

According to a survey by Barclays Bank, students leave their courses with debts averaging £2,200. Many students have to

**BY DAVE BEECH**

work in lousy jobs to make up for the shortfall. A lot of these jobs only pay about £3 per hour. This means that to make up their grant students are working four, five and even six days a week on top of their studies.

As if that wasn't bad enough, Kenneth Clarke announced in the budget that a massive 10% will be lopped off the grant immediately! To justify this he said "Why should the bus driver or the pensioner pay to finance the living costs of tomorrow's lawyer?"

## Hypocrite

What a hypocrite! This man is from the same government that has spent years attacking the conditions of busworkers and now wants to freeze their pay. And he is from the same government that has kept pensions at a miserly rate and brought in VAT on fuel.

No one should doubt for a minute why he really wants to cut grants. Public spending eats into the profits of the Tories' big business friends, so they want to make us pay for education. That's no problem for the rich—mean-

while the rest of us sink into debt or just give up the whole idea of getting an education.

Education is a right not a privilege. We must fight for a living grant that is available to everyone and for the funds needed for education.

We don't want the pensioner or the bus driver to pay for this. Let Clarke's rich friends fork out for it!

## Loans

For years the Tories have planned how they can spend less and less on education, first of all they introduced loans, then they increased the proportion that a loan takes up of a student's income by freezing the grant. Now they have cut the grant.

In the future they want students to pay their education fees as well. They are considering loans for the payment of fees or a tax which graduates would have to pay on top of income tax to pay back course fees.

No wonder the Tories want to stop students fighting back. They are putting a bill to Parliament banning student unions from campaigning. ■

## How to stop the grant cut!

**T**HERE WAS an immediate response at many colleges to the news of the 10% grant reduction. Students at a number of colleges, including the London School of Economics and the University of East Anglia, went into occupation. There were student demonstrations up and down the country.

To defeat Clarke's proposal we will need more than sporadic outbursts, we need a co-ordinated national campaign of action.

The leadership of the National Union of Students (NUS) refuses to organise this sort of action.

For years they have stuck to a policy that mirrors the leadership

of the Labour Party. They have based their strategy on winning public opinion and writing letters to MPs. They hope that some Tory MPs will break ranks with their government when they see the sense of the NUS leadership's arguments. They have done everything in their power to stop students taking direct action. They claim that militant action only puts people off.

Their strategy has failed time and again. It didn't stop the withdrawal of benefits. It didn't stop the introduction of loans.

We need action that will scare the Tories witless. Every college should immediately form action

committees to organise demonstrations and occupations—with the local NUS officers if possible but against them if necessary. Different colleges should co-ordinate their actions. Students need to unite their struggles with those of the college workers. Lecturers, cleaners, technical and administrative staff have been on the receiving end of privatisation and job losses. This year they also face a pay freeze. Students should attempt to build their action committees with the college workers and build effective united action. With militant action students can inspire others to take on the Tory government. ■

**Y**OUTH AGAINST Racism in Europe (YRE) held its first British conference on 4-5 December. With 240 young people, representing branches from cities and towns all over Britain, it opened the real possibility of a socialist youth organisation that can take the fight against racism and fascism forward. The tasks of the conference were outlined by the national officers' statement:

"We have to be prepared to become involved in battles, not just against racism, but against education cuts, for decent housing, on all the issues that affect working class people, black and white."

To combat the racist lies that Tory politicians and fascists like Derek Beackon spew out, we need to put forward genuine socialist answers to the causes of unemployment, crime, bad housing or police harassment.

That is why Workers Power supporters at the conference put forward a clear and honest explanation of what the fight for socialism means. We submitted this resolution:

"Racism and fascism will never finally be defeated unless the capitalist profit system is overthrown and replaced with a socialist system that can overcome all national divisions, end the exploitation of the 'third world' and remove the power of the tiny class of capitalists who use racism and fascism to divide working people and stop us fighting back.

