

Workers power

INSIDE

Number 177 April 1994

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

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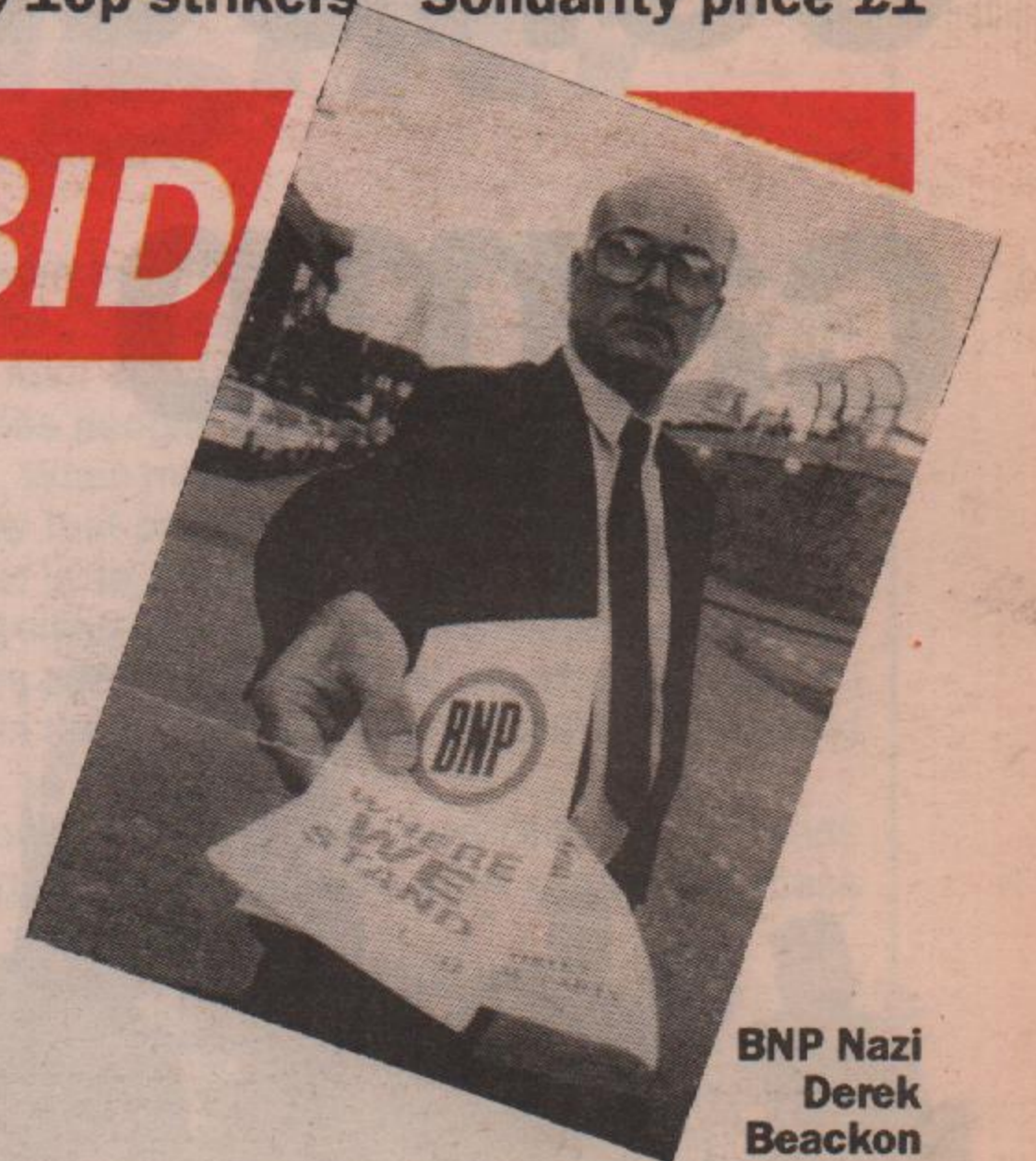
AS NAZIS MAKE ELECTION BID

Together

we can



Youth fight back in Spitalfields



BNP Nazi
Derek
Beackon

smash fascism!

The strong showing of the fascists in the Italian elections have given a boost to the confidence of fascists everywhere, including Britain's BNP.

The BNP aims to consolidate its hold in London's East End with a campaign of racist lies backed up with violence and intimidation. Since the BNP gained its first council seat, racist attacks in the Isle of Dogs have risen by 300%.

The BNP has targeted areas up and down the country for a repeat performance after 6 May.

But we can stop the BNP. Last month 50,000 workers and youth marched through London to protest against racism and fascism.

If we get organised, we can counter the racists' drive. We can drive the BNP off the streets and into the sewers where they came from.

To do that we need working

class unity in action.

We need a concerted drive to stop their election campaign, through demonstrations, protests, mass leafleting campaigns and organised anti-fascist defence squads.

The best time to stop the BNP is now: before the bankruptcy of the established politicians—Tory, Liberal and Labour—allows them to make the kind of gains they have made elsewhere in Europe. ■

HOW TO BEAT THE BNP • PAGE 6

CAMPSFIELD

Britain's

concentration

camp



Campsfield: victims of Britain's racist immigration laws

IN BRITAIN today over 6,000 men and women in prisons and detention centres have never been convicted or even charged with an offence. Their "crime" is to be foreign nationals seeking political asylum in this supposed democracy.

The Tory government over the next few weeks may be prepared to see many of these people starve to death. Since 7 March, 200 asylum seekers have staged hunger strikes demanding their release from custody while the Home Office processes their applications for asylum.

The hunger strikers are facing threats of immediate deportation, transfer to jails and even force feeding. The single largest group of hunger strikers are at the Campsfield Detention Centre, near Oxford.

Opened in November 1993, the former borstal, converted at a cost of £5 million, is run by Group 4. The Home Office has proclaimed Campsfield as a showcase for its "civilised" treatment of asylum seekers. After all, there is no prison regime of slopping out and 23 hours in the cells.

But as a representative of Oxford District Trades Council told *Workers Power*, Campsfield has its own draconian rules. In addition to the high-wire fencing and camera surveillance, the 200 detainees can expect hour-long roll calls, day or night. The guards switch off television sets when news reports mention the hunger strikes. They accompany detainees to telephones to monitor incoming calls.

On Sunday 13 March dozens of asylum seekers defied the climate of fear in Campsfield to stage a rooftop protest

while local supporters demonstrated outside. Nine of the hunger strikers, branded as "disruptive elements" and "ringleaders" by the Home Office, were swiftly sent to Birmingham's Winson Green Prison. Others were later sent to Blakenhurst in the West Midlands.

A veil of official secrecy has been thrown over the fate of the hunger strikers. Some are becoming weak and there are rumours that they may have to be transferred to the advanced medical facilities at Parkhurst Prison on the Isle of Wight. There are reports of considerable sympathy for the hunger strikers amongst ordinary inmates at Winson Green.

The asylum seekers at Campsfield are detained under last year's Asylum and Immigration Act and the 1971 Immigration Act which both confer wide-ranging, arbitrary powers on the Home Office.

Ninety per cent of the Campsfield detainees are from Asia and Africa. They are seeking asylum from some of the most brutal regimes including Nigeria and Zaire, which are propped up by the support of the British government. Campsfield also holds refugees from the Balkans. Of the 7,000 refugees who have arrived here since the outbreak of war in Bosnia only five have been granted refugee status.

Campsfield became notorious at Christmas as the Home Office sent dozens of Jamaican holidaymakers to the centre to await summary deportation as suspected "economic migrants". Such incidents, along with the death of Joy Gardner at the hands of police and immigration officers, highlight the naked racism inherent in Britain's immigration laws.

Whatever the outcome of the hunger strikes, the courage and determination of the asylum seekers is inspiring. We need a serious fight in the labour movement not only for the immediate release of the asylum seekers, but for the closure of places like Campsfield and the abolition of the battery of racist laws which underpin the whole system.

Oxford District Trades Council has initiated a campaign to close down Campsfield. Support the campaign and join the vigils outside Campsfield on the last Saturday of each month. ■

For more information contact:
Campaign Against Campsfield
(0865 724452).

TWO MORE schools have become "schools for scandal". This time it didn't start with Shakespeare and end with sexuality: it began with sex and included Mars bars.

Sex education in schools, which is at the heart of the latest "scandals", is a serious question. At a time when the incidence of HIV/AIDS is increasing and young women are being driven into poverty because of unplanned pregnancies, it is vital that children get the information they need on sex and sexuality.

The scandals, however, reflect the awkwardness of society's attitude towards sex. Often sex is seen as dirty. The same press that was outraged by a nurse allegedly giving ten year olds information on adultery and oral sex, emblazons adultery scandals with photos and titillating details across acres of newsprint.

At other times the press takes pleasure in examining the intricate details of rape and sexual abuse cases.

Yet according to our moral guardians in the bosses' press, sex is so private that it should never be discussed in public. What sex never seems to be is normal and natural!

Sex education has suffered for years from this confused attitude. Many people will remember going to school and having no sex education whatsoever. If you were at school ten years ago you might have been lucky and got some information in biology lessons. More recently you may have had timetabled lessons to discuss sex but been lectured about the importance of monogamy.

At Highfield primary school near Leeds they were attempting to cover sex education, as required by the National Curriculum. The nurse who

SEX EDUCATION ROW

"No sex please – we're bigots"

conducted the lesson, supervised by two teachers, started by answering the children's questions.

"My belief is, rather than having children going out in the playground and getting a perverted and wrong description about something, I would prefer to tell them, in a sensitive way, the true facts."

So why did this provoke such outrage in the press? Because they discussed extra-marital sex! According to Tory moralisers, this never happens—and when it does it is very wrong! On statistical evidence most of the children in the class would probably have parents who have had extra-marital sex.

In Hendrefoilan primary school in Swansea children had been using "explicit language". These words were so explicit that even the liberal *Guardian* could only refer to them as "sex act words". If anyone really believes that ten year olds in Swansea or anywhere else have never heard the word "fuck", they must be living on a different planet.

The moral panic has led to the scrapping of a guide to sex for 16 to 25 year olds. The Health Education Authority commissioned *The Pocket Guide to Sex* but have been ordered

by Brian Mawhinney not to publish. Why? Its introduction explains that the guide is designed to help you "getting to know yourself, your partners and safely enjoying and experimenting with the sex that you do have."

You can almost hear the howls of the moralists: teenagers are having sex and what is more enjoying it!

What must have upset them even more is the guide's comments on sexual orientation:

"You could be heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual. It's all perfectly natural."

For the party who introduced Section 28 which bans the promotion of homosexuality in schools, this is heresy. The fact that it is true is irrelevant to the Tories.

The Tories are split over the question of sex. Rhodes Boyson represents the total opposition wing (if only his parents had!). He wants sex education banned from schools. Others, such as Health Secretary, Virginia Bottomley, argue for more direct sex education.

But what unites the Tories is that sex education has to be about morals. Education Secretary, John Patten was "incensed" by the lesson at

Highfields primary school. He claims sex education has become a "value free zone".

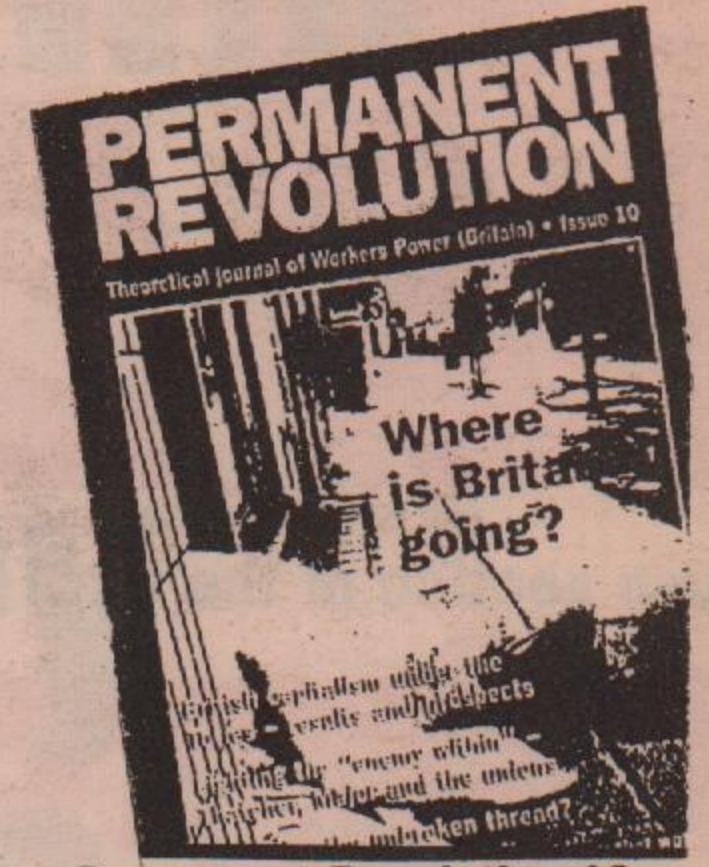
According to Patten, teachers should cover all aspects of sex but make sure they dictate to young people when they can have sex, with whom and in what way.

Sex education is never going to be a "value free zone". It is always going to be a zone of struggle between moralising bigots who want to impose their values, and truly human values. The values which progressive sex educators will always teach are that sex should be consenting, and that between consenting lovers, nothing is shameful or sinful.

The bosses have always been interested in controlling sex and sexuality. The reason for this is the importance of the family to capitalism. The family ensures that women are forced to take the burden of childcare. Isolated in the home they are more open to reactionary ideas and may pass these on to their children. The idea that there is only one acceptable sort of sex is linked to the idea that exploitation and injustice are natural in society and cannot be challenged. Man's place, for the Tories, is literally "on top".

Young people have a right to sex education without the restrictions of ignorance or conservative morality. They have a right to information without strings. If schools are to provide such education then we will need more training for teachers and healthworkers. And in order to make this right a reality for youth we need to fight for the right of all children to contraception, access to free abortion on demand, and full, confidential access to the truth about sex. ■

Publications from Workers Power and the LRCI



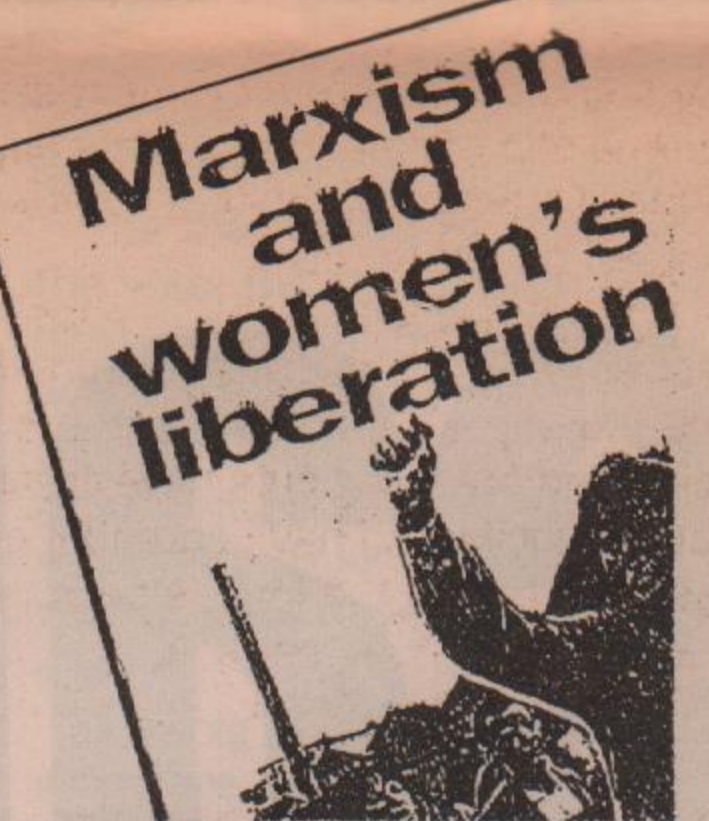
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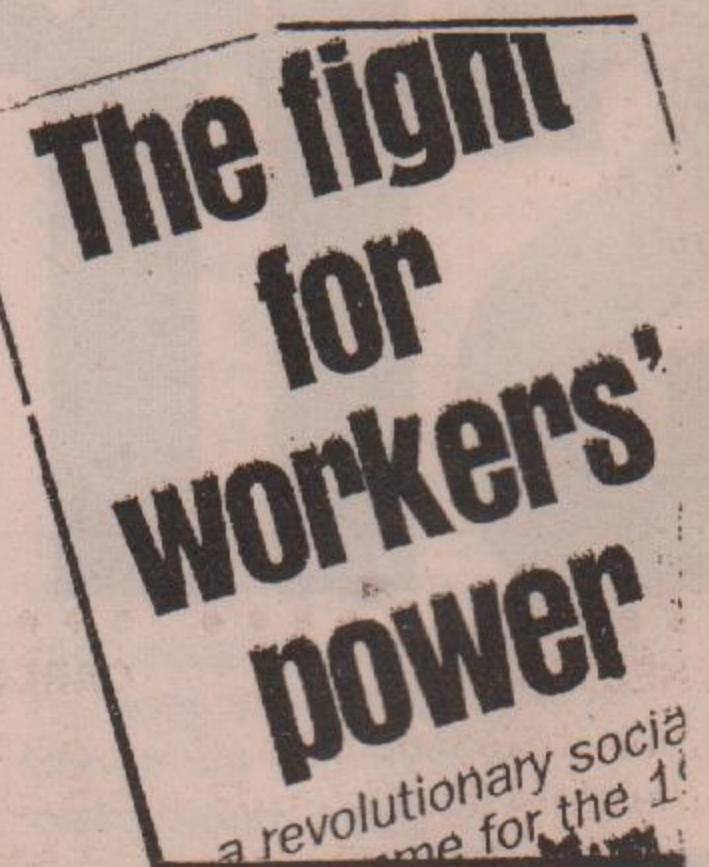
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EDITORIAL

COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Vote Labour - but organise to fight!

THE FACTS AND figures are stark: rising unemployment, poverty and crime. But they do not begin to convey the full extent of the devastation which fifteen years of Tory rule have brought to working class communities.

There are rats and cockroaches in housing estates where there were none before. There is grass growing through the astroturf in closed-down sports centres. Broken lights in dark streets go unreplaced. Crime flourishes, and the fear of it - rational and irrational - is a major preoccupation of millions.

Where there is no solidarity the selfish struggle for survival seeps in. The leaders of the Labour movement would like to think the racist poison that infected all parties on the Isle of Dogs is an isolated aberration. But most socialists and trade union activists know of desperate communities where the politics of despair could gain a foothold.

There is a struggle for shrinking resources. When precious few are saying "if we stick together we can all get what's due", it becomes a case of my rising damp versus yours; my child's nursery place versus yours; a house for my daughter or a house for a homeless stranger.

The Tories are tearing each other apart over Europe, the economy and much else. But it is issues like housing, education, crime and poverty which dominate political discussion in the pub, the laundrette and the workplace. Every one of them is, in one way or another, a local council issue.

The May Council elections give us a chance to pass verdict on what the Tories have done to our lives. There will be, and should be, a massive vote for Labour. No worker should vote Tory or Liberal Democrat. Only where other left wing parties like Militant Labour or local working class activists, have a real base of support in the community is it worth voting for them rather than Labour.

When the Tories suffer massive losses on 6 May the political heat will be on John Major. The attention of the press, the pundits and the labour movement's leaders will turn again to the arena of parliamentary politics and Tory party intrigue. The millions of ordinary workers who have delivered this blow to the Tories will be left to rot.

That's why single Labour voter has to realise that, unless we ourselves get organised and do something, nothing will change.

The tragedy is that, while it is the Tories whose economic policies and spending cuts have created the devastation, it is Labour councils who have carried it out.

Labour's role in the long, slow death of local services has passed through three phases.