There is no parliamentary road to socialism: breaking the hold of the capitalists will take a revolution to

overthrow their state power, replacing it with working class power based on democratic workers' councils and a workers' militia."

Militant Labour, whose members made up the majority of delegates, voted this down because, as one delegate put it, "... it is too narrow to say that there is no parliamentary road to socialism."

And how did they explain how socialism would come about? They didn't. Apart from some nice sounding phrases about the fight for a democratic and socialist Europe they refused to say that only revolution can achieve such a goal.

This idea that socialism can be introduced peacefully is the hallmark of Militant Labour's programme. It was heard in the debates on the police where Militant delegates argued for a form of democratic accountability. This strengthens illusions that the present police force as it exists can be made accountable to workers and youth. Workers Power are in favour of any measures that weaken the ability of the police to suppress working class protest, but the major task for socialists is to fight

# Youth against racism

**BY KIRSTIE PARKES**

*Tower Hamlets YRE*

for methods of struggle that strengthen our ability to fight back effectively.

As one delegate pointed out, making the police "accountable" at Broadwater Farm would not have protected the black community from police violence. Well organised, disciplined community defence would have been a far more effective way of stopping the police.

## Necessity

But unless workers and youth are clear that the police need to be smashed rather than reformed then they will not see the necessity in building their own defence organisations. While the majority of the conference voted in favour of the Militant resolution, Workers Power's resolution on the police had some support amongst a minority of Militant Labour delegates.

Unfortunately, the agenda prevented full conference discussion and

voting on all resolutions. Instead resolutions were voted on in commissions which then gave majority and minority report backs to full conference. This meant that not all resolutions could be discussed by conference as a whole. However Workers Power held a successful fringe meeting on Ireland which was attended 25-30 people where there was a lively debate with supporters of Militant.

The YRE conference wasn't all stormy debates and heated controversy. Conference passed some excellent resolutions on the issues of housing, unemployment and education. It adopted Workers Power's policies against all immigration controls, to fight for a 35 hour week without loss of pay and a programme of state spending under workers' control to combat unemployment.

Equally important, the conference took up the fight against all forms of bigotry and discrimination. A resolution by Swindon YRE put the fight against lesbian and gay oppression to the forefront of the YRE's future activity. A Workers Power resolution committed the YRE to campaigning for women to get equal pay, for the

right to 24 hour childcare as well as free contraception and abortion on demand for all women. By taking up the battle for lesbian, gay and women's rights, the YRE will draw into its ranks ever wider forces, including some of the best and most resolute fighters for socialism.

In the session on "Building the YRE", branches put forward some excellent initiatives. Waltham Forest YRE pointed to the need to target football matches and counter fascist propaganda which is all too prevalent on some terraces. The YRE confirmed its commitment to carry on the fight against fascism by passing a resolution by Workers Power which argued for a policy of "No platform for fascists", the building of anti-fascist defence squads and for unity in action with the ANL, the labour movement and black organisations. Plans for a Europe-wide summer camp to be held on 8-14 August in Germany are now underway.

Despite its small size, the conference gave many working class youth the chance to debate and discuss a range of important issues.

Those delegates who either disagreed with or were confused by the policies put forward by Militant on those issues of contention—the state, revolution and the struggles of oppressed people in Ireland and South Africa—should take these issues up in their branches and continue the fight Workers Power began at conference. That is the fight to build a revolutionary wing of the YRE! ■

## SALGADO'S WORKERS

## From survival to class struggle

Many people will be familiar with Sebastião Salgado's photography through one image: the apocalyptic vision of thousands of miners swarming through the mud of the Serra Pedala gold mine in Brazil. Salgado's WORKERS exhibition is full of equally stunning images of labour gathered from all over the world.

From the Indian women digging a 500 mile canal in Rajasthan, to the shipyard welders on a French nuclear warship, Salgado distills the essential features of working class experience which endure wherever men, women and children carry out manual work.

Co-operation and mutual dependence between the workers are shown in settings as varied as an Indian coal mine, a Polish shipyard and a Rwandan tea plantation. Poverty is there, of course. In almost every photo we get a sense of the sheer hard physical work which deforms and degrades the bodies of the vast majority of humanity.

If there is a single unifying quality in Salgado's photography it is the reflection of the individual resilience of working class people in the face of strenuous work in terrible conditions.

For these reasons alone the WORKERS exhibition has a lot to teach any worker or socialist.

But the photographs themselves have also stirred up widespread criticism on the left.

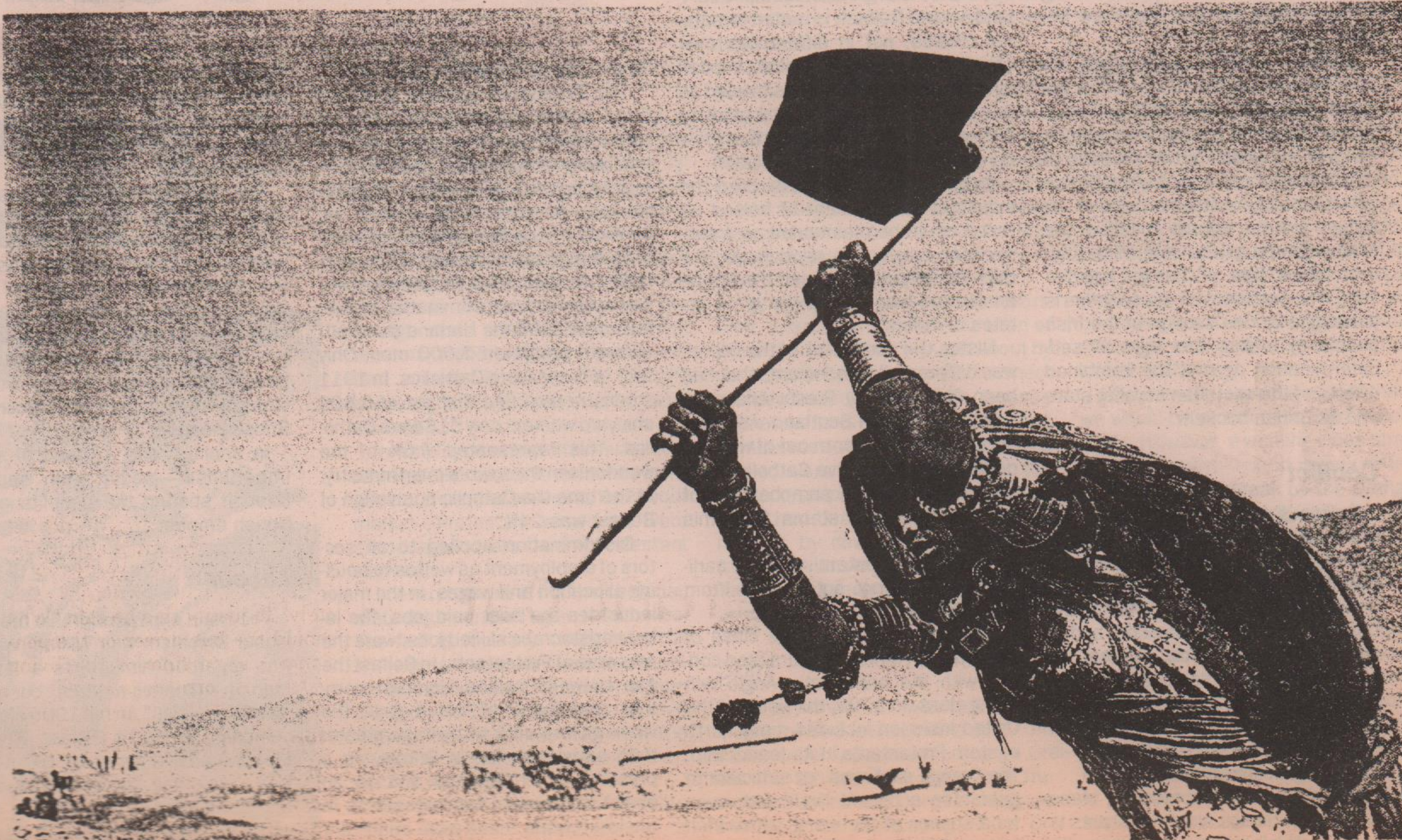
Salgado's vision of the working class is unashamedly romantic. These are not the grainy naturalistic images of workers which have become commonplace in much of British left-wing "documentary" photography. Neither are they the idealised "hero-of-labour" type photos beloved of Stalinism.