Until 1985, just after the defeat of the miners' strike, left-

wing Labour councils pledged to resist the Tory cuts. They promised to defy Tory rate-capping and to raise budgets to meet the needs and protect the interests of service users and council workers alike. In the end only two councils took that defiance to the brink - in Liverpool and Lambeth. In both cases the determination of individual councillors was not matched by clarity of political strategy.

They tried to fight the Tories from the council chamber, using the organised working class only as a stage army of extras. Up against the law, they lacked a movement organised independently, from below, to fight against the government using general strike action.

After 1985 the Labour left adopted Neil Kinnock's strategy of the "dented shield". Forced to work within Tory budgets, they opted for a policy of passive resistance. The "shield" would be the Labour council and its workforce, bravely covering the weakest and most vulnerable, and taking the worst of the Tory hammering in the form of job cuts, lower pay and the slow destruction of the "voluntary sector".

That was a failure too. The cuts went on unabated. The dented shield strategy had a profound psychological impact on workers' attitudes to Labour councils. Even where councils did try to wield the cumbersome, corrupt and bureaucratic machinery of local government as a "shield", they became a byword for sloth, bureaucracy and corruption.

The Liberals, with their con-trick of "devolving power" in places like Tower Hamlets, have made big gains in working class communities. Every Liberal leaflet hammers home the message: Labour doesn't care about our area; Labour's trendy councillors live somewhere else; Labour lets council workers treat people like rubbish. Even the most class conscious workers know that there is a grain of truth in this - even if spoken by a corrupt, lying, racist bosses party.

The third, and current, phase of Labour local council policy is simple. Implement the Tory policy better than the Tories. Close down your sport and leisure department completely and call it progress. Contract out all services to private firms and call it modernisation. The Tories ask for £4 million cuts? Cut twelve million and phone up Labour HQ straight away to make sure they use the fact on Question Time.

The left reformist councillors who presided over the first two phases of the retreat find themselves de-selected or out of favour, replaced in positions of power by the openly careerist and corrupt. *Labour Briefing*, a magazine with its finger on the pulse of the Labour council left, reveals the mood that has resulted: "Local government is certainly no longer fashionable, as it

was briefly in the early and mid-eighties. Many on the left simply ignore its existence . . . Local government, they say, is a lost cause." (*Briefing* April 1994)

But working class people don't have the option of ignoring local government. When millions of workers vote for Labour on 6 May, many know that pale-pink Toryism is what they'll get.

If voting Labour is to mean anything it must be a way to prepare a working class fightback. The most determined, class conscious workers need to be using the elections to demand that Labour acts in the interests of the millions it is supposed to represent.

But no-one should rely on Labour to carry these demands out. We should use the elections to start organising mass action:

- For an end to all cuts in jobs, pay or services,
- For the council to open its books so that local committees of working class people can calculate our real needs and draw up emergency local budgets,
- For a steep and progressive local income tax to raise money from the rich, not the poor,
- For an end to debt repayments to the millionaire owners of the banks.

Such a fight, based on strikes and occupations, not humble petitions, would lead the working class and any councillors with the guts to back us into a head on conflict with Tory central government.

But that is what it will take to restore the services and jobs we need to stop the decay of our cities and communities.

Only in this way, by giving a practical and fighting lead, can socialists win the most advanced sections of the working class away from forlorn hopes that Labour will at least soften the Tories' blows.

By demonstrating both what Labour could be doing and their stubborn refusal to do it, we can win workers to see the need for a new political party, a party that really puts power in the hands of "local people", all over the country, male and female, black and white. We need a revolutionary party, that can direct our struggles towards the overthrow of the Tories and the chaotic capitalist system that is wrecking workers' lives. ■

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MEETINGS

LONDON

• *The council elections and the tasks of socialists*
 7 April, 7.30, London School of Economics, Room S421, St Clements Building, Houghton St, WC2

• *South Africa: has the ANC sold out?*
 Tuesday 19 April, 7.30, London School of Economics, Room S419, St Clements Building, Houghton St, WC2

19 April - see sellers for time and venue
 Public Meeting
 • *Should socialists vote Labour?*
 26 April, 7.30, SCCAU, West St.

LEICESTER

• *Ten years on - the Lessons of the Great Miners' Strike*
 19 April, 8pm, Castle Community Rooms, Tower Street, (opposite the prison).

MANCHESTER

Revolution Youth meetings:
 • *Can the state be reformed?*
 Wed 13 April, 7pm, 3rd Floor, Manchester Metro Student Union

• *Is human nature a barrier to socialism?*
 Wed 27 April, 7pm, 3rd Floor, Manchester Metro Student Union

CARDIFF

• *South Africa: has the ANC sold out?*
 14 April - see sellers for time and venue

• *The council elections and the tasks of socialists*
 28 April - see sellers for time and venue

BIRMINGHAM

Revolution Youth meeting
 • *Why youth should fight for revolution*
 Monday 25 April, 7.30, see sellers for venue

SHEFFIELD

Bolshie Women meeting:
 • *The Bosnian War - what do socialists say?*

BOLSHIE WOMEN

A weekend of discussion for Women on Socialism and Womens liberation
 Organised by Workers Power
 DATE: 9/10 APRIL 1994
 VENUE: SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION

Saturday 9th April

- ★ Fighting racism and fascism
- ★ Suffragettes and Socialists - the early struggles
- ★ How long can capitalism survive?
- ★ The rise and fall of the welfare state
- ★ Eastern Europe - has Capitalism triumphed
- ★ Marxism and Art
- ★ Bread and Roses - Women Struggles in the USA
- ★ Women in the US Civil Rights Movement

Sunday 10 April

- ★ Political Correctness and the Labour Movement
- ★ The family in crisis
- ★ Did the Bolsheviks liberate Women?
- ★ The fight for Political Revolution in China
- ★ Women and the fight for a revolutionary party

BOLSHIE WOMEN will be held at Sheffield Hallam University Students Union on 9 and 10 April 1994.

It is a women only event.

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SHEFFIELD COUNCIL WORKERS All out to stop the cuts!

ON 10 MARCH 5,000 Sheffield council workers challenged the anti-union laws in a 24 hour strike to save jobs and services.

Despite the Labour council's efforts to scare workers by claiming the strike ballot was "illegal", about 1,000 strikers marched through the city in defiance. In the end it was the councillors who were to be scared to use the law against a militant and united workforce. Activists must now build on this to ensure that if the employers do go to the courts to stop strike action next time, the courts are defied.

The strike, timed to coincide with the council voting on a budget that included £39 million of cuts, is an excellent start to the campaign to save jobs and services. Unison's action encouraged members of Apex to overturn their full timers' advice and

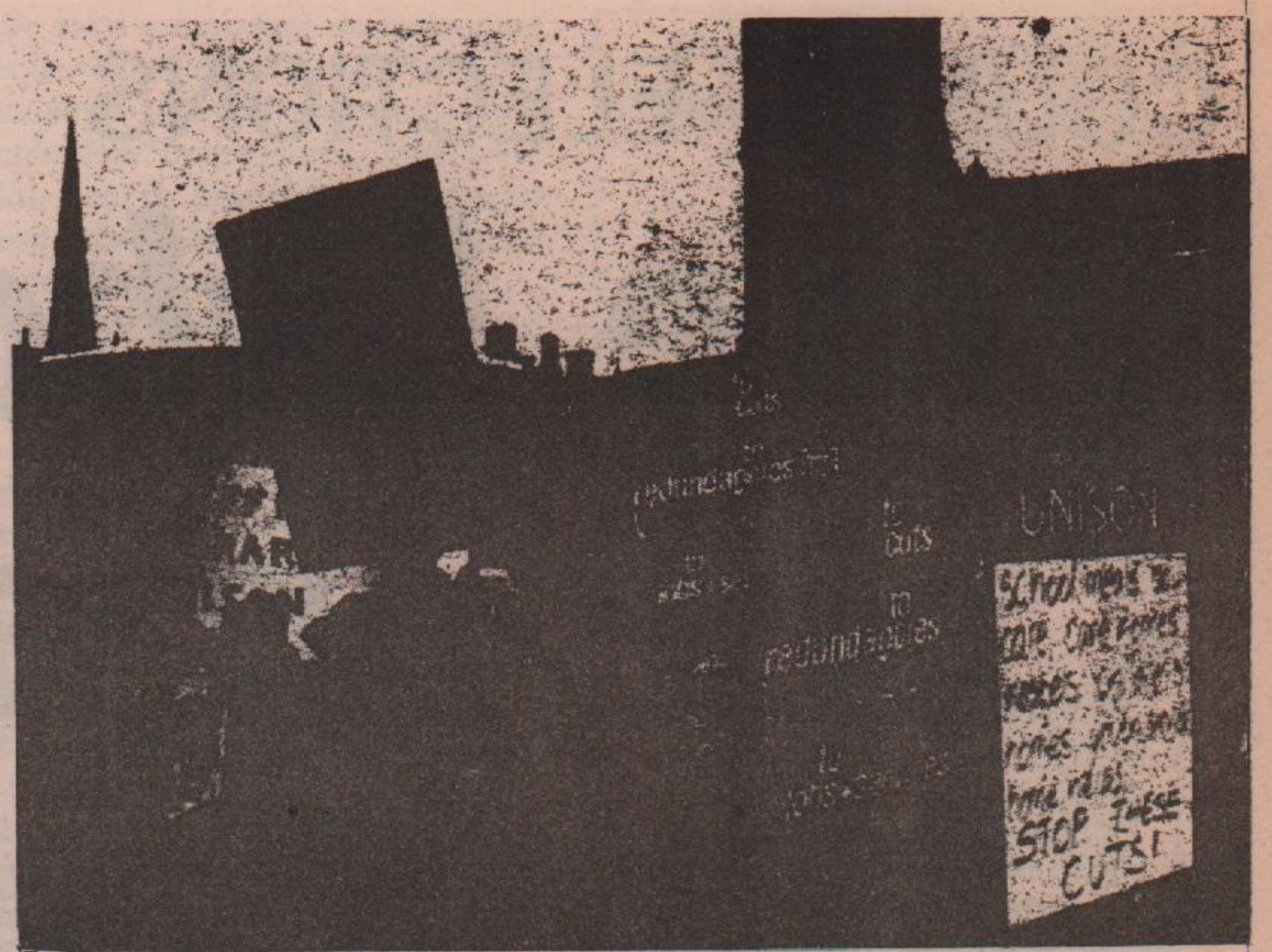
reject a proposed pay cut proposal. Scab officials in Unison's manual workers' branch had urged their members not to support the strike despite a joint branch meeting of 3,000 members endorsing the action two days before. Many of their members ignored their advice and some have now applied to join the white-collar branch that did support the strike!

This demonstrates how militant strike action can unify workers from different branches and departments. Unfortunately, the Unison branch leadership, including SWP members, has refused to draw this lesson. Workers Power and other militants called for branch-wide strike action as soon as any redundancies are issued. But the majority supported a "strategy" of devolving negotiations to departmental level. As a result less than 1,000 members so far have been balloted

for further strike action.

Rank and file militants must now co-ordinate their efforts to maximise future unity. All departmental strikes should be made indefinite and used to spread action to the bigger workplaces. Elected and accountable strike committees should abolish the false divisions fostered by the bureaucrats and cross-union mass meetings must control the action and negotiations.

The fight for all-out, council-wide strike action must continue. During the election campaign, council workers must demand that the Labour group opens its books to the working class electorate. The Tories are fond of telling us how much Labour councils are in debt. Fine, then Labour councils should refuse payments to the banks and use the money to finance much-needed services. La-



Sheffield workers defy legal threats

bour should be forced to provide services on the basis of working class needs, even if that means defying the Standard Spending Assessment rulings.

A political campaign like this, backed up by strikes in those departments where the cuts are being imposed, can put a council strike back on the agenda - and win wider support from working class people who depend on council services. Rank and file militants across the branches

must organise now to plan leaflets and actions. If the Broad Left - which, criminally, has not met since two of its members were elected onto the branch committee! - won't do this, a new rank and file organisation needs to be built which will.

- Indefinite strike action to stop redundancies!
- All-out strike to stop the cuts!
- Force Labour to fight the Tories not the workers!

The initial reasons for the establishment of black caucuses in the unions were simple. Despite a TUC statement as far back as 1974 that black workers had special problems which were associated with colour and race, nothing whatsoever was done. It was an independent initiative by a loose coalition of black trade unionists in 1981 which led to the first black caucus.

The Black Trade Unionists Solidarity Movement held its inaugural meeting with some 30 black trade unionists representing a cross section of various unions, including Nalگو. At its meeting the BTUSM agreed to assist black workers in setting up caucuses within their individual unions and to wage a campaign for their recognition. Sadly, without a solid base in any one union, the BTUSM crumbled very quickly. But it did provide the impetus for a more fruitful initiative by Nalگو members.

Black workers in Nalگو started to caucus at branch and regional level in 1982, in the belief that isolated black workers needed collective support to resist racist attacks, harassment and discrimination both at work and as part of their daily life. The aim of the black members' group was never to draw black workers away from the concerns of the union. Neither was it to limit black workers to 'black issues' only, increasing their isolation. Instead, the driving force behind the establishment of these groups was the need to build black workers' involvement in all aspects of Nalگو's work, and to bring the fight against racism to the very centre of the union.

Until the mid-1980s there were very few black workers in local government. In areas like Lambeth less than 4% of the workforce were black in the late 1970s, yet by 1986 this percentage had increased to nearly 20%. In the country as a whole a similar picture emerged. Many of the initial openings were in low paid clerical and typing areas.

A majority of these workers joined Nalگو and very quickly became involved in a struggle against racism in the union, the workplace and society at large. Since 1974 the issue of racism had been raised at successive Nalگو national conferences. The union sponsored a number of events organised by the Campaign Against Racist Laws. It spoke out against

BLACK WORKERS Fight for the right to organise

After years of resisting black workers' calls for the right to organise within the unions, the TUC has begun organising black workers' conferences. **Laura Watkins** looks at the history and lessons of black self-organisation in the unions.

virginity tests and passed motions opposing the British Nationality Act. Initially Nalگو bureaucrats pointed to these actions to resist black members' calls for self-organisation in the early 1980s. In 1981 a black member, Muhammad Idrish, faced the threat of deportation. Nalگو argued that this was not a trade union issue and at first refused to fight his case. It took a two year struggle in which black and white members canvassed support from the black community, other trade unionists and activists, including striking miners, to shift the leadership.

Their eventual involvement was contradictory. On the good side, the bureaucracy produced and distributed a range of material detailing the case and winning support from other workers to stop the deportation. They oversaw conference motions, mobilised for and organised three national demonstrations. But they restricted their argumentation to the "special circumstances" surrounding Idrish himself. The underlying theme of their campaign was to portray him as a good and much needed black social worker warranting special dispensation. This logic meant that Idrish was not to be a precedent for other members, or the signal for the union to fight actively against all deportations. Within months of Idrish's successful campaign, Sahid Syed was forced to go through the humiliation of convincing the leadership to act against his deportation.

Involving Nalگو in the other issues of concern to black workers proved equally difficult. The recession-hit 1970s and 1980s witnessed an alarming increase in the level of harassment of black workers from the immigration authorities and police. Countless black workers were

subjected to dawn raids. Passport checks, detention and deportation became commonplace. Working class support for black self defence became a vital necessity in the face of racist policing. The success of anti-deportation campaigns convinced black members of the importance of black caucuses. The black members' group enabled these workers to press Nalگو into action, eventually winning a policy of opposing all immigration controls and a commitment to boycott measures that

lead to deportations. A national officer had responsibility for supporting anti-deportation campaigns and campaigns against immigration controls. These gains must now be extended within Unison.

Initially the leadership's response to black members' groups was hostile. Black members were accused of fostering disunity and of wanting to create a separate trade union. Nothing could be further from the truth. By actively fighting racism the caucus became a powerful addition to the united struggle of the union as a whole. The passive unity that the leadership wanted would have left black workers defenceless against state racism and racist and fascist attacks. Hundreds of black workers rightly rejected this. Yet even as late as 1992, the bureaucracy set up a Race Equality Working

Party to foil the further progress of the black members group. Little wonder most black members boycotted it and campaigned instead for recognition of their caucuses.

The experience of black workers' self-organisation shows the importance and potential of black caucuses. But it also illustrates some of the many pitfalls. Budding bureaucrats can see them as a means to their advancement. The conclusion to be drawn is that caucuses alone are not enough. We need rank and file control over all our union representatives, with directly accountable leaders, to transform the unions into effective organs of class struggle. Above all, the unions must be committed to action against racism in all its forms, whether from employers, union officials, or from the state itself. ■

OVER 4,000 teachers' jobs are under threat as a result of cuts in Section II funding. Section II is the money provided by the Home Office to support students for whom English is not their first or only language. The Tories plan to phase out Section II over the next few years, but the cuts are already beginning. In Tower Hamlets, a borough with a high proportion of bilingual students and over 450 Section II teachers, the racist Liberal Democrat council intends to implement a 33% cut by this September, axing 150 jobs. Over 60 jobs, those of teachers on short term contracts, will go at the end of March.

The NUT Executive have refused to call for national strike action against the cuts. They belatedly called a half day strike in Tower Hamlets on 15 March - two weeks before teachers were due to be thrown onto the dole! No more action is planned until the summer term.

The local leadership, made up of members of the Socialist Teachers' Alliance (STA), have refused to criticise the lack of support from the national union and have failed to organise further unofficial action.

In this they have received the wholehearted support of SWP teachers. At

TEACHERS Stop racist cuts!

BY AN EAST LONDON TEACHER

the East London Teacher's Association's (ELTA) February branch meeting the SWP voted against a proposal, put by a *Workers Power* supporter, to use the 15 March as the starting point for indefinite action. The SWP's concern was not with the action needed to stop the Section II cut, but with the location of a lobby on the 15th. At a subsequent union meeting, SWP teachers even voted against a motion calling for a modest two days of unofficial action!

The SWP's *economism*, fighting for what it thinks the members will accept rather than what is necessary to win, explains their failure to support further action to defend the 60 jobs - but it does not excuse them. Even more staggering was the SWP's refusal to support a call by ELTA members to hold a democratic mass meeting on the day of the strike where proposals

for action could be discussed by strikers. Instead they supported Carole Regan, ELTA Secretary and incoming Vice President of the NUT, who argued against on the grounds that speakers might be critical of the national union!

To win back the jobs that have been lost and prevent the rest from going, indefinite strike action will be needed until the Liberal Democrats' cuts package has been withdrawn in full and all the lost jobs reinstated. We cannot expect to get this sort of action from the local leadership. They are claiming that the half day strike action was a success, telling those who are losing their jobs that they should not talk of defeat!

Militants will need to organise action themselves, building it in their school NUT groups and attempting to spread it as widely as possible across the borough. Organising this kind of action will be difficult, but it is, however, the only way of preventing a major defeat. ■

TUC TALKS TO TORIES

Monks' new habit

AS PART of its re-launch the TUC invited Stephen Dorrell, a junior Tory Treasury minister, to address a conference on public sector funding. The TUC's leader, John Monks, thanked Dorrell for "venturing into the lion's den". A pig-pen might have been a more appropriate description—with the bureaucrats quietly lining up for their union's turn to be slaughtered by the Tories.

Britain's trade union bureaucracy, organised in the TUC, have seen their power and influence considerably eroded over the last fifteen years. They have shied away from active resistance to the Tory attacks—leaving that to the real lions of the labour movement, militant rank and file workers. Instead they have combined the betrayal of workers' struggles with a desperate attempt to remould themselves into a responsible, non-militant "public service" institution.

The "re-launch" of the TUC marks the culmination of the bureaucrats' attempts to find a cosy role for themselves in Tory Britain.

You could be forgiven for failing to notice this dramatic event—you certainly weren't consulted about it. In November a re-launch was agreed. The timescale for consultation was set for the period between then and early February. This meant no discussion in branches, stewards' committees or union conferences. In fact no consultation with the members at all—no democratic discussion on plans to restrict democracy in the labour movement.