Salgado's picture of a woman digging the Indira Gandhi canal in Rajasthan exemplifies his individualist approach. The woman is caught in a classic 1930s Stalinist pose, wielding a shovel against an empty sky. But it is not the shovel which weighs her arms down: it is the huge and ornate dowry bangles she wears, and clearly takes pride in wearing.

Salgado sees the rough manual labour of third world factory and farm workers as a kind of "living museum" of capitalism. The sub-title of the exhibition—"an archaeology of the industrial age"—reflects this view: the workers of the Third World show us a past which the developed world is supposedly outgrowing.

Though Salgado takes this "post-Fordist" outlook as his starting point, he clearly doesn't share the disdain for the working class which many "post-Fordist" theorists express. Every photograph presents a positive image of the working class. But what is positive in working class life, seen through Salgado's lens, is usually individual hope and resilience.

He sees exploitation as an "endless cycle" with barriers that "only dreams can surmount". These dreams shine out through the cheery



faces of Rwandan child tea-pickers queuing for their pittance of a wage, through the meticulously ornate jewellery of the canal workers, and through the defiant stare of a Pakistani factory worker amid clouds of dust and dirt.

But Salgado's view of manual labour as an outmoded, dying, Third World experience is false to the core. Manual labour in semi-colonial countries is very much part of the present of capitalism. Even in what Salgado calls "developing countries" there exists uneven and combined development: the latest techniques alongside abject poverty and backwardness.

The very products the workers are tearing out from nature with their bare hands—tobacco, sugar, fish, oil, coal and lead—form the basis of individual consumption the world over.

Though it is referred to in the accompanying text, the photography hardly begins to explore the experi-

Paul Morris  
reviews  
Sebastião Salgado's photographic  
exhibition  
WORKERS - an archaeology of the  
industrial age

ence of the modernisation of industry and agriculture in the third world, or the millions of starving, unemployed and homeless workers this has created. Salgado chooses his images to emphasise the echoes of early capitalism in 19th century Europe which can be found in many semi-colonial countries today.

That being said, there is one striking difference between Salgado's pictures of rural workers and workers in heavy industry. In almost every image of rural labour the human beings predominate. Even in vast projects like the Serra Pedala mine the landscape is dominated by the human

form. But in the pictures of heavy industry huge abstract shapes predominate: giant pipelines, oil rigs and ship interiors dwarf the human beings which created them. In capitalist industry it is not machines which serve humanity but human beings who become the servants of the machines.

Most disappointingly, the exhibition does not show workers' collectivity in struggle. There is collectivity at work, whether it is in the struggle to haul huge nets of thrashing tuna fish, or to lever an entire ship into the waters of the Gdansk shipyard—but collectivity in struggle is largely missing.

There are glimpses of it, as in the images of the Serra Pedala miners grappling with their security guards. And the picture of women dam-constructors holding a big semi-circular "discussion meeting" prompts the unanswered question: what were they discussing?

But overall, despite his attempt to show every worker as a thinking individual, capable of dreaming and surviving, Salgado never shows the only genuine source of hope in working class communities: the collective struggle for a better future.

A world where the vast majority don't have to destroy their bodies and waste their childhoods in hard physical labour can only come through the collective struggle for socialism. Once all society's productive capacity is harnessed to providing food, shelter, power, education and health to all humanity we can progressively reduce the time spent at work—mental and physical—to a negligible minimum, leaving human beings to develop all the qualities and aspirations which a life of drudgery suppresses.

It could be argued that Salgado's pictures merely reflect the true state of the working class internationally, which has suffered a decade of defeat and atomisation, particularly in the semi-colonial world where product prices, and therefore wages, have fallen dramatically since the late 1970s.

One way to counter such an argument would be to reel off a list of strike figures and trade union growth showing how Third World workers are fighting back. But there is no need to. You only have to look closely at the faces of the children, men and women in Salgado's photographs.

There are few looks of resignation and hopelessness, many of determination, hope and anger. It is out of hope and anger that revolutionary socialists can and must fashion an international movement which will fight to destroy the rotten system Salgado depicts.

WORKERS is at the Royal Festival Hall, South Bank Centre, London SE1 (Waterloo Tube and BR) until 13 February, Free. For information and teachers' packs call 071-921 0951.

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**I**N THE aftermath of the Shankill bombing, thousands of workers from Belfast's main employer, Harland and Wolff, marched to protest at the killings.

This was an example of workers' action, but not of workers' unity: Harland and Wolff is a Protestant sectarian employer whose workforce is overwhelmingly Protestant. Catholic SDLP MP Joe Hendron was hounded off the march by a baying mob, despite declaring his total opposition to the Republican movement and despite the SDLP's repeated collaboration with the British security forces.

That small incident spoke volumes about what lies in the way of achieving working class unity in Northern Ireland.

Workers' unity is a complete abstraction unless the fundamental political obstacles to it are removed. Those obstacles are not the religious ideas in the minds of two sections of the working class. They are the British occupation of the six counties and the British state's refusal to allow the whole Irish people to determine their own future free of foreign interference. The conflict in the six counties is a struggle by one section of the Irish people to realise this right of self-determination against the combined efforts of the sectarian Loyalist state and its British backers.

### Conflict

Religious strife is a mere reflection of this conflict, an ideological echo. It is not an echo which reverberates equally on both sides of the divide. Despite Sinn Féin's capitulation to the Catholic church on abortion and a number of other social issues, its rhetoric is that of a secular, anti-imperialist movement. Loyalism—from its parades and legal parties through to the rhetoric of its paramilitaries—is overt in its religious sectarianism.

The division in the working class between Catholics and Protestants is really a division between those who believe that all 32 counties in Ireland have a right to be part of a single united country, and those, largely Protestants, who wish to maintain "Ulster" as a province of the United Kingdom.

This is what Marxists call an unresolved national question. The right to full national independence has been denied to Ireland. Instead Britain partitioned Ireland, retaining six of Ulster's original nine counties as a fiefdom, governed for most of its existence by Orange dominated capital and, when that broke down in the face of the anti-unionist revolt of the late 1960s and early 1970s, by Westminster.

Unless Marxists confront, and seek to resolve, the national question in a revolutionary way, then workers' unity will remain the stuff of bar room bluster forever.

National unity and independence are not socialist demands. Marxists recognise these demands as "bourgeois democratic" goals, which formed

part of the political programme of the rising capitalist class in the 19th century in Ireland and elsewhere. But recognising the national question as a bourgeois question doesn't mean we refuse to fight for a revolutionary outcome, or that the unresolved national question is a "distraction" from the class struggle. In fact the national question in Ireland is a key component of the class struggle.

The whole history of attempts to unite the working class by ignoring or bypassing Orange sectarianism proves the futility of such an approach.

The division in the working class of the six counties, a division at its most intense in the great industrial heartland around Belfast, is rooted in material causes, not in differences over church ceremony. As British capitalism developed, Ireland was treated as one big farm. Its agricultural produce fed the great cities of Britain that grew up during the industrial revolution.

Britain deliberately obstructed the industrial development of Ireland so that it could be maintained as a subservient colony. Its agricultural produce benefited Britain and the British aristocrats who owned the great estates in Ireland.