The TUC has always been a bureaucratic structure. But as thousands of rank and file workers have proved, mass lobbies of the general council or industry committees can exert pressure on the bureaucracy provided they are combined with the mobilised strength of rank and file workers in action. The TUC's new structure is designed to distance the new, all-powerful, but highly unrepresentative, "executive committee" from such pressure.

The old General Council of 46 members will now meet five times a year instead of monthly and will have a purely consultative function. The new "executive committee" will comprise the old 26-strong Finance and General Purposes Committee. This unelected and unaccountable body has members from just sixteen of the TUC's sixty-eight affiliated unions. The TUC's other eight committees are "suspended for an indefinite period". The TUC's seven industry committees are abolished, to be replaced by "forums" or "task groups". Congress will stay, but largely as a media-friendly jamboree, not a general assembly of the labour movement.

There is a clear political objective behind all this. The TUC is the "bureaucracy's bureaucracy". It is the court of appeal in inter-union disputes, the co-ordinating centre for cross-union campaigns. Nominally at least, it is also supposed to be "the general staff" of the labour movement. Over the last fifteen years these functions have become obsolete.

Individual unions have, through mergers, created federations comprising workers from many different sectors—UNISON is a classic example. Inter-union conflict is dealt with directly by these bodies. Cross union campaigns have become the preserve of combinations of these bodies. Last month's TUC march against racism was the exception rather than the rule.

Most important of all, the defeats inflicted on the labour movement have



Workers in struggle: Monks takes a dim view

exposed the TUC's status as the "general staff" of the labour movement as a sick joke. It has proved itself to be a co-ordinator of treachery, not solidarity. In the face of repeated rounds of anti-union legislation the "general staff" has done no more than raise the white flag.

The combined result of these changes is a loss of members, income and importance. The choice was either abolition or the redefinition of the TUC's role. In line with the growth of "service unionism"—in which unions are seen primarily as providers of services to individual members rather than collective organisations of working class struggle—the union bosses decided to keep the TUC but remould it as a co-ordinator of services and an instrument for trade union public relations.

In the month following the "re-launch", the TUC welcomed Stephen Dorrell, held a meeting with Paddy Ashdown, planned a conference with the Tory employment secretary David Hunt and the CBI director-general Howard Davies and appointed former Liberal Democrat president, Des Wilson, as a PR consultant (on a £50,000 salary!). This is the shape of things to come.

The TUC sees this new all-party approach as the key to improving the position of unions within Britain. It proves that they are "modern", "responsible" and committed to co-operation with the bosses, not conflict with them. As Monks put it, these moves show that:

"we want to work as partners with employers who will work with us to maximise job and income security."

Monks matches his words with deeds. The Tories have effectively slashed public sector pay through their incomes policy. With public sector unions comprising the majority of the TUC's members it should campaign against this attack. To do so effectively it should call some action—a good old fashioned strike.

After all, the clear lesson of the failure of the TUC's "Jobs and Recovery Campaign" at the time of the pit closures in 1992/93 was that renouncing any action in advance handed the Tories a decisive victory.

BY ARTHUR MERTON

But what has the all-new, dynamic TUC done? Nothing. Indeed, it has explicitly rejected the idea of a one day strike in the public sector over pay.

This kind of treachery is to be expected. But thoroughly modern Monks is exploring new ways to betray trade unionists. He commissioned an opinion poll on the question of a one day strike in the public sector. To his horror the members polled a 64% majority in favour of a strike. Amongst the much valued "general public", 55% supported a strike. Amongst young trade unionists the majority was even bigger.

The members wanted a strike. The TUC didn't. So . . . it ignored the members. This will come as no surprise to any trade unionist, but Monks then went even further. He actually suppressed the results of the poll!

Support the Arrowsmith workers!

THIS MONTH marks the anniversary of the sacking of 121 print workers from the Arrowsmith factory in Bristol. The dispute started because Arrowsmith refused to re-negotiate an in-house agreement covering wages and conditions. The print workers' union, the GPMU, lodged a claim through their National Wage Campaign, for a £6.50 wage rise and an extra day's holiday entitlement. Not exactly a claim which would have broken the bosses' bank.

The Arrowsmith workers voted to support the claim with a work-to-rule and an overtime ban. Management took swift and vindictive action. Disassociation letters were issued. When no-one agreed to sign, dismissal notices were promptly dispatched to all hourly paid employees, including to those on holiday, sick leave and even to two women on maternity leave! The workers were locked out. They have maintained a picket outside the factory gates for a whole year.

The determination of the sacked Arrowsmith workers is clear, but the

course the bosses and the Tories love this. David Hunt has hailed the new-look TUC. The CBI sent a message of support to the re-launch press conference. They love it because it is a message of surrender, a message that whatever they hurl at workers—pay cuts, redundancies, service cuts, anti-union laws—the TUC will not organise a fightback.

John Monks is lapping up the bosses' praise. The man is a creep. And the bosses, who understand the class struggle far better than the bureaucrats, know he is a creep. While they are praising him for his "reforms", they are also laughing at him for exposing his cowardice to them.

The Economist, noting the strikes that have shaken Europe over the last few months, remarked:

"And in Britain, the home of trade unionism? On March 1 the best the TUC could manage was a press conference, complete with finger nibbles and wine. Never mind: this garnered

more attention than anything it has done for years."

The bosses regard the TUC with sheer contempt. Deservedly so. The TUC's re-launch, like its fifteen year record of retreat, is contemptible.

The bosses do, however, still fear the ability of rank and file workers to fight back. Every strike or threatened strike has them panicking about the revival of "militancy". Every series of ballots has them talking about the return of a season of "discontent".

Rank and file workers will continue to fight. But they will come up ever more sharply against the "modernising" bureaucracy. The reforms that are really needed in the TUC will be raised in such struggles: its democratic transformation into a real organising centre of the class struggle under the control of its millions of rank and file members.

With the victory of such struggles, with the completion of such reforms, Monks and his modernisers will suffer the fate that has befallen far too many of the trade unionists who pay their handsome salaries—the sack. ■

dispute has followed a depressingly familiar pattern.

An industrial tribunal quashed their claim for unfair dismissal despite admitting there was "an interpretation of the law, which could be applied, but one which we are not prepared to use". The bosses, on the other hand, had no difficulty in obtaining a High Court injunction to ban pickets or demonstrators from anywhere near the premises. Recently, a total of seven pickets have been arrested and charged with obstruction. One of the incidents involved a policeman posing as a scab in order to make arrests.

Although the Arrowsmith workers were supporting a national GPMU wage claim, the union bureaucrats have not called solidarity action to defend them. Strikers at Revell and George and Harvest Print in Greater Manchester are similarly locked out for supporting the National Wage Campaign. Strikers must force the GPMU to call national action in defence of all their jobs.

Other workers have shown sup-

port. When the strikers' jobs were advertised in the local Job Centre, staff there walked out. Seven CPUSA members were disciplined and two sacked. This led to further strike action by local CPUSA members throughout Bristol.

This shows that, at a rank and file level, it is possible to win workers to breaking the anti-union laws. It is vital we force the union leaders to do the same and organise solidarity action within the GPMU, CPUSA and other unions. Only that can ensure that another heroic struggle doesn't go down to defeat.

• **Anniversary Demonstration** 26 April, outside Arrowsmith's, Winterstoke Road, 7.30-8.30am & 3.30-4.30pm.

• **Anniversary March** 30 April, sponsored by Bristol Trades Council and South West Region TUC. Assemble Castle Green, 12 noon, Bristol City Centre.

• **How to beat the anti-union laws—** turn to centre pages

How to stop the BNP

THE BATTLE is on to beat the BNP. We know the time: from now until the council elections on 6 May. We know their battle plan: to feed on workers' anger at poor housing and unemployment, stirring up racism and deploying gangs of thugs on the streets. We know the battleground: the list of BNP election candidates is to be published on 6 April.

The way to win this fight is to get thousands of socialists, trade unionists and youth onto the streets in an active, united campaign. We have to answer the BNP's lies and racist arguments. We have to rebuild solidarity in working class communities, so that anybody who displays BNP window posters and stickers gets treated like scum.

We have to organise to stop the BNP campaigning. The BNP must be denied any public platform. They must be stopped—physically—from holding any meetings, selling any papers, canvassing any estates.

At the same time we have to step up the fight to protect black communities and anti-racists from the BNP's terror campaign. Whilst the BNP has threatened to stand hundreds of candidates nationwide, the threat is not of a mass Nazi upsurge. The BNP's real efforts are targeted on a few, chosen areas. It is there that anti-racists must concentrate their forces.

The BNP numbers a few thousand. The workers' movement numbers seven and a half million. The labour movement, together with hundreds of thousands of anti-racist youth, has the power to crush the BNP.

The chant goes: "We are black, we are white: together we are dynamite!" But dynamite won't go off if its explosive power is not harnessed and detonated. The current strategy of the anti-racist movement's leadership means that the massive power and potential of that movement may be unfocused and diluted.

The TUC demo in March mobilised over 50,000 people. It had a massive impact on the local community—the

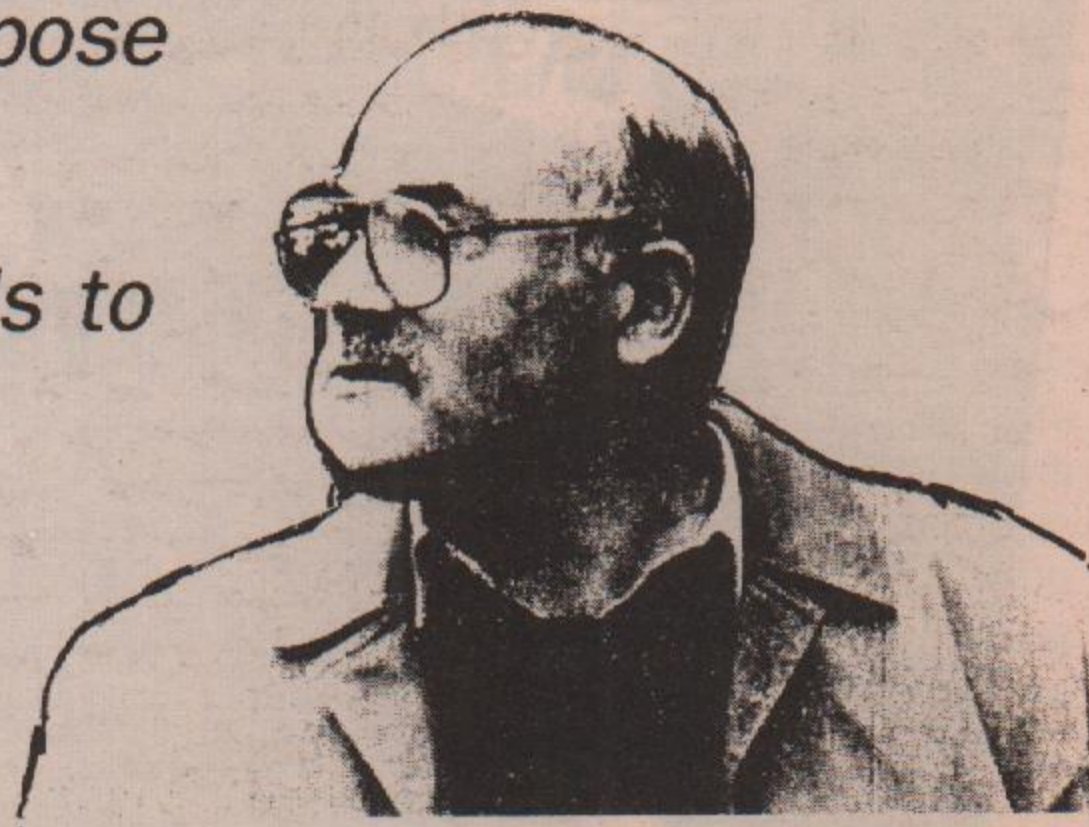
- ★ *Maximum unity in action between all workers' and anti-racist organisations. Co-ordinating committees in every town*
- ★ *Set up anti-fascist groups in workplaces, schools and estates*
- ★ *Launch a mass campaign to expose the BNP's lies and stop them campaigning*
- ★ *Build anti-fascist defence squads to deny the BNP a platform*
- ★ *Workers need socialist answers. Join Workers Power in the fight for a revolutionary alternative!*

whole area was covered in anti-racist graffiti; black and white working class people marched side by side against racism. Not a single person in the thousands of flats and houses along the route dared to voice their opposition.

But the march could and should have been ten times bigger. The left alone managed to mobilise 40,000 demonstrators at Welling, despite the sabotage of the TUC, the Labour Party and the self-appointed leaders of the Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA). The Labourite magazine *New Statesman* and

Society declared before the East End demo: "If it is not the biggest anti-racism demonstration in Britain since the heyday of the Anti-Nazi League in the 1970s it will have been a failure".

It was not a failure, but the trade union bureaucracy pulled out only token forces in many areas. They fear the emergence of a mass anti-racist movement because they know they could not control it. When we read in the same *New Statesman* editorial a call to "prevent—physically if necessary" the fascist mobilisations, we get a sense of the support that exists



Beackon

within wide layers of the labour movement for a policy of active, organised confrontation with the BNP.

But that doesn't fit in with John Smith and John Monks' plans.

They are all too ready to denounce racism from public platforms, whilst compromising with it in practice. Labour wants to be seen by the bosses as responsible, the party of law and order.

That was why it was left to the rank and file to mobilise for 19 March. That was why the demo wasn't routed through the Isle of Dogs. Imagine the

power of a 50,000 strong march in an area poisoned by racism. A march through the Isle of Dogs would not have been a boring stroll. It would have been a powerful statement of support for the beleaguered black community and anti-racist workers.

Labour leaders have promised to outlaw racial harassment—in four years time, if Labour wins the election. What about now? The main struggle of the Labour and trade union leaders at the moment appears to be helping ARA demobilise anti-fascism.

And these people are not the only obstacles in the fight for an active, anti-fascist workers united front.

The Anti-Nazi League, the biggest anti-fascist movement, is controlled by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). It issued an appeal for joint activity and collaboration to national and local groups in February.

But wherever anti-fascists have approached the SWP/ANL for joint meetings and activity, they have refused. The exceptions have occurred only where the SWP does not control the ANL.

Why this sectarianism? The SWP and the majority of the ANL's paper membership is committed to the physically smashing the fascists—the ANL is not.

The Labour MPs and media figureheads who support the ANL will not commit themselves to No Platform.

ANL spokespeople like Peter Hain denounce active anti-fascism on TV as "punch up politics". To keep the support of such people the SWP keeps strict control over the ANL, with decisions made in closed meetings, not in local ANL branches.

What is the answer? In every area we need united anti-fascist organisations committed to No Platform for Fascists and to an orientation to mobilising working class support for active opposition to the BNP.

For that, Workers Power is prepared to unite in action with any organisation and individuals, with no conditions other than that an active campaign is organised. ■

Know your enemy...

UP TO now the BNP has not tried to hide its violent, fascist character. While fascism in most of Europe has carefully cultivated a "respectable" image, the BNP has followed an open policy of violence.

There are signs that this may be changing. BNP leader Tyndall has reportedly banned BNP activists from joining the overt terrorist group Combat 18. But former C18 thugs are resurfacing as BNP candidates. One declared: "the days of punch ups with the left are over—the public doesn't like that".

No-one should be fooled. The BNP, desperate to hold onto the protest votes it received in Millwall, is putting on a sham of respectability.

There is joint membership and collaboration between the BNP and C18.

BNP councillor Beackon is himself a member of C18. Their real policies are outlined in C18's "What We Stand For":

"Send all non-whites back to Africa, Asia or Arabia [sic] alive or in body bags, the choice is theirs . . . To execute all white race mixers . . . Banning foreign imports and only trading with like minded white countries"

C18 also stands for "executing" all homosexuals, for banning abortion and "a final solution for the eternal Jew".

The BNP may use different language in order to win electoral support from confused and disorganised workers, but it stands for the same things.

Between now and the May elections, we will be treated to pathetic excuses from white racists in Millwall

for voting BNP. They claim it's not fascism they are voting for, but the BNP is the "only party prepared to give a lifeline to the people of the Island". The full extent of the "lifeline" these workers can expect was heard in a radio interview broadcast in March:

"Beackon: We tried to do something about housing, education and jobs on the Island.

BBC: What is your policy on Social Services?

Beackon: [pause] What do you mean, housing?

BBC: No, Social Services. You will be in charge of Social Services if you win.

Beackon: What, [pause] what . . . what sort of Social Services?

BBC: Social workers . . .

Beackon: I don't know 'til we get

there.

BBC: What's your policy on environmental health?

Beackon: Have we got policies on that?

BBC: I don't know - what are they?

Beackon: [pause] I don't know, ask me a specific question!

BBC: You must have policies, you're standing for election. What would your policy be on planning?

Beackon: Well we plan to build new homes for local people.

BBC: That's a housing policy. I was

Anti-fascist leafleting on the Isle of Dogs. Every Sunday 2pm. Contact ANL for details on 071 924 0333

Millwall Labour "Beat the BNP" Campaign Day, Sunday 10 April.

wondering what your planning policy was.

Beackon:[long pause] I don't know at the moment.

BBC: What have you done as a councillor?

Beackon: I've done quite a lot for the local people.

BBC: Like what? What issues have you raised in council meetings? Have you ever spoken? Excuse me? [Beackon leaves studio. Interview is terminated]"

The BNP has only one policy for the Isle of Dogs—a racist housing policy based on misinformation and prejudice.

It is committed to destroying the lives of working class people, black and white.

It will turn the Isle of Dogs into a fascist cesspit if it wins in May.

That's why we should not rest until Beackon's moronic face has been introduced to the pavement and his BNP/C18 thugs driven from the streets for good. ■

When Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown was excluded from the platform of the London anti-racist demo, he went crying to the media claiming that this "undermined unity".

The TUC was right to refuse Ashdown a platform, but we need to understand why. We need unity, but unity in action against fascism: unity of all those committed to physically denying the fascists a platform and to a campaign based in the working class.

The Liberals were excluded because they had pandered to racism in Tower Hamlets. This is true enough. Ashdown was not prepared

to discipline three Liberal Councillors in Tower Hamlets found guilty of racism. Now in Tower Hamlets they have been caught rigging their election candidates' list so that only white candidates stand in white areas. Ashdown has declared this electoral ethnic cleansing "unconstitutional" but it remains to be seen what he will do about it.

But Labour is no less racist than the Liberals. Labour supported and introduced vicious racist immigration laws. Labour supports the rac-

ist police. Labour blocked the selection of black candidate Sharon Atkin in the 1987 election because she dared to point this out. They were all too ready to have Ashdown and even Tory rebels in the ill fated "people's power" alliance against the 1992 pit closures.

Why should we support united action with Labour but not the Liberals? The difference lies in the class character of the two parties. The Liberal Democrats should be excluded from any anti-fascist united

front because they are an open bourgeois party. Their participation will always be bought at the price of tying our hands to peaceful, legalistic protest.

It is vital that such campaigns are built in the labour movement and based in the working class. Why? Because only the working class can smash fascism.

Labour's pro-capitalist politics come into contradiction with its mass base. It remains a bourgeois workers' party: pro-capitalist, but based

on the trade unions and capable of being pressured by the working class to take action on its behalf. Socialists have to exploit that contradiction. Labour's leaders should be called on to abandon their support for immigration controls, to support black self defence, and to organise the destruction of the fascist threat.

The workers' united front is designed to break workers from their Labour leaders by destroying their illusions in the leaders' rhetoric.

The key questions on which that will be done are support for black self-defence, opposition to the racist immigration laws and the fight to deny the fascists any platform. ■

What kind of unity?

Pit sense or nonsense?

IN THE year of the tenth anniversary of the great miners' strike it would be nice to welcome the publication of this book. It contains the recollections of an active strike leader. It provides vivid details of the central role played by militant rank and file miners of Doncaster. It reproduces documents and recounts incidents that show the bravery, the ingenuity and the class conscious determination of the miners.