Ulster, the north east of the island, was different. It was the area that had been "planted" by Presbyterian settlers, mainly from Scotland. As a distinct region it was born out of war and conflict with the native Catholic population. Much of the paraphernalia of the Orange Order stems from this period.

Even so, Protestantism in its earliest form was not entirely free from nationalist sentiment.

The existence of a large class of Presbyterian tenant farmers bred conflict with the aristocratic Anglo-Irish ruling class. In 1798, the rising of the United Irishmen included many north eastern Protestants in its leadership. The Orange sash was not sufficient to guarantee a decent livelihood, even for a section of the rising native Irish bourgeoisie.

### Division

After crushing the rebellion of 1798 the British state responded in a way that became its hallmark in every colony it seized. It fostered division in order to secure its unchallenged rule.

While the industry of Ireland as a whole stagnated, the north east was nurtured as a centre of manufacturing. Textiles, shipbuilding and engineering were all developed. Markets were secured courtesy of the British empire. Belfast in particular developed in line with nineteenth century Britain. The Protestant middle class which had felt aggrieved by the link with Britain in 1798 was thoroughly integrated into its industry and empire by the middle of the nineteenth century.

One economic historian noted: "Instead of being the solitary Irish industrial city, Belfast, looked at this way, becomes an outpost of industrial Britain... This in turn involved a withdrawal of industrial Belfast from the rest of Ireland and made its leaders singularly deaf to all appeals of economic nationalism."

Belfast and its north eastern hinterland shared in the profits of the empire. There was no market in backward Ireland for its textiles or its warships. But the union with Britain guaranteed the realisation of profits for these Protestant owned industries.

At the beginning of this period of industrial expansion, Catholics numbered a mere 6% of Belfast's population. But industrial development swelled the ranks of the Catholic community as Catholics headed north to find work.

In response the seeds of real sectarianism—the defence of the privileges and priorities of the Protestants against the Catholics—were sown. Egged on by the violently anti-Catholic Orange Order, Protestant workers repeatedly rioted against the invasion of



"their" city by Catholics.

The Protestant workers also suffered terrible privations. But the extent of these privations turned them into jealous defenders of their community against their fellow Catholic workers. As the century wore on the conflicts intensified. Protestant workers were granted considerable advantages. In the major industries there was systematic discrimination in their favour. In 1866 the Harland and Wolff shipyard employed 3,000 men. Only 225 of these were Catholics. In 1911 a census recorded that out of 6,809 shipyard workers only 518 were Catholics. This represented 7.6% of the workforce in the town's main industry. At the time the Catholic population of Belfast was 24%.

Discrimination applied to all sectors of employment as well as to housing allocation and wages. In the major industries the best paid jobs, the labour aristocratic skilled jobs, were the preserve of Protestants. In Belfast the gap between skilled workers' earnings and those of the rest of the working class were, on average, greater than anywhere else in Britain. As a preserve of Protestants and as an object of ambition for Protestants in unskilled work, these were important privileges.

In the context of such advantages, the hostility of the Protestant working class to nationalism had a clear material base. An independent united Ireland would cut them off from the empire they depended on. Thus, their hostility to the arrival of Catholics began from an economic motive. In the context of the movement for Home Rule, first threatened in 1886, it received an added political motive. The Catholics favoured Home Rule, a limited form of national independence. Protestants favoured the maintenance of the Union with Britain.

### Unionism

Politically, the Protestants—workers and bosses—were forged into an anti-Home Rule Unionist bloc, reaching a high point with the massive Unionist Convention in 1892. Its goal was preservation of the union with Britain at all costs. It gave birth to the concept of the "Ulsterman", the loyal subject of the crown and the sworn enemy of Irish national freedom.