But despite all this, the book is marred by Dave Douglass' politics. Douglass is not only the author of many works on the life, conditions and struggles of miners. He is also a key figure in the NUM, particularly in the Doncaster area. In this role he is a consistent apologist for the left bureaucracy of the union.

Closure

This was revealed most starkly during and after the autumn 1992 pit closure crisis. Douglass used his column in the *Daily Worker* (the paper of a tiny left Stalinist group known as the Leninist) to defend Scargill's failed strategy of "people power". Douglass maniacally attacked all those, in particular Workers Power, who argued that this was a fatal strategy. His invective against us didn't save a single pit. Nor did the strategy he supported.

In a curious example of twisted logic Douglass combines his role as left cover for the bureaucracy with declarations of support for the *Class War* brand of anarchism. The fact that an NUM loyalist *par excellence* is in solidarity with a bunch of anarchists who regard all unions as enemies of the working class, may seem bizarre. But it suits Douglass' purpose perfectly.

He can pose publicly as a firebrand anarchist, a dangerous extremist, a scourge of the "Trotskyist" left. But because he brooks no control over himself or his actions by his rag, tag and bobtail political friends, he can get on with his everyday reformist practice inside the NUM.

In this book Douglass is out to promote his image as an anarchist working class hero. Given the tragic demise of the NUM he can easily afford this fake leftism. He can also afford to lie through his teeth.

Dialogue

His theme is that the left is not interested in a dialogue with workers, only with telling them what to do, bossing them about, ordering them around from on high. The Socialist Workers Party and Workers Power are labelled as the chief culprits. We are all arrogant "Leninists" according to Douglass:

"There is never any significance to the struggles of the workers themselves, until the Leninist/Situationist/Trotskyist Moses comes along and tells us what it is." (p99)

In response we can simply demand: prove it! Where, when and how did Workers Power ever treat the struggle of the miners in this way? Where, when and how did we belittle the significance and potential of that struggle, despite the absence of a revolutionary leadership? Never. It is a stupid slander by a man desperate to find a scapegoat for his own inadequacy. As for the idea that we were not interested in listening to miners

Mark Harrison
reviews
Pit Sense versus the State
by David John Douglass
Phoenix Press, 1994, £4.40

themselves, Douglass is well off the mark—and he knows it. Take just one example, from the countless ones that occurred during the strike. A Yorkshire miner wrote a letter to me. It concerned the question of picket defence, and the report he had prepared for the Yorkshire Area Strike Committee, calling for protective headgear for pickets. The Committee blocked the implementation of this report.

The miner pointed out that this was proof that miners were already taking up the question of picket defence that Workers Power consistently argued for. In response to this letter Workers Power engaged in a long dialogue with the miner concerned and tried to muster support for his proposals. Was this a case of us not listening?

The miner wrote, "why don't you invite me . . . to discuss with you what's going on?". I replied:

"I would very much like to continue a dialogue with you. I could come up to see you at a time convenient to you and we could continue the discussion face to face."

That miner was none other than Dave Douglass himself, whom Workers Power was glad to collaborate with—and learn from—in the vital task of building picket line defence, despite our political differences.

Collaboration

In addition Workers Power invited Douglass to be on a panel to discuss the strike at the 1984 Workers Power Summer School. The result of all this was that a number of Sheffield Workers Power members had a series of meetings with Douglass and we collaborated on solidarity work for the strike, picketing etc. Workers Power even organised a speakers' tour of mining areas on the topic of Ireland with, as the main speaker . . . David John Douglass!

To turn around now and claim that we were guilty of not listening to miners is plain nonsense. The numerous strike militants from Hatfield will testify to this. After all they gave several of our comrades awards for services to the strike.

Douglass' selective memory causes him to omit this from his history. Instead he suggests that Workers Power went to the Orgreave mass picket merely to sell papers. During the battle Workers Power members are alleged to have stood by shouting "Workers Power!". While miners were being bloodied, we just sold papers, Douglass alleges. The police thought, "Workers Power were insignificant. So did we." (p103)

When I first read this I was angry. When I re-read it I laughed. It is pitiable. It is the last refuge of a washed-out ex-revolutionary. Of course it is a lie. Workers Power members fought at Orgreave and many other picket lines. We took our share of knocks from the police and that was why we found such a warm welcome in every picket's home in Dunscoft, Douglass' village, including at that time his own. We were even made members of special picket squads, involved in serious attempts

to stop scabs getting into work. Douglass knows all this. So why tell lies?

The answer is political. We were willing to listen and willing to fight, to get our heads broken, to collect money for the strikers, and to fight for solidarity action. Our members working for BR in Nottingham tried to stop coal from moving and were sent home every day of the strike—without any money from the NUR. But we were also willing to give an opinion.

We were willing to learn, but we were not afraid to teach when we believed that Scargill's strategy was wrong and that the miners were heading for a defeat. We would not have been true to ourselves as revolutionaries had we simply stepped back

and said, well what you are doing is fine even if it does lead to defeat. And this is what Douglass really objects to. He denies any role at all for the revolutionary party.

This can sound leftist in its anarchist variety—spontaneous workers' action will do the business. But in substance it is profoundly opportunist. What it means is that the workers' leaders should not be challenged by revolutionaries. They should be left to do whatever they want. And it means that there is no room for a workers' party uniting the struggles of workers.

Instead, what we get from Douglass is that the NUM can do the job of a party, and that he is a custodian of its revolutionary credentials. Attacking the idea of a revolutionary party, he writes:

"So what is the point or relevance of all this? Simply that the NUM, as a tried and tested organ of the miners for generations, despite its designation as a trade union, is not simply a trade union and need not remain so if the members of that organisation wish to extend it to wider and more political fields." (p104)

The NUM is enough, says Douglass. Wrong. The NUM was not enough, not in 1984/85 nor in 1992/93. The union suffered two terrible defeats,

defeats which have reduced its membership drastically. The absence of a party capable of defeating the reformist leadership of the whole labour movement was decisive.

A trade union unites workers in a particular industry. The NUM organises miners. In both 1984-85 and in 1992 rail and steel workers, car workers and dockers, local government workers and civil servants, all needed to take action, needed to understand the political issues at stake, needed to be mobilised against their leaders.

Tirades

What instrument does Douglass propose for doing this? The NUM? But only miners can join this "party", so why should dockers abide by its instructions? Douglass has no answer. His lacklustre bureaucratic syndicalism (it would be an insult to the really great revolutionary syndicalists of the past to compare their politics with Douglass') is bankrupt, and this book proves it.

The book could have been useful. Its tirades destroy its educational potential. It ill serves the Doncaster miners, with whom Workers Power fought shoulder to shoulder, to dress up a pack of lies and insinuations as workers' history. ■

The sorrow of war

Paul Morris
reviews
The Sorrow of War
by Bao Ninh
Secker and Warburg, London, 1993 £8.99



"WAR IS HELL" is the message of most honest war memoirs. Bao Ninh's *The Sorrow of War*, based on the author's experience as a North Vietnamese soldier in the war against US imperialism, shows that war is hell even if you're on the winning side in a just, revolutionary struggle.

Ninh's book also shows that the peace became a living hell of personal and political disillusionment for the North Vietnamese veterans, traumatised by memories of the carnage and the guilt of survival.

Ninh's hero, Kien, is driven to writing about his experiences in the war. He recalls the deaths, one by one, of his fellow platoon members. The cumulative effect of each episode of murder, rape and torture gives the reader a sense of the post-combat trauma which has blighted the lives of millions of war survivors in this century.

Ultimately it is not the results of North Vietnam's victory which make the war bearable for Kien; it is the humanity and courage of ordinary people. Kien writes about Hoa, a fellow soldier raped and killed by an American patrol as she draws them away from a group of wounded North Vietnamese.

"But for Hoa and countless other loved comrades, nameless ordinary soldiers, those who sacrificed for others and for their Vietnam, raising the name of Vietnam high and proud, creating a spiritual beauty in the horrors of conflict, the war would have been another brutal, sadistic exercise." For Ninh, this human courage does not offset the cost of the war. He writes "Justice may have won but cruelty, death and inhuman violence had also won".

Ninh is clearly disillusioned with Stalinist Vietnam's treatment of its veterans, and with the bureaucratism of post-war life. There is not a hint, however, of the pathetic bleating of so many former Stalinists that "socialism was all a mistake", etc etc.

In his exploration of the effects of an anti-imperialist revolution on the combatants Ninh never flinches from an important fact, which every revolutionary should remember. We fight the capitalists on terrain created by them. We are fighting for a better kind of society but in revolutionary wars violence is still violence. Its effects traumatise, madden and destroy. Only the working masses, who have nothing to lose and everything to gain, are capable of surviving and making sense of the horrors that revolutionary civil war can unleash.

Ninh's book has been described as the greatest war novel since *All Quiet on the Western Front*. It certainly ranks as one of the most moving and unforgettable accounts of war written this century. It shows better than any "liberal" Hollywood film the real horror of the Vietnam war. At the same time it never betrays the heroism of the poorly armed working class men and women who, through their sacrifices and in the name of socialism, beat the most powerful country in the world. ■

How the Tories shackled the unions

FOR FIFTEEN years the trade unions have been battered by frontal assaults on their jobs, wages and services. These have been backed up by legal assaults on workers' rights to organise. Since 1979 the Tories have introduced six major pieces of legislation, in addition to a host of minor ones, shackling effective trade unionism.

For the ruling class these legal restraints have been a godsend. Even though many bosses haven't directly resorted to the use of these laws, a series of test cases have underlined their importance. Trade unionists can be stopped from striking or picketing by injunctions. Unions can have their assets seized. Individual members can be jailed. All of this can happen if a boss goes to court and a judge nods his head.

Printers, miners, seafarers, dockers, railworkers and now college lecturers have all been victims of the anti-union laws. Every ruling has served to intimidate millions of other trade unionists. A recent *Labour Research* survey revealed that merely the threat of the laws was a factor in deterring many workers from considering strike action.

This reveals the principal objective of the anti-union laws. It is not to make trade unions themselves illegal. It is to make effective action illegal.

It was the widespread action of workers in the 1960s and 1970s in defence of their basic interests that troubled Britain's profit-hungry bosses. The action was frequently successful. Jobs were saved. Pay was improved. Services were defended. The bosses saw "union power" as the source of every problem—from low profits to high inflation.

The focus of militancy was in the workplaces. Strong union organisation was reflected in a powerful shop stewards' organisation. So powerful was this layer of militants that the trade union bureaucrats themselves chimed in with the Tories and the bosses in condemning militants.

The dilemma for the bosses was how to break the power of shop floor trade unionism and strengthen the bureaucrats within the unions against the "militants", but at the same time weaken the general position of the trade unions within society as a whole. Twice they got governments pledged to legal "reform". Twice these governments failed.

In 1969, when Harold Wilson's Labour government tried to bring in anti-union measures under the Bill *In Place of Strife*, they were stopped. A mass campaign by the trade unions brought hundreds of thousands on strike and onto the streets. Then Ted Heath's Tory government of 1970-74 saw its Industrial Relations Act effectively smashed by a movement of general strike proportions in 1972—to free five jailed dockers—and by two national engineering strikes.

The Thatcher government consciously decided to play it differently. They were committed to a legal onslaught, but their strategy for implementing it was far more effective than predecessors' attempts. There were four parts to their plan:

- to bring in a series of laws on a piecemeal basis so as to avoid providing an easily generalised, all embracing focus for trade union opposition
- to make individual bosses responsible for using the laws put in place in order to prevent the government itself becoming the focus of opposition
- to introduce laws, like those on balloting, that would strengthen the hand of a cowardly bureaucracy against the rank and file militants
- to combine all of these measures with a section by section attack on workers, without immediately using the

law in order to defeat, demoralise and disperse the militant layer of shop floor leaders that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s.

This was an excellent strategy from the bosses' point of view. But, for it to work one thing was necessary—the union leadership had to play ball. The Tories relied on the TUC preaching opposition but practicing compliance. They understood what makes the TUC tick better than many trades unionists. At every stage the TUC backed down.

In 1980, when Thatcher introduced the first of her Employment Acts, attacking picketing and solidarity action, the TUC announced its plans to oppose the measures. The Tories breathed a deep sigh of relief: far from threatening a re-run of the early 1970s, the TUC called only for a day of action and a lobby of parliament. The "action" was minimal (the TUC called for "lunchtime meetings") and the lobby was just a day out for officials.

A special conference of the TUC at Wembley in 1982 threatened defiance of the laws and solidarity action in the event that the law was ever used. But this was just hot air.

Eddy Shah, a right wing newspaper owner, went to court and got an injunction to stop the NGA print union's "sec-

ondary picketing" of his plant in Warrington in 1983. The TUC leaders refused to give any solidarity to the NGA, even blocking the proposal for an all-out print strike. All the commitments given at the Special Conference were quickly abandoned.

This, coupled with the TUC's pathetic response to the outright banning of unions at GCHQ in Cheltenham, paved the way for the historic miners' strike of 1984. The Tories and their capitalist backers went into that dispute confident that the overwhelming majority of union leaders were not prepared to challenge the anti-union laws. Their confidence was justified. Even when the miners' union was stripped of its funds, not one union was prepared to defy the laws and strike with the miners.

The isolation of the NUM and the TUC's refusal to deliver solidarity was the fundamental reason for the strike's defeat. That defeat massively weakened the whole workers' movement and paved the way for the subsequent legal attacks on trade unionism. ■

Effective action is

illegal

UNLIKE FRANCE, Spain and Italy, there has never been a legal "right to strike" in Britain. The system of "common law" means that, in place of a written constitution, unelected judges, selected from the families of the rich and powerful, can make up the law as they go along. They "interpret" existing Acts of Parliament and past court rulings as they see fit.

The judges long ago decided that any strike or industrial action is a breach of the contract of employment between a worker and his employer, or—as they still put it—between a "master" and his "servant". In law, strike action is a "fair reason" for an employer to dismiss a worker.

In 1974 the Labour government, under pressure from the rank and file of the trade unions who brought down Heath, introduced a law which codified some important gains for trade unionists. But the 1974 Act also contained a real gift to the bosses.

It declared that trade unionists could not be sued for a breach of their contract of employment where the breach was an action that formed part of a "trade dispute". But the definition of a trade dispute left out any action that could be regarded as political.

During the lifetime of the Labour government workers felt the effects of this deliberate omission. Postal workers were banned by a judge from striking in support of South African workers fighting against apartheid because this was "political".

This left the way open for the Tories and the employers to move in, making the definition of legal strike action ever narrower. A legal "trade dispute" is now defined exclusively as being with your direct employer.

In practice, in the world of multinational corporations, this robs workers in subsidiary firms of the right to defend themselves against the bosses who decide to sack them. When the plugs were pulled on the van makers, Leyland Daf, by their multinational owners, the workers had no legal right to take action since they were technically not in dispute with the British plant managers. The result? Mass sackings.

The same applies to workers in the public sector. They can strike against their departmental or hospital bosses, but not against the council that cuts their budget or the government that is dismantling the NHS.

In 1980 Thatcher brought in the first of her Employment Acts, restricting the workers' rights to take solidarity action. The employers are allowed to act in concert, and the state can provide them with tremendous back up through policing, the harassment of strikers, the denial of benefits and so on. But workers are not allowed to act on the straightforward principle of working class solidarity: an injury to one is an injury to all. By 1990 Tory laws meant that all immunities were withdrawn from unions engaged in "secondary" action.

The law has been extended so that

TORY ANTI-UNION

Defiance not

In February a judge decided that the college lecturers' law if it went ahead with a strike to defend

The union had already held a ballot. The ballot was held in accordance with the constraints and procedures and recorded a

But the judge ruled the strike

This is just the latest in a succession of legal attacks on unions, as with all of the Tory anti-union laws, is to re

Richard Brenner surveys the battery of anti-union laws and argues that the best way to get them repealed is

ALWAYS PROVIDE
ADVANCE NOTICE



the relevant "trade dispute" has to be *in existence* at the time a strike ballot is held. This has been used against the London Underground workers. The courts ruled in 1989 that the NUR (now the transport workers' union RMT) could be sued for action over an issue which the courts decided were *not* yet part of a dispute with London Transport.

The point, of course, is that all major disputes are political. The idea that there is a wall between "economic" disputes over pay and conditions and the concerted *political* efforts of the capitalist class to attack the living standards of the working class is sheer nonsense.

Take the pit closure announcement in 1992. Millions of workers understood immediately that this was a political issue. The Tories were not just punishing the miners, but weakening one of the most determined detachments of the labour movement, softening all of us up for the attacks to come. But the widespread walkouts in support of the miners in October 1992 were all unlawful. They were a political response to a political attack.

The Tories adopted the same piecemeal approach with regard to the laws on balloting. There was no requirement to ballot until 1984. After that, any union could be sued for strike action held without a ballot. This allowed them to "sequester"—steal—the miners' funds during the great strike of that year. Since then, the rules have been changed, getting

tougher and more complicated year by year.

Previously, whilst employers could dismiss strikers, they were not allowed to do so selectively. If they were going to dismiss workers for going on strike, then they had to dismiss all the strikers. Only after three months would they be allowed to selectively re-employ former strikers.

But in 1990 the Tories brought in yet another Employment Act. This declared that where a strike was unofficial, the bosses could sack any of the strikers. This was a green light for out and out victimisation. Worse, any strike action in defence of workers sacked in this way—even if official and backed by a ballot—is now unlawful.

The 1990 Act also introduced measures to force union officials to prevent unofficial strikes. Unions are responsible for all strikes unless they actively repudiate the action, even if they plan to hold a ballot and make the action official!

Other Tory laws have included banning the closed shop, and preventing trade unions from disciplining strike-breakers in their own ranks. Effective picketing is also illegal. The Tories' Code of Conduct, which limits the numbers of pickets to six, is technically only advisory, but is treated as holy writ by most police chiefs. During the miners' strike, South Wales NUM was sued for putting six pickets outside a pit gate because sixty miners were demonstrating on the opposite side of the road! The same law was

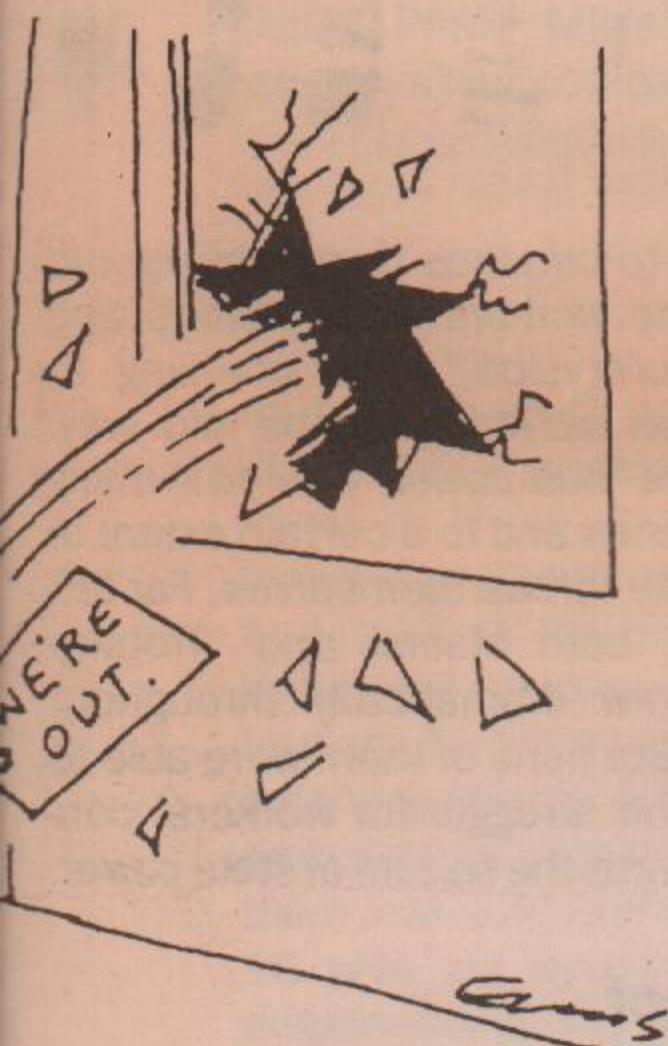
UNION LAWS

How to beat the laws

Compliance

...ers' union, NATFHE, would be breaking the
...he pay and conditions of its members.
...took place within the Tories' existing time
...clear majority of 62% for strike action.
...e could not take place.
...attacks on trade unionism in Britain. Its aim,
...nder effective trade unionism impossible.
...laws at the bosses' disposal and argues that
...a campaign of active defiance.

IDE OF STRIKE



...ed against seafarers in the strike
...ainst P&O.

their latest laws

...st year saw the legal noose tighten
...ill further. Even the former General
...ecretary of the TUC, Norman Willis, a
...an not given to strident denunciations
...ns of the capitalists and their gov-
...nment, described the Trade Union
...reform and Employment Rights Act
...993 as "full of vindictive anti-union
...asures".

The provisions of the Act include:

Anyone can sue strikers

...viously it was up to the employers
...emselves to decide whether to sue
...ade unions or their members for
...king action. But now anyone affected
...of the action can sue—for example a
...mmuter during a bus strike. As-
...orted reactionaries, anti-union bigots
...d members of the Tory party can
...tag the unions through the courts
...d claim injunctions to ban particular
...ctions. And they can get state fund-
...g to back up their case! Meanwhile
...ade unions are not allowed to give
...ncial backing to members fined for
...ing action such as picketing.

All ballots are now to be postal

...e Tories and the employers like to
...an that this is extremely democ-
...ic. After all, secret ballots are sup-

posed to be the best possible protec-
...tion against intimidation, and the best
...way of ensuring that everyone takes
...part and votes as they see fit, rather
...than under outside pressure.

Since the introduction of postal vot-
...ing, participation in ballots has gone
...down, not up. The aim of the law is not
...to free workers from "intimidation" by
...their workmates, but to maximise the
...possibilities for the bosses to intimi-
...date workers by keeping them apart
...during the decision making process.
...Newspaper campaigns, television
...propaganda and direct mail shots by
...employers try to make workers feel
...isolated and turn them against the
...idea of action.

Trade unionism is about combina-
...tion. It aims to identify workers' col-
...lective interests and organise common
...action to promote them. If one section
...of a workforce is to be sacked, there is
...nothing wrong with them putting as
...much pressure as possible on work-
...ers from other sections to hang to-
...gether—on the contrary, this is the
...essence of solidarity.

That is why the Tories want deci-
...sions on action to be taken anywhere
...but the workplace, preferably at home
...where the influence of workmates and
...the feeling of collective strength are at
...their weakest. Meanwhile the employ-
...ers try to undermine workers' confi-
...dence as much as they can. As the
...lawyers for the college employers ar-
...gued in the NATFHE case, the whole
...point of the 1993 Act was to allow
...employers "to seek to persuade em-
...ployees to say no to action. A target-
...ed approach to particular employees
...would be more effective."

The union must give the employer seven days notice of when the action is to start.

The reason for this is obvious. It gives
...the employers the chance to make
...their preparations, and removes any
...advantage that unions may derive from
...sudden, unexpected action. The pur-
...pose of a strike is to disrupt or halt the
...production and distribution of goods
...or the provision of services. It hits the
...employers where it hurts them most—
...in their pockets. A compulsory notice
...period allows the bosses to make
...their preparations, advertising for
...scabs to carry out strike bound work,
...launching their own propaganda cam-
...paigns. It is like instructing the victim
...of a street robbery to give their at-
...tacker ten minutes notice of their in-
...tention to fight back.

The union must declare seven days in advance whether the action is to be "continuous" or "discontinuous".

This means that the union has to say
...in advance if it is planning one-day or
...indefinite action. The union's battle
...plan has to be revealed—but of course
...the employers' does not. It is like a
...poker game in which one player's cards
...must be held face up while the other
...player's are concealed.

The union must give a list of all individuals to be involved in the action.

This was how they nobbled the threat-
...ened NATFHE strike last month. When
...taking a strike ballot, unions are now
...supposed to hand over to the employ-
...ers the names of every single member
...who is being asked to vote on indus-
...trial action. NATFHE had not done this.
...So 50,000 college lecturers could not
...strike without breaking the law, de-
...spite the majority of its members vot-
...ing for action.

Before any trade union can strike it
...will now have to hand over accurate
...records of every one of its members
...involved in a ballot. For the larger
...unions this means tens of thousands
...of names. Even preparing the informa-
...tion will mean further delays, which
...will benefit employers, allowing them
...more time to prepare to resist a strike.
...Any inaccuracies in the records—how-
...ever slight or unimportant—will be
...seized on by employers desperate to
...stop action.

Worse still, employers will know ex-
...actly who is involved. They will be able
...to target workers individually with prop-
...aganda threatening dire consequences
...in the event of a strike. Intimidation
...of union members will be easier, particu-
...larly in workplaces which are not fully
...unionised.

Imagine trying to win support for a
...strike for union recognition in a previ-
...ously non-union plant or office. Before
...any strike, the employers will find out
...who the union members are.

The judges who ruled the NATFHE
...strike illegal under this law knew ex-
...actly what they were doing. They were
...proving in practice that the new law
...could be used not merely to slow down
...the possibility of a strike taking place,
...but to stop it taking place altogether.

All of these new measures come on
...top of existing provisions which give
...the employers and the courts the
...chance to interfere in the balloting
...procedure. They can decide if they
...think the question on the ballot form is
...put properly. The form must carry the
...threat that "if you take part in a strike
...or other industrial action you may be
...in breach of your contract of employ-
...ment", which means that you can be
...sacked. Ballots have to be held not
...less than four weeks before the start
...of the action, giving the employers a
...tremendous advantage by preventing
...any swift response by the union to
...attacks on jobs, pay or conditions.

There is one action the anti-union
...laws allow without any ballot of trade
...union members: calling off a strike!
...The laws leave the union bureaucrats
...the power to call off strikes which
...thousands of workers have voted for,
...without any consultation at all.■

EVERY LAW the Tories have intro-
...duced has been accompanied by
...the claim that they are furthering
...the cause of democracy. But then US
...President Harry Truman claimed he
...dropped the atom bomb on Hiroshima
...to "save lives". This is what George Orwell
...called "doublespeak"; barbarism dis-
...guised by phrases with the sole intention
...of fooling people.

Every single provision of the Tory anti-
...union laws is an attack on working class
...democracy. They attack our right to de-
...fend our jobs and living standards. They
...are laws to protect the profits of a handful
...of capitalists. They are class laws.

Workers need to wake up to this fast.
...Class laws serve the interests of the class
...enemy. There is nothing morally wrong
...with breaking such laws, and we must
...break them.

The leaders of the labour movement
...have forgotten that trade unionism was
...born and forged by workers breaking
...laws. They may commemorate the
...Tolpuddle martyrs—pioneer trade
...unionists of the nineteenth century—at an
...annual ceremony, but they have buried
...the message these martyrs stood for:
...breaking the law that banned unions.

Today the Labour and trade union lead-
...ers preach respect for the rule of law no
...matter what. The struggle against class
...laws contradicts their reformist project
...of winning the right to manage capital-
...ism through a slavish obedience to capi-
...talism's rules. But there is more to their
...attitude to the anti-union laws than this.

The Labour Party itself has long been
...keen to contain, and where necessary
...make illegal, effective workers' action.
...From using troops to break strikes to
...In Place of Strife, Labour has shown
...itself willing to use class law to preserve
...social peace. Today it explicitly rejects
...the policy of repealing the anti-union
...laws because it sees them as useful
...weapons for itself when it comes into
...government. It wants no repeats of the
...1979 "winter of discontent" which
...smashed the Labour government's pay
...policy.

The union leaders too see some use in
...the laws. That is why the TUC has
...agreed not to push for their total
...repeal. In particular the rules on
...ballots give them a weapon to prevent
...strike action. A "yes" vote in a strike
...ballot gives them strength in their
...negotiations with the bosses, without
...them actually having to resort to
...action itself. After all action is a drain
...on their funds; a disruption of their
...daily routine of accommodation with
...the bosses. It can be an opportunity
...for a challenge to the bureaucrats' pri-
...vileged positions as rank and file
...militants get wise to their treacherous
...role as "middle man" in the class
...struggle.

Trade unionists should continue to
...put pressure on their leaders to resist
...the laws, to demand that Labour
...repeals them if it gets into office. But
...such demands will remain empty unless
...they are backed by rank and file
...action in a direct struggle to defy
...and defeat the laws.

After years of defeats many workers
...really believe that the laws are here
...to stay. But many of the same work-
...ers thought the poll tax couldn't be
...beaten. A militant campaign of to
...defy the law proved them wrong.

A campaign against the anti-union
...laws will do the same. With the Tories
...weak and divided, prone to U-turns
...and mishaps, there is every chance
...that one successful act of defiance
...could generate widespread resistance
...to all the anti-union laws. That would
...open the way for a campaign to
...sweep these laws off the statute book
...for good.

How to fight the anti-union laws

To undermine the Tories' efforts to
...isolate individual union members
...through the postal balloting rules,
...trade unionists should hold mass
...meetings in every workplace to
...discuss action and convince mem-
...bers of the need to strike

against attacks on pay, jobs and con-
...ditions. All votes should be held after
...mass meetings when the arguments
...and the sense of collective solidarity
...are at their height. Rank and file
...activists should exert control over
...such meetings to ensure the union
...bureaucrats' monopoly of informa-
...tion is broken and the arguments
...for action are heard.

Secret committees should be
...formed (like the "Shepherd's Pie
...Gang" that ran the tube strikes in
...London in 1989) to co-ordinate un-
...official action. This can minimise
...the risk of victimisation and se-
...lective sackings under the 1990
...Act. Secret organisation should also
...be used for the dispersal of funds
...to prevent sequestration. The bosses
...have their secret stashes. There is
...no reason why the unions shouldn't,
...so long as they are under the control
...of trusted members.

One day actions are not enough to
...force employers to back down, espe-
...cially if the union obeys the law and
...tells the employers its plans in ad-
...vance. For indefinite strikes against
...all attacks on jobs, pay and condi-
...tions of work.

No to repudiation. All unofficial
...strikes should be made official. This
...means defying the laws. But without
...such defiance there is no future for
...effective trade unionism. If the laws
...are then used against the union as a
...whole, workers must fight for soli-
...darity action, broadening the strug-
...gle into a challenge to the union
...laws themselves.

The political fight against the anti-
...union laws must be taken up by
...every union branch up and down
...the country. There should be a
...national campaign agitating for the
...repeal of the laws, demanding that
...the Labour Party reverse their com-
...mitment to retaining the laws and
...scrap every piece of Tory anti-union
...legislation.

Trouble is, Jock, as I see it,
all strikes are political!



The laws are an attack on all work-
...ers. The judges who stole the miners
...funds did not think twice about doing
...the same to the printers and the sea-
...farers. They regard all workers as
...their enemy. An attack on one is an
...attack on all. We need a general
...strike to smash the anti-union laws.
...An attack on the whole class de-
...mands a reply from the whole class.
...Directing defiance now towards the
...goal of winning solidarity from other
...workers is the practical way to move
...towards such a general strike.

The prospect of a general strike
...might seem far off to many workers
...today. That is not because there is
...an unwillingness to fight. The 1980s
...and the 1990s have shown time and
...again that workers will sacrifice
...everything to defend themselves in
...struggle.

The problem is we are saddled with
...a leadership who think cowardice is
...a virtue, retreat a way of life and
...treachery a noble art.

The task is to defeat that leadership.
...This can be done by organising the
...militants thrown together in struggle
...into a force to challenge the reformist
...bureaucrats in the unions and the
...Labour Party. It can be done by
...building a rank and file movement.

Such a movement will not fall from
...the sky. Nor will the politics it needs
...to win. To successfully organise the
...rank and file into a force that can
...win the battle with the bosses and
...the bureaucrats, we need, above all,
...a party with a programme to win—a
...revolutionary communist party.■

APRIL 1974

The Portuguese Revolution

IN APRIL 1974 rebel army units, under the leadership of the Armed Forces Movement (MFA), overthrew the 44 year old Portuguese fascist dictatorship. The fascist regime of Caetano had few friends left, and as the rebel tanks moved through the streets they met little resistance. The workers of Lisbon welcomed the soldiers as liberators, placing carnations in the muzzles of their rifles.

Portuguese capitalism was facing a fundamental crisis. At home, its economy was chronically uncompetitive and in decline. The fascists had resisted industrialisation, rightly fearing the creation of a concentrated and powerful proletariat. Foreign investment had been flooding into the country since the early 1960s, attracted by the low wages and repression of trade union organisation. But domestic capital was weak and dominated by the banks. Exclusion from the EEC compounded this and threatened future foreign investment.

Discontent

In these circumstances, Portugal's colonial empire was a costly anachronism. Half of Portugal's GNP was eaten up fighting wars against national liberation movements in Africa and South East Asia. Discontent was rife throughout the army's ranks. Demands for a negotiated neo-colonial "solution" in Portugal's favour led to the formation of the MFA. It was backed by Portugal's major capitalists.

When 100,000 workers took to the streets of Lisbon to celebrate May Day a week after the rebel coup, it was clear that discontent was not limited to the army commanders. In the first month 200,000 workers took strike action in 158 different workplaces.

The workers demanded better wages and a *saneamento* (purging) of fascist spies and bosses. In the absence of real trade unions, strikes and occupations were organised by factory, land and shanty town commissions. Many workers found themselves in control of their factories or farms after the bosses had fled. Others found they could veto every management decision. Over the next 18 months, this form of "dual power" in the workplace spread.

The government first tried to restore order by granting a 30% pay increase, and by sacking 1,000 of the most visible fascists from industry. When this failed to stem the wave of strikes, the ruling junta brought the Communist Party (PCP) and Socialist Party (PSP) into the government. At the same time they tried to impose an anti-union law forbidding solidarity and political strikes. They simultaneously attempted to curb the freedom of the press, outlawing the reporting of workers' struggles.

Intact

The PCP was the main party of the industrial and rural working class. The PCP had organised the major acts of resistance during fascist rule, and had kept its clandestine party structures intact. The PCP consequently recruited massively in the workplaces during the first few months.

But despite its history of resist-

ance to the fascists, the PCP was a Stalinist party, and did not represent the interests of the working class against capitalism. The PCP leaders wanted to use their mass base and influence amongst the workers and soldiers to bargain for positions inside the capitalist state machine. This led the PCP to denounce strikes and support their suppression by the state.

As a result many militants turned to the recently formed PSP which was cynically supporting strikes in order to undercut the PCP. Other workers developed anti-party sentiments alongside illusions in the left wing of the MFA. The opportunities for a revolutionary party to be built in this period were immense.

The anti-union laws were introduced on 29th August 1974. Within days they were a dead letter. 5,000 helmeted workers from Lisnave shipyards, a PCP stronghold, downed tools and confronted the Continental Operations Command (COPCON), a section of the army which had been made responsible for internal order after the forced destruction of the fascist PIDE. The soldiers refused to fire on the workers. Discipline in the armed forces was beginning to crack as this report from one of the rank and file soldiers testifies:

"The commander soon saw that we were not going to follow orders, so he shut up... The following day in the barracks, things were more lively. Before morning assembly many comrades [soldiers] were up and shouting the slogans of the demo: 'The soldiers are the sons of the workers', 'Down with capitalist exploitation'."

Pressure

The Portuguese ruling class found itself in a deep crisis. They had not counted on the militant and creative resistance of the working class. Twice in the following months, on 28 September and 11 March 1975, the right wing of the MFA attempted coups in a

"The following day in the barracks, things were more lively. Before morning assembly many soldiers were up and shouting the slogans of the demo: 'The soldiers are the sons of the workers', 'Down with capitalist exploitation'."

desperate bid to restore order. Both times the workers mobilised to pressure the army rank and file to disobey their orders. The 11 March coup was defeated in the most devastating manner. Workers across Portugal, fearing a coup similar to the one by Pinochet in Chile, brought the country to a standstill blocking all the major roads, railways and airports. They set up checkpoints to track down the fascist organisers of the "March of the Silent Majority", which had been intended to be the trigger for a counter-revolution.

From March 1975 onwards, an even more militant phase of the Portuguese revolution opened up. Elections to a Constituent Assembly on the anniversary of the MFA coup returned 58% of the vote for the parties of the working class, with the PSP gaining 38% support. The MFA's call for a blank ballot paper received an overwhelming rebuff as 93% of the

For eighteen months in 1974 and 1975, the Portuguese working class shook the world. Their heroic struggle saw six successive governments try to restore order, vast swathes of industry and agriculture pass effectively into the hands of workers' commissions, and military discipline in the armed forces disintegrate. The Portuguese Socialist Party eventually managed to demobilise the working class and saved the bosses necks.

Jeremy Dewar looks at the lessons of the Portuguese revolution, twenty years on.

population exercised their democratic right.

70% of industry was nationalised overnight as a result of militant strike action by the bankworkers. Many TV and radio stations and newspapers came under workers' control in retaliation against the anti-working class line of the proprietors. Strikes, occupations, land and housing seizures mushroomed, as did the workers' commissions which organised and increasingly co-ordinated the action. In the army, a rank and file organisation, "Soldiers United Will Win" (SUW), organised demonstrations of up to 100,000 in support of demands for better pay and an end to officers' privileges and petty rules.

Throughout 1975 successive provisional governments collapsed as they failed to find a "solution" to the

crisis. The tactics of the major parties shifted dramatically as a result.

The MFA's dream of a controlled democratisation and neo-colonial foreign policy was in tatters. Spinola fled the country. The MFA itself effectively split, its right wing adopting a Nasserite strategy copied from the liberation movements in Africa, based on a state capitalist project of stabilisation. The left wing, led by COPCON commander Otelo de Carvalho, attempted to build a base amongst the anti-party militants in the commissions and toyed with the idea of a Castroite solution—a "left" military dictatorship.

The PCP decided that since it could not dampen down the workers' struggles, it should use them to bargain for more influence in the government, army and state bureaucracy. The Stalinists supported and led many of the strikes and occupations, but carefully kept control of the unions and



Popular Front demo 1975

stamped on all attempts to link up the commissions. In August the PCP attempted to tie the revolutionary left to a Popular United Front which declared its support for the anti-working class 5th Provisional Government.

Mario Soares' PSP was being squeezed by these tactics. Its preferred solution—a coalition civilian government with the openly bourgeois PPD—was blocked by the intense unpopularity of the latter. In the summer, the PSP launched a vicious anti-Communist campaign, collaborating with the fascists and their peasant base in the north. Over 60 PCP and trade union offices were attacked during this campaign to "save democracy".

Portugal was clearly heading for a confrontation. It came on 24th November 1975. The right wing in the army, in collaboration with the PSP, had slowly been regaining control of the armed forces. Sensing that De Carvalho was becoming isolated they ordered his removal from the command of the COPCON. The following day, the left wing paratroop regiment was detained in its barracks. Militants, led by building workers, surrounded the barracks, pleading for guns. But even the Lisnave workers only had 60 weapons between them. Eventually, the "left" Carvalho appeared with the prime minister to appeal for "calm". The workers were confused and paid the price for their illusions in left militarism. Soares declared that "democracy" had been saved:

Emerged

"In one blow November 25th wiped out the suicidal inclinations of the far left and cut the ground from under the far right. Democracy emerged from the test victorious and strengthened."

In reality the counter-revolution had triumphed. Was this outcome avoidable? Was socialist revolution seriously on the order of the day in Western Europe in the 1970s?

The answer to both questions has to be yes.