Home rule—"Rome Rule" as the Protestants dubbed it—meant an end to a share in imperialist profits for the bosses of the North and an end to the privileges enjoyed by Protestant workers. The Orange worker and boss found a common political cause. Both donned the bowler hat and the Orange sash and marched arm in arm against Catholicism and nationalism. The Orange monolith was created—a cross-class reactionary alliance dedicated to preserving the privileges of one section of the working class and the position of the whole Northern Irish ruling class.

A crucial factor in the maintenance and development of the Orange bloc was the political leadership of the Belfast labour movement. Founded upon the solid rock of the skilled workers' unions, this labour movement was infected from the very beginning with Orange sectarianism. In so far as there was any class consciousness in

# Workers and the qu

this movement, it was one shaped by the need to defend Belfast's industrial supremacy as a means of defending Protestant workers' privileges in the labour market.

The unions were British unions, and proud of it. They were in conflict with what they regarded as "debased" Unionism—the Unionism of the conservative Ulster landlords. In place of such Unionism they fostered a "progressive" Unionism, shared by sections of the urban ruling class, which stressed social improvement for the working class in line with the gains secured by British workers.

In short it was a brand of social imperialism—social gain secured through sharing the benefits of the British empire.

### Labour

The main exponent of this brand of labour Unionism was William Walker, who regarded himself as a "labour man on economic matters" but a "Unionist in politics". In his 1905 election campaign in North Belfast, Ramsay MacDonald was his agent. His outlook was compatible with the reformism of the developing British Labour Party which for many years refused to take a position on the Home Rule question for fear of alienating Protestant support in the north east of Ireland.

Typically, this labour movement Unionism disguised its reactionary, pro-imperialist content with spurious internationalism. The movement's mouthpiece in the early twentieth century, the Belfast Labour Chronicle, argued: "Nationalism is dead or dying and Imperialism is the transition stage to international union of the proletariat all the world over. The total separation of Ireland would be but a disintegrating influence on the people and can proceed from narrow views alone... there is no victory in changing lay for clerical tyranny in any country."

This labour Unionism found common cause with the urban based Independent Orange Order, led by Lindsay Crawford. Both shared reformist goals (municipal reform, progressive labour legislation) and reactionary ones (total opposition to separation from Britain). While this brand of Unionism caused occasional strains in the Orange monolith, it was incapable of breaking that monolith since it was founded on the common overriding aim of maintaining the link with Britain.

### Partition

Since the 1890s the Orange bloc has undergone periods of intense strain but it has never been broken. To this day, despite the deprivations suffered by Protestant workers, the fear that they would lose their marginal privileges within a united Ireland has kept them tied to the Orange bosses and the British state. The creation of the Orange sectarian state in 1921, and the maintenance of this state up until now, provided a material foundation for sustaining the Orange bloc.

The current Downing Street peace declaration makes much of the need to resolve the conflict through the democratic process. But is there anything remotely democratic about the



Defenders of the Orange state

"Why can't the workers of all, both loyalist and anti-Unionist, attacks. What is more, but wants to live for years? I marched together on recent arguments amongst many to make sense: since May be transformed into a revolution shouldn't we argue against? But these arguments don't really divides the working class systematic national oppression

existence of the six county state?

In 1918 an all-Ireland election produced an outright majority for the party of independence, Sinn Féin.

We hear much about modern Sinn Féin's "hostility to the democratic process" from British politicians and propagandists. But no mention is ever made of the way in which the Sinn Féin of 1918 was victim of one of the greatest affronts to democracy in the history of British imperialism.

The election returned 73 Sinn Féin MPs, seven Irish Nationalists (compromisers) and 26 Unionists. Two thirds of the population voted for a Republic. If any party in Westminster received such a majority it would consider its mandate inviolable. Yet when Sinn Féin made good its promise and declared a Republic, the British state banned all nationalist parties, declared the Sinn Féin parliament an "illegal assembly", and unleashed its troops to terrorise and murder Irishmen and women.