The ruling class were divided and

unable to continue to rule in the old way. The workers, in the cities and the countryside, were unwilling to carry on suffering in the old way. Effective "dual power" existed in many workplaces and to a certain extent in the state forces themselves. Far left groups, both Maoist and Trotskyist, grew dramatically throughout 1975. But none of them were able to guide the struggle for workers' control towards the seizure of state power.

Correct

In particular, this would have involved the correct use of transitional demands and the united front tactic. The limits of workers' control in the workplaces was summed up by one shipyard activist:

"Even at Setenave we don't have workers' control. How can we if we don't control the banks? Our attitude is we want to know everything... We want to control decisions but we do not take responsibility. We don't believe we can have workers' control alone."

Demands for a state control of industry and the banks, under the control of the workers' commissions, should have been placed on the PCP and PSP. Despite their reactionary nature, these two reformist parties still held the allegiance of the vast majority of the working class. They should have been called on and pressured to form an anti-capitalist workers' and peasants' government based on, and accountable to, organisations of armed workers, soldiers and peasants. Such demands would have received enormous support from the mass working class base of these parties, and a revolutionary party could have grown rapidly as the reformist leaders failed to meet their promises.

Our task, and the only way to pay real homage to the revolutionary workers of 1974-75, is to ensure that a revolutionary communist international is built, so that when European bosses next cower in fear of the working class we can take that struggle to its conclusion—working class power! ■

YOUTH REVOLT SHAKES FRANCE

General strike now!

ASPECTRE is haunting the French ruling class. The spectre of May 1968. Having lived through a student-worker rebellion 26 years ago, right wing Prime Minister Edouard Balladur wants to avoid at all costs another eruption of youth and class hatred. But everything he does is bringing that explosion closer.

Last autumn the Air France strike and the student protests against housing benefit cuts showed that Balladur's honeymoon period was over. On 16 January one million people protested in Paris against attempts to increase state funding for private schools. Opinion polls show that the vast majority of French workers want to see a national fightback against the government's policies and would be prepared to participate.

Blind to this rising combativity, and failing to heed the warnings from journalists and politicians alike, the government went ahead with its latest provocation. At the beginning of March it launched an attack on youth wages and the value of educational qualifications. As an integral part of its "Five Year Plan for Jobs", the Balladur government wanted to provide the bosses with a well-qualified and flexible workforce which would also be paid below the legal minimum.

Attack

Their proposal—similar to one made two years ago by the late Socialist Prime Minister Bérégovoy—was to allow companies to take on unemployed youth at wage levels ranging from 30 to 80% of the legally guaranteed minimum wage (the "SMIC").

For the youth this SMIC-jeunes was an outright attack on their prospects of getting a decent job. It was an insult to those youth who had followed the government's suggestion and taken up the two year university vocational courses in management, tourism, technical studies. Instead of receiving around £700 a month, the government was proposing to give them less than half that amount! For 16 year old school-leavers without qualifications, the situation is even worse: they would receive less than £1 an hour!

Successive governments have encouraged youth to stay on and get qualifications in order to get better jobs. But youth unemployment is the highest in Europe at 25%. There are no jobs to be had, and those that do exist will be on poverty wages.

For the rest of the workforce the government's imposition of reduced wage levels for youth was a clear threat to adult employment levels. Why should a boss employ an older worker when they could get a young person to work for less? As badges and banners all over the country proclaimed: "Dad, I've found a job... Yours!"

No sooner was the new decree announced than unions and students organised a fightback. Demonstrations began all over the country, including mobilisations of school students and those on vocational courses who had rarely shown much militancy in the past.

Police

In the second week of March, in Paris, Lyon and Nantes, tens of thousands of youth took to the streets to be met with a vicious response by the CRS riot police. The government's excuse was that the demonstrations were being infiltrated by casseurs—rioters who smashed windows and looted shops.

The police attacks led to dozens of arrests, which were swiftly followed by "exemplary" sentences. This heavy-handed reaction merely poured oil on

BY EMILE GALLET
Pouvoir Ouvrier

the fire and led to the youth raising further demands, including the freeing of the prisoners and dropping of the charges.

Meanwhile, the main trade union federation, the Communist Party-influenced CGT, went ahead with long-planned demonstrations against unemployment in seven major cities on Saturday 12 March. Even the media had to admit that the movement was a massive success: over 250,000 demonstrators nationwide.

The government began to worry whether it had made a mistake. It had.

The next week saw demonstrations of youth all over the country, culminating on 17 March in a series of joint union-youth demonstrations. These marches were symbolically very important: for the first time in over thirty years all the union federations participated in the same demonstration!

However, although there was a real opportunity to unite students and workers in a massive movement of strike action against the "Plan for Jobs" and for the imposition of the 35 hour week, the union leaders have steadfastly refused to go beyond their afternoon stroll through the streets of Paris.

Unrest

The government decided to make a stand on this issue, having backed down in every other confrontation, from Air France to the fishermen. Balladur has repeatedly stated he will not withdraw the law. If he were to back down it would represent a fatal weakening of his chances in next year's presidential elections.

Instead, the government has made a series of amendments to the law, notably increasing the pay levels for graduates to 80% of appropriate wage levels agreed with the unions. But the movement has continued unabated. Youth and workers are still opposed to the SMIC-jeunes for the simple reason that there is no reason why young workers should be paid 80% of anything rather than 100%, as is their due.

On Friday 26 March, over 200,000 French youth demonstrated in more than forty towns. The depth of the unrest is great, and the increasing hatred of Balladur and his state can be measured by the violence of the confrontations with the police which have taken place at the end of the demonstrations.

Far from being intimidated, youth have only been further outraged by the brutality of the police attacks and by the blatant bias shown by the legal system. In Lyon, two Algerian students were immediately expelled from the country—completely illegally—following their arrest. This was despite the fact that they had not been proved to be guilty of anything, except of being Arabs who dared to protest on the streets.

And while youth have received vicious sentences—up to six months inside for throwing stones!—a CRS cop got only six months for killing an

Arab youth "by accident", and fascist militiaman Paul Touvier has only just come to trial for killing seven Jews fifty years after the event!

As in May '68, youth feel alienated from society. The proposals to give youth second class jobs on poverty wages come at the same time as a series of attacks on free speech.

The most notable case was an attempt to censor a popular evening radio phone-in programme where youth discuss their personal and sexual problems using their own lan-

guage rather than the clinical terms approved by the government censors.

Protests from youth and the unions led to the threat being withdrawn. But this goes alongside a number of other examples—the disciplining of a teacher for reading Rimbaud's erotic poem "To an arsehole" to his A-level class, the seizure of an issue of "Charlie-Hebdo" (a vulgar satirical magazine read by youth), and the banning of a book with an erotic painting of a woman by nineteenth century French painter Courbet on the cover.



Special issue of Pouvoir Ouvrier, March 1994

Hands off North Korea!

BY MICHAEL GATTER

THE US Administration has increased its military threats against North Korea. Patriot missiles are being deployed in South Korea and joint South Korean/US military manoeuvres are planned. The USA is arguing for an economic boycott through the United Nations (UN).

South Korea is backing the US threats. Defence Minister, Rhee Byoung Tae, declared that if the North attacked, "We would make it an opportunity to realise unification".

Weapons

The official justification for the threats is North Korea's refusal to allow international monitoring of its nuclear capabilities. Yet, not far away China, Pakistan and India openly admit to possessing nuclear weapons and they have not faced obstacles to imperialist trade, political alliances or arms deals.

The truth is that the pressure on North Korea is not about nuclear

arms. It is because North Korea is seen as a threat to the political and economic interests of imperialism in the Pacific Rim. Clinton sees this area as a priority "emerging market" with more than two billion potential consumers. The USA wants political and military stability in the region under its influence. All regimes which do not fit in must be eliminated.

In the past China, with close political and economic ties to North Korea, obstructed the plans of the UN to intervene. As part of its developing links with the imperialists, China is now prepared to tolerate an economic blockade. Japan also wants stability, though it is more cautious about the increased US military presence.

North Korea is a degenerate workers' state. It is not a "socialist" regime, but a brutal Stalinist dictatorship which oppresses workers and peasants. Like China, North Korea under Kim Il Sung is opting for "Spe-

The chance is there to launch a decisive fightback against the government's plans, notably its attacks on jobs and wages. The youth are already on the streets. The working class needs to be drawn more centrally into the fight. Another national mobilisation against the SMIC-jeunes has been fixed for 31 March. Everything needs to be done to use that mobilisation as a springboard to launch an all-out general strike against the plan for jobs and to impose the 35 hour week with no loss of pay.

The French section of the LRCI has been fighting to make this perspective a reality. We have given out thousands of leaflets and sold hundreds of copies of a special issue of *Pouvoir Ouvrier* focusing on the call for a general strike and for defence against police attacks. In Nantes, where the mobilisation has probably been at its strongest, our comrades have been in the leadership of the student movement which has called for a general strike and is sending out delegations to the workplaces to argue for immediate strike action.

Strike

Meanwhile the rest of the left is either calling for a 24-hour general strike (LCR and the French section of Militant Labour) or is merely threatening "there'll be trouble" (*Lutte Ouvrière*!).

The fight for an all-out general strike will be vital to the future of this movement. The situation is extremely volatile. With political leadership, and with the awakening of the labour movement, French workers and youth could lead a fundamental challenge to the Balladur government. That is why the spectre of May 1968 haunts the French bosses!

But if the workers do not move, the youth mobilisations without revolutionary leadership, could descend into a spiral of unplanned violence, uncoordinated confrontation and ultimately a dissipation of the militancy and a failure to win the demands.

As in May '68, the spark has come from the youth—disenfranchised, disillusioned, with nothing to lose. The workers' movement, after years of retreat, had already begun to show a rising morale following the struggle of the Air France workers. If the two forces meet, there will indeed be the "social explosion" the ruling class fears and everyone else desires. ■

cial Economic Zones" to try and revitalise the economy. Ultimately this will subordinate the country to the imperialists.

Workers must oppose the imperialist attempts to re-colonise North Korea. This means defending North Korea—not the brutal regime but the gains of the workers' state: the planned economy, the social services and the working class itself. The best way for the North Korean working class to defend itself against the imperialists is to kick out the Stalinists and take power into its own hands through workers' and peasants' councils and militia.

Conflict

An overthrow of the Stalinist regime by imperialist aggression, rather than working class action, would be a set-back. It would worsen the living conditions of the masses, create further obstacles to the class struggle and strengthen imperialism.

We are unconditionally on the side of North Korea in this conflict. Workers in South Korea and the US must sabotage all economic and military efforts to strangle North Korea.

- No to economic sanctions!
- US imperialist troops out of Korea!
- Defend North Korea!

Statement of the
International
Secretariat of the LRCI

A programme

SOUTH AFRICA'S first elections by universal suffrage are the result of direct action by the trade unions and the township youth, which broke the Apartheid regime's will to resist. But the leadership of the ANC has broken its pledge to see through a democratic revolution in South Africa.

The result of these elections will not be a sovereign Constituent Assembly, with sole control over all the armed forces, which can appoint a government from whatever parties it wishes by simple majority, with no restrictions or reservations based on race or nationality, able to decide on ownership of the factories, mines and land.

Only an Assembly which consists of representatives immediately answerable and recallable to mass meetings of their electors could hope to fulfil the democratic and social needs of the masses.

The ANC leaders' deal with De Klerk places parliament under the guns of a South African Defence Force (SADF) scarcely altered by the addition of the ANC's MK military units, under the same racist commanders who gunned down thousands of fighters for freedom. It secures inequality in political representation, and a powerful role in government for the National Party for a long period ahead. It guarantees the multinational corporations their property and the super-exploitation of the working class.

The ANC's concessions block all serious attempts to solve the land question, to put the unemployed to work, to mobilise the resources needed for education, housing, public health—resources that can only be secured by workers' ownership and control of the mines, factories and fields.

A coalition between the ANC and the former Apartheid parties will inaugurate not a democratic revolution but a democratic counter-revolution. Although this rests on the democratic liberties won by the masses since 1984, it blocks the achievement of the real content of this struggle: jobs, land, decent housing and health care for all. For this reason, despite the enormous prestige of the ANC leaders, we say to the workers of South Africa and the youth of the townships: *do not vote for the ANC or the sell out they are trying to impose.*

Real revolutionaries always warned that a revolution which stopped at the "stage" of parliamentary democracy and a market economy (capitalism) would not only obstruct the struggle for socialism but would be an abortion of democracy itself.

The ANC's sell out shows that no "front of democratic forces" can lead the masses to victory, to the uproot-

ing of the social inequality and chronic poverty to which racist capitalism has condemned the great majority of the population. Only a party based on the working class and the township masses, a revolutionary workers' party, can see the struggle through to victory. Such a party should be using these elections to denounce the rotten settlement. The working class, the unions and the mass organisations of the townships must fight to build that party.

Workers should call on their elected representatives to break the agreement with De Klerk and the National Party and declare themselves a Sovereign Constituent Assembly. They should be answerable to and recallable by mass meetings of their electors and pledge themselves to accept only the wage of a skilled worker, handing over the rest to their constituents.

Workers should demand of their unions and the SACP that they refuse any and all support for an ANC-NP government. The unions should break their alliance with the ANC, and form a workers party on a revolutionary programme for a socialist South Africa.

Fight for a workers' government based on the mass organisations of the working class and the townships. Only a workers' government could smash the entire machinery of the Apartheid state and take measures against big capital to enable the urgent needs of the masses to be satisfied.

Arrest all the High Command and the officer corps of the racist SADF and police. Down with a standing army, armed against the masses! Disarm all the white racist forces. The black soldiers and MK fighters should be employed to train the masses in the use of arms and to provide NCOs and officers for a workers' and people's militia. Transform the local Self Defence Units into real workers' and people's militias. Open the arsenals and arm the workers and the township masses! Smash the AWB, all racist paramilitaries and the Inkatha death squads!

Dismiss the racist, unelected judiciary. Release all political prisoners and all the victims of racist injustice!

The election of popular tribunals from the working people! All the racist criminals and their stooges and informers must be brought to justice! Dismiss the state bureaucrats that have administered apartheid!

Meet the immediate needs of the unemployed and the homeless! For a massive programme of public works. Build houses, hospitals, nurseries, schools, libraries, sports centres, meeting halls! For electrification, mains water supply, sewerage, road and public transport provision or extension. For the training of teachers, doctors and other health workers.

End the super-exploitation of black workers. Equal pay at the highest existing rate for the job. Promotion of black workers in proportion to their numbers in the workforce to all the higher scientific, technical and supervisory grades, with special training wherever this is necessary. Employ black men and women in the white-collar jobs and professions up to proportionality within the population. For a national minimum wage at a level set by a congress of COSATU. For a sliding scale of wages fixed to a cost of living index calculated by the unions and women's organisations in the townships.

"Where will the money come from?" cry the bosses and their lackeys. From the rich, from the South African

and multinational corporations! These bloodsuckers must be subjected to a punitive wealth tax, a steeply progressive income tax and the nationalisation without compensation of all the resources and materials needed for the Public Works Programme.

Stop the lay-offs and dismissals. Nationalise, without compensation, all workplaces declaring retrenchment and redundancies. Establish immediate workers' control in every factory, mine and office. Pay the existing unemployed the average industrial wage. Organise the unemployed into a national movement, allied to the unions. For the immediate reinstatement of all unionists blacklisted and victimised.

Down with the National Economic Forum! No deals between COSATU and the big corporations! Not a bloc with the bosses but a remorseless struggle against them! No wage restraint! No austerity programmes dictated by the IMF and the World Bank! Unconditionally renounce the debts accumulated by the racists in defence of Apartheid!

Land to the landless rural population! Expropriation of all large farms! Modern large scale agriculture should come immediately under the control of the agricultural workers. Other land should be distributed to all who wish to farm it either co-operatively or individually. For councils of land workers and small farmers to carry out the Agrarian Revolution.

The remaining structure of the homelands must be swept away. It is the will of the great majority that South Africa should become a unitary state. No bastions of white privilege or stooge rulers in the "homelands" can be left by a thoroughgoing revolution. Yet, after the demolition of the last remnants of the Apartheid regime and its system of privileges, a democratic South Africa—let alone a socialist one—could not deny to any formerly oppressed nationality or linguistic group the right to self-determination. This must include the right to secede if they expressed this wish democratically and there was no ques-



ANC: going better with Shell?

SOUTH AFRICAN LEFT

Voting for the sell-out

BY DAVE STOCKTON

THE ANC IS in the process of transforming itself into the main bourgeois party in South Africa.

No workers' organisations should vote for the ANC in the coming elections. Although the ANC has mass working class support, it is not a workers party of any variety. It is the capitalists' chosen party of the democratic counter-revolution.

In essence the ANC is a bloc between bourgeois nationalists and the workers organisations, with the bourgeoisie in complete control: what Trotsky called "a popular front party". On the eve of the elections the ANC retains this character because of the continued presence in its ranks of the South African Communist Party (SACP) and by virtue of its electoral "Alliance" with the COSATU union federation. These working class forces are utterly subordinated to the bourgeois ANC leadership.

Links

The ANC's links with the workers' organisations, powerful as they are, do not result from the struggle by the working class to create its own party in opposition to the parties of the capitalists. For all its worker support the ANC is not, like the British Labour Party, a "bourgeois workers' party"—capitalist in politics but with an organic base in the workers' movement. The trade unions are not organised within the ANC structures and have no method of influencing its decisions except through the "Alliance".

Since it was legalised the ANC

has set up a party structure drawing in increasing numbers of black and white, middle class, would-be politicians. It has received large grants from bourgeois agencies and support from the big corporations like Anglo and Shell. In short the ANC is becoming a representative for black business and more importantly imperialist capital in conjunction with the big South African and multinational monopolies. It is symbolic that its headquarters are now in a building donated by Shell!

The fact that millions of black workers will nevertheless vote for it, expecting to gain from its victory the final dismantling of the apartheid state, does not alter this harsh truth. The task of revolutionaries is to tell this truth to the working class without evasion or equivocation. The ANC is carrying out a betrayal of the revolutionary struggle to smash racist privilege and inequality.

Any authentic revolutionary socialist organisation would, in the current circumstances, do all it could to present its own list for the elections. This would open up the best opportunities to fight both for an action programme for a proletarian revolution in South Africa and for the building of the revolutionary socialist party necessary to lead this revolution.