Carson calls the unionists to arms

















# Workers power

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## TORY "BACK TO BASICS" CALL

# Hypocrites!

**EVERYBODY LOVES** a good Christmas panto, where the villain is unmasked at the end as a rotten hypocrite. The Tories were kind enough to give us one this year—the Tim Yeo show.

On Boxing Day the *News of the World* revealed that Yeo, a Tory environment minister, had fathered an illegitimate child. No big deal—except that Yeo and his party have been blaming all the ills of society on... one-parent families!

"It is in everyone's interest to reduce broken families and the number of single parents", Mr Yeo moralised last autumn. "I have seen from my own constituency the consequences of marital breakdown." Only now is it clear that he was speaking from personal experience.

But rather than own up to his double standards, he tried to justify them by saying he only meant those "single mothers whose financial support derives entirely from the public purse, and this is not the case in this situation." How hypocritical can you get?

In John Major's classless society a single parent family is condemned to survive on a weekly benefit of £63.95. Mass unemployment and the lowest level of state-funded nursery provision in Western Europe combine to turn the lives of millions into misery.

Heaping degradation upon degradation these single parents are blamed for everything from rising crime and bad education to poor health standards.

But if the mother is a Tory councillor with a middle class job and a £150,000 house, then that's a "personal matter."

It is these double standards that have angered so many workers and single parents—not prudishness or Victorian morality. Most working class people don't care who Tories sleep with... as long as it's not with them.

John Major says his "Back to Basics" campaign will continue to form the bedrock of government social policy. On the day Yeo finally resigned he said, "None of my ministers have interpreted it [Back to Basics] as an attack on single mothers." This is strange. Major seems to be ignorant of who is in his cabi-



Major

net and what they have been saying over the last six months.

● Health Minister Virginia Bottomley said recently:

"Women do not have a right to have a child; a child has a right to a suitable home."

● Treasury minister and arch bigot Michael Portillo boasted:

"We prize the individual who demonstrates a sense of duty towards family and the community."

● Education Secretary John Patten told last year's Tory conference:

"To me there is no greater betrayal than having a child and then walking away."

Tim Yeo, John Major—who already knew about Yeo's "love child"—and Steven Norris, who is alleged to have five "mistresses", all applauded vigorously.

Rather than drop their moral cru-

sade Tory MPs will be spending the next few weeks hectically "tidying up" their personal affairs: bribing and threatening various actresses, rent boys and corrupt hangers-on into silence in an attempt to prevent the gutter press having a field day with their private lives.

The Tories are reluctant to abandon their "Back to Basics" crusade because they have no alternative. After 15 years of Tory rule, they can no longer blame the last Labour government, so they are blaming individual members of the public who don't conform to Noddy in Toytown norms of behaviour.

"Back to Basics" is an empty slogan to hide the bankruptcy of a government whose main business is launching a massive attack on the rights and living standards of working class people.



Yeo

John Patten, for example, has spent £2.1 million sending out leaflets to all parents explaining the "Back to Basics Guide to Education".

In the leaflet he urges parents to dress their kids properly, give them a hearty breakfast and not forget to pack them off to school "ready to learn".

This condescending junk mail is designed to disguise the fact that schools are now so underfunded that Newham Council in East London, for example, is abolishing all school meals.

No wonder that Margaret Morrissey, moderate spokesperson of the National Association of Parent Teacher Associations summed up the effect of Patten's leaflet campaign: "I think somebody is going to kill him".

For the Tories' and the bosses,

"Back to Basics" means just this: back to the basic task of cutting social spending, increasing repression and whipping up ignorant outrage amongst its middle class supporters.

But millions of workers know the weakest and most vulnerable in society are not the cause of capitalism's ills, they are its victims. Hypocrites like Yeo deserve to be chucked out of office, not because of their sexual activities, but because of their unrelenting assault on working class people.

The working class should start its own back to basics campaign. Back to the class struggle to abolish poverty and deprivation, back to strike action, occupations and effective picketing. Back to the basic struggle to kick out the hypocrites and bigots for good! ■