Had it been possible to vote separately for the workers' organisations and candidates within the ANC alliance then revolutionaries should

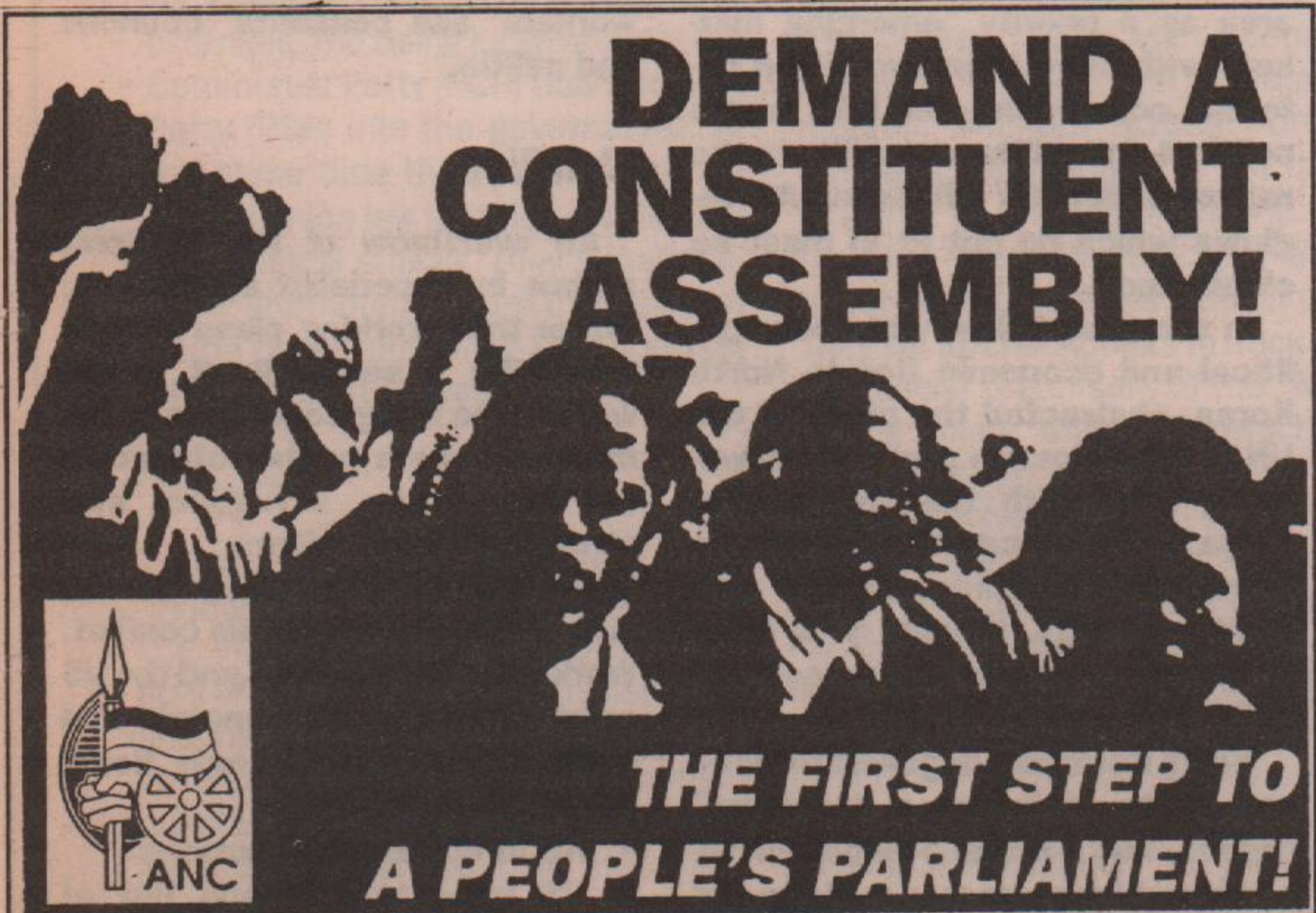
have supported these candidates critically, challenging their commitment to the ANC strategy and demanding that they fight for the interests of the masses.

In the event the SACP went out of its way to make itself indistinguishable from the bourgeois candidates. The joint Alliance electoral list allows no way of voting only for the SACP and COSATU. Only 35% of the ANC's list are trade unionists—mainly top union bureaucrats. The SACP itself has a clear minority of candidates on the list.

Candidates

In these circumstances a key tactic for revolutionaries is the call for a mass workers' party. Revolutionaries should call on the unions at all levels to break from the ANC and convene emergency conferences to nominate independent workers' candidates, to create a united Workers' List for rejection of the ANC sell out. Revolutionaries would fight alongside reformists in the workers' movement for the creation of a mass workers' party, and would conduct a struggle with those forces over the nature of the party and its programme.

The call for a workers' party, launched at the 1993 NUMSA conference, initiated a serious and protracted debate in the workers movement. Militants who see the need for working class independence are now faced with the task of building a new party. The best time for building such a party is in the pre-election period



But the new assembly will not be sovereign

for workers' power

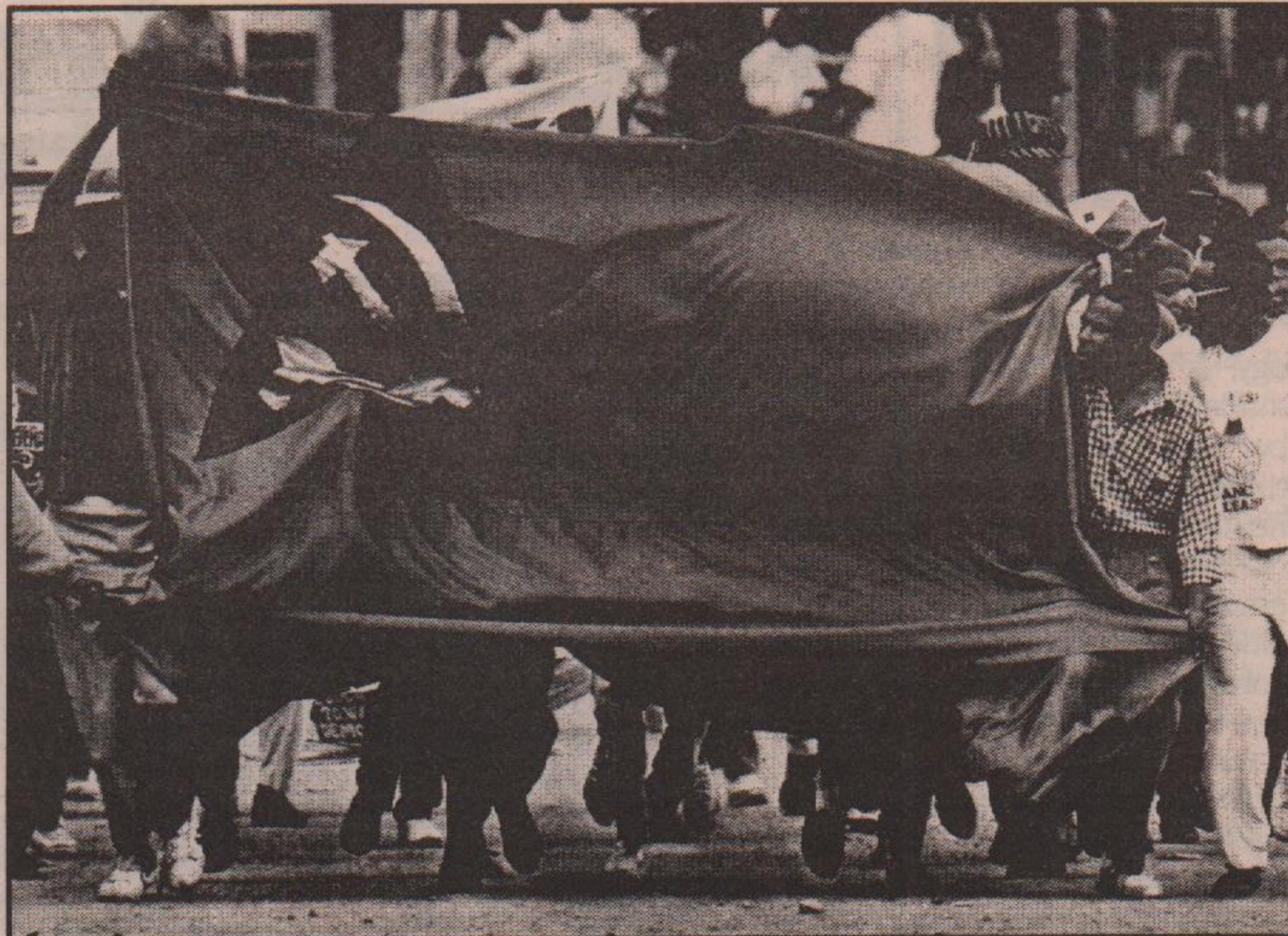
tion of it involving the oppression of others. But workers do not seek to multiply state borders along ethnic or linguistic divisions. Quite the opposite: we are for as large and united a federation of workers states in Africa as possible.

■ Down with the privileges for English and Afrikaans! No state language; equality for all languages to be used in education, state administration and the law! Take newspaper publishing and all broadcasting into the hands of workers' and civic organisations. Freedom of expression for all except the forces of racism and counterrevolution. For an emergency programme to wipe out illiteracy, to make up for the poor quality and under-resourced schooling of Apartheid! Hungry and overworked children cannot study; child allowances and grants for school children and free school meals as a right! For a massive expansion of technical and scientific training at secondary and tertiary levels. More resources for culture, sports and entertainment.

■ End the oppression and super-exploitation of women. For the right to work, equal pay, creches and nurseries in the workplace and the communities. For local clinics where free health and maternity care, contraception and abortion facilities, are available on demand. Against domestic violence and rape, women must be

organised and refuges provided. A mass movement of working class women linking up and developing the existing workplace and community organisations and allied to the unions and other workers organisations needs to be built. The democratic and social rights of other sections of the oppressed, lesbians and gay men, children, must be championed without equivocation by the working class movement.

■ The ANC-National Party Government will not only fail to meet the expectations of the great mass of its supporters but will attempt to solve the problems of the economy at the expense of the working class and township poor. Mass struggle will be necessary from day one. The COSATU officials and the leadership of most of the mass organisations will try to obstruct resistance because of their subordination to the ANC. A militant and democratic renewal of the unions and township organisations is needed to stop the leaders putting the brakes on the struggles of the masses. Shop stewards' committees, township committees must come together as workers' councils. Their delegates must be elected at mass meetings and be



SACP: tied to the bourgeois ANC

instantly recallable. There must be a single mass united trade union federation.

■ Workers' councils can be instruments of mass struggle and organs of workers' power, more democratic than any parliament. Workers' council power alone can provide both strong government, able to crush the resistance of the capitalists and the racists, and democratic government, for and by the working masses themselves.

The rule of the working class—the dictatorship of the proletariat—is the only road to socialism, because it will mobilise the creativity and initiative of millions of workers and township poor to plan economic transformation.

Workers' councils, backed by an armed workers' and popular militia, will enable the masses to do away with a state bureaucracy and a standing army, smash this machinery of repression and privilege, and move towards greater and greater equality

and prosperity, towards the abolition of classes altogether. Such a socialist transformation of South Africa cannot be undertaken by peaceful means. The bourgeoisie, white and black, will try to stop it by any means necessary. Therefore, the proletarian revolution must involve an armed insurrection of the organised working class and township youth.

■ The democratic revolution against racism cannot be fulfilled unless a workers' government goes on immediately to enact socialist measures. Nationalise all large scale industry, mining, business, commerce and banks, putting them under workers' management. Establish a monopoly of foreign trade. For a congress of workers' and township delegates to draft an emergency plan and create a democratic planning apparatus.

■ As the experience of the Soviet Union showed, socialism cannot be finally achieved in a single country. It can only be achieved by the mobilisation of the resources of the whole world. These can only come into the hands of the workers by the international proletarian revolution. A workers' revolution in South Africa will be a mighty summons to action for the working class and poor peasants of Africa and beyond. It could lead rapidly to the creation of a socialist United States first of Southern and then the whole of Africa. □

Congress Militant

Paper of the Marxist Workers' Tendency of the ANC

Centrists backing the ANC

when the need for workers to have their own voice and programme and oppose the sell out is paramount.

However, the opponents of the workers' party in the unions have succeeded in blocking the project until "after the elections". Within the major unions, SACP supporters argued that while the unions need to assert their independence after the election, the key task at the elections was defeating the Nats and bringing an ANC government to power.

Small left wing forces, primarily around the Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA) and the Comrades for a Workers' Government (CWG) have carried out agitation for the workers' party. A WOSA-dominated Workers' List Party has registered for the election.

Vanguard

As a result of both the remaining illusions of the vanguard in the SACP's "stage-ist" approach, and because of extreme civil war conditions in the townships where the left is strong, it now seems that the Workers' List Party will represent no more than the forces contained in WOSA and a few sympathising individuals.

What has been the position of the main would-be Trotskyist groups?

The Marxist Workers' Tendency (MWT) of the ANC, an organisation

politically aligned to Militant Labour in Britain, have lined up with the fake lefts in the SACP. They call for a "massive vote for the ANC". They rest their strategy on the mechanical view that the revolution is still going forward, albeit "through a democratic phase". The failure of the ANC/National Party government to deliver will force a split between the major partners and then a split between the leadership and the Left, they believe. Thus the masses must "fight for the soul of the ANC".

For the MWT the conclusion is that calls for a workers party are "premature". Meanwhile the workers must "go through the experience of an ANC government".

But it will not be an ANC government. It will be a coalition with the Nats and others.

The workers do not need the experience of voting for a popular front or an embryonic bourgeois party. An ANC vote is only a vote for class collaboration, for the democratic counter-revolution.

Of course the masses do not realise this now. They have illusions in Mandela and the ANC. We do not share those illusions and we cannot share any responsibility for bringing such a bosses government to power. Revolutionaries have to adopt a basic position in favour of class independence.

The position of International Socialists of South Africa (ISSA) is

equally craven. The ISSA is the sister organisation of the British SWP, but you will look in vain for an explanation of the SWP's position on the coming election in *Socialist Worker*. However ISSA member Terry Bell, writing in the current issue of the South African magazine *Work in Progress* spells it out.

Bell is able to make valid criticisms of the form in which the call for a workers party is raised by WOSA: a party on the model of the reformist Brazilian Workers' Party (PT). Bell points out that this has a reformist logic. Then, by sleight of hand, he declares that any call for the building of a mass workers party must inevitably lead in such a direction.

At a stroke the whole revolutionary tradition, from Engels to Trotsky, which has been prepared to collaborate with reformist workers in the task of building an independent working class party in order to fight to determine the politics of that party, is thrown away.

Alternative

The alternative? That workers will have to wait for the slow painstaking building of the SWP in South Africa. Sectarian in its tactics towards the mass movement, the ISSA nevertheless manages to commit the same gross opportunist error of the MWT. Bell writes:

"Since socialists stand for the self-emancipation of the working class the Left should argue that we vote—without illusions in party or parliament—with the class on April 27."

So there we have it. The workers should not fight for or vote for a workers' party because it could turn out to be reformist... but they can and should vote for the capitalist counter-revolutionaries of the ANC!

Ultimately Bell's article is an admission of defeat. Until revolutionaries can influence events they must devote themselves to the long slow

struggle for a revolutionary cadre organisation and leave politics to the liberal bourgeoisie. Meanwhile the "revolutionary" organisation puts forward no proposals or programme for mass revolutionary action to solve the crisis.

The CWG (sister organisation of the British WIL), publishers of *Qina Msebenzi*, were the initiators of discussions to form the list for a workers' party.

Support

They emphasised, correctly, the need to orient towards the trade unions—especially the rank and file—to win support for an electoral initiative on this basis. They played an important role at the 1993 NUMSA conference.

Tragically they have now decided to abandon this principled stand and give critical support to the ANC. Their stated reasons (stated verbally since neither the WIL or the CWG have yet published a word on their position in this country) are that the workers' party has proved impossible, because of need for self-defence against Inkatha in the working class areas.

They complain that WOSA acted in a sectarian fashion and hijacked the mass Workers' List Party for themselves, that WOSA has no serious working class support for its campaign, that its programme is centrist, a melange of revolutionary and reformist ideas. The latter point is clearly evident from the text of the Workers' List Party programme (published in *Socialist Organiser* 17 March 1994), which does not deal with the question of how the working class could take power in South Africa.

But none of these arguments are valid ones for violating elementary Marxist principles and voting for the bourgeois ANC.

This terrible position destroys at one blow the claim of the CWG, and

their co-thinkers in the WIL and the international Leninist Trotskyist Tendency to be "orthodox" Trotskyist organisations. At the first major strategic test the LTT has followed the most opportunist centrists in voting for the South African bosses' chosen party.

There are now two centrist candidates, one of the tiny WRP and the other a "Workers' List Party" which includes WOSA.

That they are standing against the ANC is of course principled, but their programmes are centrist. The WRP does not have any serious working class base and is only standing in one or two regions.

In the absence of any sections of the working class with illusions in this organisation, there is no reason to give it critical electoral support. There are no illusions to put to the test and expose, no forces behind them that could be rallied to a revolutionary programme.

The "Workers' List Party", with 200 candidates, looks a more serious proposition since it is a national list. To the extent that it has support amongst sections of the most advanced and determined workers it would be legitimate for revolutionaries to critically support this list.

Weak

However, there remains the possibility that WOSA will effectively stand on its own. Given its weak roots in the working class, its primary orientation towards student and community organisations, and its centrist programme, there is no more reason to support WOSA than there is to support the WRP.

In the absence of a real workers' list, the only means available to class conscious South African workers to register their protest would be by spoiling their ballot papers, writing in slogans against the sell-out, for a constituent assembly and for working class power. ■

MIND AND MATTER

Marxism, psychology and the Bulger case

THE MURDER of Jamie Bulger shocked millions of people. Everywhere, people asked the same question: why?

The answer to this question is not simple and, as the debate in *Workers Power's* letters page shows, people with similar political points of view can advance radically different answers.

In our original article on the subject (WP173, December 1993) we argued that the event was "an aberration, a qualitatively different viciousness that defies pat explanations" and that the answer as to why the two boys killed James Bulger "lies deep in the psyche of the killers themselves".

In the following months we were accused of "a complete abandonment of Marxism", of advancing "a view more akin to lapsed Catholicism than Marxism" in an article which was "at odds with Marxism, historical materialism and indeed materialism itself".

The discussion raises important questions about the relationship between Marxism, psychology and science in general.

Marxists are materialists. We think that all phenomena, including the movements of social classes and the behaviour of individuals, can be explained by material factors which obey certain objective laws.

These "laws" are not simply invented by scientists. They correspond to the way in which matter moves and interacts. It is the job of scientists—and Marxism itself is an attempt to think scientifically about society—to formulate these laws as accurately as possible.

Social

Marxism is the science of social development. Psychology is the science of individual behaviour. Yet human beings are "social animals"—their individual behaviour can only take place in a social context.

Two different and opposing conceptions of human behaviour have generally been advanced through the ages. On the one hand there is the idea that we behave the way we do because of "original sin", "nature" or "genetic determinism". On the other hand there are explanations focusing on "upbringing", "nurture" or "environmental factors".

The Marxist starting point in trying to overcome this bald contradiction is that the human mind or psyche is composed of matter. It consists of electrical signals in the brain. The nerves which carry these messages are assembled in a particular way, a complex interaction of genetic "programming" and the effects of experience. But the chemical and neurological laws governing the way in which we are "wired" cannot, in general, explain the way in which individuals behave.

Of course, some behaviour can be explained and predicted by particular physico-chemical or biological laws. You drink alcohol—you behave stupidly—you fall down.

But in general we need richer explanations of human behaviour, explanations which deal with human beings not just as a walking collection of nerves and chemicals but as social beings, interacting with each other and the world, developing according to certain contradictory laws.

If we want to understand the society which produced James Bulger's murderers, with its child abuse and poverty, its two-faced attitude to children's rights and responsibilities, its lurid video nasties and its moralising bigots, only Marxism will suffice.

If we want to understand the particular effect of that society on the children—how the institution of the "bourgeois family" was mediated through the actual families of James Bulger's murderers—we cannot rely on Marxism's understanding of society's laws alone.

We have to grasp the reality of

individual behaviour through a dialectical materialist psychology.

In the development of psychology, a massive step forward was made in the late nineteenth century by Freud. Freud allowed us to glimpse the possibility that human beings do not only behave according to simple material rules governed by their emotional states or their social conditions. They might also behave according to more complex and unseen rules, perhaps relating to the nature of the family and the way in which the growing child relates to its parents, the imposition of discipline and so on.

These factors, Freud claimed, take the form of unconscious forces or structures. They cannot be directly observed but can be deduced on the basis of close observation of the behaviour of the individual.

Another attempt at a materialist explanation of human behaviour was made by the Russian psychologist Pavlov, in the early years of this century. Pavlov's famous research, on the changing behaviour of dogs under different external stimuli, formed the basis for an explanation of the behaviour of in human beings.

Controversy still rages over the merits of the psychoanalytic and behavioural approaches laid down by Freud and Pavlov respectively.

Here is what Trotsky, one of the few great Marxists to write about psychology, had to say on the subject:

"Pavlov's reflexology proceeds entirely along the paths of dialectical materialism. It conclusively breaks down the wall between physiology and psychology. The simplest reflex is physiological, but a system of reflexes gives us 'consciousness'. The accumulation of physiological quantity gives a new 'psychological' quality . . ."

Freud

"The school of the Viennese psychoanalyst Freud proceeds in a different way. It assumes in advance that the driving force of the most complex and delicate of psychic processes is a physiological need. In this general sense it is materialistic if you leave aside the question whether it does not assign too big a place to the sexual factor at the expense of others . . . But the psychoanalyst does not approach problems of consciousness experimentally, going from the lowest phenomena to the highest, from the simple reflex to the complex reflex; instead he attempts to take all these intermediate stages in one jump . . . from the religious myth, the lyrical poem or dream, straight to the physiological basis of the psyche". (Trotsky, *Culture and Socialism* 1926)

Trotsky's purpose here was to show that:

- different scientific methods can grasp elements of the same reality
- they do not have to be subjectively Marxist. The best objective science will spontaneously approximate to the dialectical materialist method
- Marxism doesn't reject Freudianism just because of its "conjectural" and primarily individually-oriented method of analysis
- whilst there can be a Marxist, materialist judgement made about



Since publishing Arthur Merton's article on the outcome of the James Bulger murder trial *Workers Power's* letters page has been deluged with responses. We have been able to print only a few of these. Here Jack Tully responds on behalf of the *Workers Power* Editorial Board

psychology's methods and conclusions, there can be no "party line" on them. Some Communist Party members had argued in favour of banning Freudianism from the USSR's scientific establishment.

Trotsky returned to this theme in his notebooks in the 1930s, emphasising again that:

"By itself the method of psychoanalysis, taking as its point of departure 'the autonomy' of psychological phenomena [from the physiological], in no way contradicts materialism. Quite the contrary, it is precisely dialectical materialism that prompts us to the idea that the psyche could not even be formed unless it played an autonomous, that is, within certain limits, an independent role in the life of the individual and the species" (*Notebooks* 1933-35)

At the same time Trotsky was prepared to criticise vigorously every attempt by psychology to provide its own "pat explanations" of social phenomena. Much of sham Freudianism, he wrote, "has nothing to do with science and merely expresses decadent moods". And he devoted a whole article to attacking Pavlov's attempt to explain not merely individual behaviour but society's development in terms of physiological reflexes (*Science in the Task of Socialist Construction*, 1923)

What does all this mean for our attempts to understand the Bulger case, and for the arguments raised in letters to *Workers Power*?

The gutter press screamed that the two boys were "evil bastards" and thus repeated the argument of medicine-men, exorcists, religious bigots and reactionaries down the ages.

Other press pundits claimed the boys' behaviour was the direct result of one "material influence"—watching

the horror video *Child's Play III*. The Tory right lined up behind this argument, and the original *Workers Power* article was focused against their pro-censorship conclusions.

We can accept Colin Lloyd's argument (WP175) that the article over-emphasised this point, failing to take on the "evil bastards" argument, and sweepingly applied the notion of a simple "aberration" to other shocking crimes.

On the other hand, two readers argued that distinctly social reasons can explain why James Bulger was killed.

Gerry Downing claims that "the cause was the disturbed and decaying social relations in the capitalist society as a whole". Quentin Rudland writes that "at least one of the two murderers had probably been severely abused by an adult" (This was mistakenly transcribed in *Workers Power* 174 as "secretly abused").

These are attempts to provide a materialist explanation. Unfortunately, merely because a theory attempts to root itself in material factors does not mean it is right.

In this particular case, these "explanations" do not help us one bit. This is not the first phase of decay in capitalist relations, nor is Liverpool the hardest-hit place on the face of the planet, and yet the Bulger case was so striking because it was so unusual. Similarly, many children are abused. Virtually none of them kill other children.

Despite their best intentions, Downing and Rudland only proved that their "explanations" are not sufficient. It is obviously the case that neither child abuse nor capitalist decay are adequate explanations because they cannot explain the particularity of this case.

Both contributors make reference to Freud in support of their arguments. As Rudland suggests, the early Freud discovered the material evidence of widespread sexual abuse of children and linked it to adult psychological disorders. But under the pressure of public opinion Freud changed his explanation, emphasising childhood fantasies, as opposed to the actual experience of abuse, as the roots of psychosis.

A materialist critique of Freud must take account of this massive, ideologically motivated retreat from scientific truth. But it does not invalidate the consideration of aberrant behaviour from the point of view of the individual human psyche. As Trotsky pointed out it is precisely dialectical materialism which allows us to consider the psyche playing:

"an autonomous, that is, within certain limits, an independent role in the life of the individual and the species".

So why did these two boys kill James Bulger?

If we are true to Trotsky's method we have to admit we do not know the full answer. That does not mean that the answer is unfathomable. But Marxists do not pretend to have a monopoly of insight into the motivation of two genuinely abnormal children.

This is not an "abandonment of Marxism" or an example of "lapsed Catholicism". It is a refusal to follow the gutter press and leap upon the first explanation which comes to hand—either innate evil or susceptibility to trashy horror films.

It will require scientific study, probing the psyche of the two boys concerned and all the factors—social and biological—which produced those two boys to fully understand the crime.

Some of that study has already begun, with journalists Gitta Sereny and David Smith producing separate accounts of the children and their families. In both accounts we find unmistakable signs of neglect and suggestions of sexual abuse in the case of one of the perpetrators, but also suggestions that the behavioural problems of another arose from his chronic hyperactivity.

Being

All of this should warn Marxists against any attempts at "pat explanations". Marxists—including some of the writers to the letters page—quote Marx, who argued that "being determines consciousness". This is undoubtedly true, but needs to be understood in its fullest, most dialectical fashion.

"Being"—our existence, our nature—does not only refer to our immediate or past social experience. Humans are social animals; that is, we have a material, social nature. Our physical nature is refracted through the experience of society.

There is no barrier between Marxism and psychology. Indeed self-consciously dialectical thought is the best guarantee of accurate results in psychology and any other science. But Marxists, even if armed with the general truth that "being determines consciousness", have no monopoly on scientific truth. They have no right simply to counterpose their own armchair psychology to that of the bosses' media pundits. ■

Cardiff AFA

Workers Power,

I am writing to you as regards the article concerning Red Action and the recent events within Cardiff Anti-Fascist Action. In our opinion the article is misleading in the extreme and even contains statements which are simply not true.

Who exactly are this wide layer of "trade unionists, socialist activists and youth"? If they exist outside your article we cannot help but find it strange your members did not see fit to bring them along to an AFA meeting, or even tell AFA members of their existence.

It is untrue that RA members attempted to expel WP due to your refusal to sell *Fighting Talk* (FT), indeed it was not even RA who brought the original motion. Also, the section of the motion dealing with FT was not the biggest issue within it, the real problem was Workers Power's political dishonesty within AFA, an issue you chose not to deal with in your article surprisingly enough.

Secondly, FT is not the magazine of London AFA, it is the magazine of the whole of AFA, as you well know contributions are welcome from anyone in the organisation.

You say the majority of the meeting voted against your

expulsion. This is a downright filthy lie. At no point in that motion was your expulsion proposed and the vote was drawn five to five as you know full well. The political dishonesty involved here is beyond sad, it is pathetic.

At no time did RA call a secret meeting. The meeting was a caucus to discuss the future of AFA after the previous meeting. It was felt by all those present that the split between WP and the rest of AFA was unmendable and the ways must part. Due to previous behaviour, it was decided that we keep the name of AFA and exclude you from any future AFA meetings.

Lie

We have never claimed that a "national leadership" had sanctioned our actions, again this is a lie. What we did say was that we, as an AFA group had the recognition of AFA national conference, which we gained purely as a precautionary measure to prevent WP hijacking the AFA name should you have attempted to do so.

We demand that you print a

public apology in your next paper as this sort of stupidity will not be tolerated by Red Action, nor should I think should it be by the rest of Cardiff AFA. We don't find this childish backbiting at all amusing and you are strongly advised not to attempt this sort of rubbish again.

Yours,

D for Cardiff Red Action.

(This letter has been shortened for reasons of space.)

We reply

Yes, the vote was 5:5 and therefore lost.

To convene another meeting without WP being invited and then to "expel" us is a bureaucratic witch-hunt. Your appeal to a "national AFA conference" which was kept secret from the Cardiff AFA group is likewise a typical manoeuvre to disguise your sectarian politics.

You cite our "previous behaviour" as a valid reason. What is this behaviour? Building Cardiff AFA from scratch? Holding public meetings of up to 50 youth? Carrying out widespread agitation on the estates and physically confronting the fas-

cists?

If this excludes us from a Red Action front, so be it.

If selling *Fighting Talk* was not the main part of the motion, why did RA vote against our amendment deleting that sentence? Because as you yourself said, you think WP are "filthy scum" and you wanted us "out of AFA".

Finally the wide layer of trade unionists, socialist activists and youth that you have failed to notice: 250 of them, under the banners of the ANL and YRE, were at Pontypridd on 26 March.

We and others from AFA were with them, where we successfully led the agitation to physically confront the BNP thugs. As a result we ran them out of town.

Small

Small though this partial victory was, it represents a big step forward for anti-fascism in South Wales.

Two months earlier in Barry the ANL leaders refused to confront the Nazis.

This time the call for "No Platform" was too loud for them to ignore. If RA and the miniscule "Cardiff AFA" splinter group had bothered to turn up you could have been part of the real action.

Wrong on student demo?

Dear Comrades,

Workers Power makes a number of elementary blunders in your coverage of the current round of student struggles (issue 176).

1. You say "Socialist organiser provided self-appointed stewards" for the 20,000-strong student march held in London on 23 February. Wrong. The National Student Activist Alliance, the body which called the demonstration, provided the stewards—over one hundred of them, from dozens of different colleges.

The NSSA was set up after a 2,000 strong demo, which I was chief steward of, in December 1993.

Rally

2. You say "in the run up to 23 February demo the steering committee set up by the National Activist meeting and made up of students from different groups which helped to build support for the demo." Look, you do not know what you are talking about: the meeting you refer to was an SWP rally at which they would not let me—the march's chief steward—speak. They claimed—absurdly—that it was their march and the route of the march would lead to parliament. The committee that they "set up" was made up of one SWP'er, one SWP sympathiser and "people from activist groups" (unspecified.) It never, to our knowledge, met. The SWP's intervention hindered building broad support for the march. They gave the NUS right wing ammunition to attack the march. The NUS right wing were happy to tell college activists that the demo was in fact a march on parliament which would end in a riot. The message so far is this: do not base your articles on coverage in Socialist

Worker. Reason: they lie a lot.

More important is the issue of the SWP's "March on parliament" stunt, which ended ignominiously on the day after a sustained attempt by the march organisers to stop them wrecking the protest. If they had done what they said, there would have been a gigantic confrontation with the police which would have led to scores of injuries and arrests. The SWP's hyped up students were talking of "200 casualties" being "acceptable".

Well, we do not think this would be acceptable. We think demonstration organisers should act responsibly—i.e. as people who care about the students who are protesting and people who make calculations about how such a fight with the police would affect the chances of building a mass student fightback against the Tories.

We did not think it would be a step forward for the movement to have a mass political campaign against student

Talking rubbish?

Dear Comrades,

With racist attacks and fascist activity of all kinds increasing daily, the need for united, mass action against the BNP and their ilk has never been clearer. Yet the latest issue of *Fighting Talk* (No. 7) the magazine of Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) carried petty sectarianism to ludicrous heights.

Aimlessly

It describes the 16 October Unity demo, the biggest mobilisation aimed at physically confronting the fascists since Lewisham in the seventies as: "50,000 anti-fascists wandered aimlessly around South-East London".

The Unity Demo was not "aim-

poverty diverted into a limited campaign to defend students arrested during fights with the police. We wanted—and got—a mass rally, followed by an activists' meeting to discuss the way forward. We were quite right. The NSSA is now a national rank and file movement within NUS. Your students should join.

Central

This is why the Alliance for Workers' Liberty is central to the student left. Your call: the SWP were right but should have marched with defence guards, is a comment for your own satisfaction, rather than a policy with any grip on the actual situation faced by the student movement.

For socialism,
Mark Sandell (AWL)

We reply:

1. The NSAA may have officially stewarded the demo, but Socialist Organiser was in political control. 50 members

less" at all. It aimed to close down the BNP HQ in Welling. It didn't succeed because the Metropolitan Police didn't consider this an "aimless" activity either. They ran riot in order to prevent it.

The sectarians in AFA may think that a 50,000-strong militant anti-fascist demonstration doesn't amount to much, but it's at least 49,000 more than AFA can mobilise on a very good day! And if their strategy was wrong why weren't AFA there to redirect their minds, if not their feet? That's how a mass movement with the right politics and practice—"No Platform!"—will be built, whether or not AFA choose to participate.

In comradeship
Chris Reilly

formed a line to prevent marchers linking up with a huge contingent which had broken through police lines and occupied Waterloo bridge.

2. The SWP did call the National Activists' Meeting, on the eve of a student school, and it was run undemocratically—what else do you expect from the SWP? But it did mobilise a representative cross-section of students. And the SWP felt obliged to set up some sort of nominally independent steering committee, even if under their control. Unofficial organisation and defiance of the law will always provoke attacks from the NUS right wing. That is no reason for giving in to the bosses' legality.

3. We too think demonstrations should be organised responsibly. That means being honest if you think there's going to be a confrontation with the police and preparing defence squads for that eventuality. On the day, it was not just the SWP but thousands of students who wanted to march on parliament, but were insufficiently organised to achieve it. Remember that the last time students tried to march near parliament there was a massive, unprovoked police attack.

4. Yes, the SWP's claim that a march could bring down the Tories is stupid self-delusion. But then again so is the idea that the AWL is "central to the student left". It is central to the opportunist block that poses as the left at NUS Conference. It is a cozy staging post where aspirant student bureaucrats like Tom Robin, recently expelled by the AWL for selling out Northumberland students, can gain a few left credentials without ever challenging the core ideas of the clique that runs NUS: peaceful protest, legalism, pacifism and Labourism.

WHERE WE STAND

WORKERS POWER

is a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the documents of the first four congresses of the Third (Communist) International and on the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International.

Capitalism is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human need.

Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

The Labour Party is not a socialist party. It is a bourgeois workers' party—bourgeois in its politics and its practice, but based on the working class via the trade unions and supported by the mass of workers at the polls. We are for the building of a revolutionary tendency in the Labour Party, in order to win workers within those organisations away from reformism and to the revolutionary party.

In the trade unions we fight for a rank and file movement to oust the reformist bureaucrats, to democratise the unions and win them to a revolutionary action programme based on a system of transitional demands which serve as a bridge between today's struggles and the socialist revolution. Central to this is the fight for workers' control of production.

We are for the building of fighting organisations of the working class—factory committees, industrial unions, councils of action, and workers' defence organisations.

The first victorious working class revolution, the October 1917 Revolution in Russia, established a workers' state. But Stalin and the bureaucracy destroyed workers' democracy and set about the reactionary and utopian project of building "socialism in one country". In the USSR, and the other degenerate workers' states that were established from above, capitalism was destroyed but the bureaucracy excluded the working class from power, blocking the road to democratic planning and socialism. The corrupt, parasitic bureaucratic caste has led these states to crisis and destruction. We are for the smashing of bureaucratic tyranny through proletarian political revolution and the establishment of workers' democracy. We oppose the restoration of capitalism and recognise that only workers' revolution can defend the post-capitalist property relations. In times of war we unconditionally defend workers' states against imperialism.

Internationally Stalinist Communist Parties have consistently betrayed the working class. Their strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) and their stages theory of revolution have inflicted terrible defeats on the working class world-wide. These parties are reformist and their influence in the workers' movement must be defeated.

We fight against the oppression that capitalist society inflicts on people because of their race, age, sex, or sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of all of the oppressed. We fight racism and fascism. We oppose all immigration controls. We fight for labour movement support for black self-defence against racist and state attacks. We are for no platform for fascists and for driving them out of the unions.

We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland. We politically oppose the nationalists (bourgeois and petit bourgeois) who lead the struggles of the oppressed nations. To their strategy we counterpose the strategy of permanent revolution, that is the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle by the working class with a programme of socialist revolution and internationalism.

In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of "our own" army and the victory of the country oppressed and exploited by imperialism. We are for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. We fight imperialist war not with pacifist pleas but with militant class struggle methods including the forcible disarmament of "our own" bosses.

Workers Power is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary International (the Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51.

The LRCI is pledged to fight the centrism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International and to refound a Leninist Trotskyist International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. We combine the struggle for a re-elaborated transitional programme with active involvement in the struggles of the working class—fighting for revolutionary leadership.

If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!

workers power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

● WORK FOR DOLE PLUS £10

● VAT ON FUEL

How the Tories make you pay!

APRIL FOOLS' day this year is packed with practical jokes. Unfortunately the Tories aimed them all at the unemployed and low-paid workers.

Four million are out of work in Tory Britain. Over a million of these have been unemployed for over a year. Millions more, largely women workers, are trapped in low-paid, part-time jobs. If you listen to Tory ministers, you'd think this was deliberate scrounging.

But anyone who has been near a dole queue can see right through this lie. The jobs simply aren't there. The jobless outnumber job vacancies by seven to one. And no one would choose to live on £44 a week. The truth is that life on the dole is a quick slide into poverty.

From April this year, the Tories are speeding up that slide. Unemployment benefit will now only be payable for the first six months. After that you have to apply for the new "Job Seekers Allowance". But that is withheld if your partner works or if you have more than £2,000 savings.

The Tories have brought in compulsory labour for the unemployed. Claimants can now be forced to do 18 hours a week on a "Community Action Programme". Wages: the dole plus £10!

Major and Lilley want to force down wages by attacking the poor-

est section of society, who will then swallow their dignity and accept pitiful wages to escape poverty and slave labour. Not content with this, they also want the unemployed to pay for their own benefits by working for peanuts.

Those lucky enough to have jobs are also in for a shock when they get their next pay packets and fuel bills. Tax increases will cost the average household £10 a week. The lowest paid and the unemployed will be hit hardest. Indirect taxes are levelled at the same rate, whether you're an NHS care assistant on £9,000 a year or Lord Hanson on £26,000 a week!

On top of this the Tories have the cheek to impose a pay freeze on public sector workers, claiming the cost of living has remained the same. When inflation and tax increases are added up, this amounts to a 10% pay cut. One in four public sector workers already earn less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold. These cuts will only increase that figure.

There is an answer to all these attacks. It is the profit system which causes unemployment and condemns millions to poverty wages. The working class should fight to force the rich capitalists to pay for their own crisis.

Profits are forecast to rise by 16% this year. That money should

be channelled into alleviating the misery suffered by those on the dole. Whilst the Tories call us scroungers, they quietly agreed to "write off" over £3 billion uncollected tax over the last two years. Almost all of this was owed by their rich friends in the City. A punitive tax on wealth should be levied to finance jobs for all or benefits equal to a full wage.

Services should be expanded to meet the needs of the working class. It is criminal that hospitals and schools needed while 100,000 building workers are desperate for work. A programme of public works could create hundreds of thousands of jobs, at trade union rates of pay. This is what we need—not useless slave labour schemes like the Community Action Programmes.

The unions should launch an immediate campaign for a 35 hour week and an end to overtime—with no loss of pay. More overtime is worked in Britain than anywhere else in Europe. A minimum wage of £1,200 a month would end the need for overtime as well as creating millions of new jobs overnight.

When the cuts were first announced last year, Bill Morris of the TGWU called the package "an explosive cocktail which will guarantee a spring uprising".

Spring is here. Let's hold Bill Morris to his word. ■

SOUTH AFRICA What will ANC victory mean?

This month South Africa's black majority will have their first ever chance to vote. The white racist politicians, the same people that brought in and administered the apartheid system, are trying to claim the credit for bringing democracy to South Africa.

But De Klerk and his National Party have conceded the one person one vote system because they were forced to. The mass revolt of black workers and youth in the townships—a revolt that came close to a fully fledged revolution back in 1985—terrified the apartheid leaders. They have granted reform to avoid revolution.

Some racist diehards are holding out. But they are a small minority, with hardly any backing from the bosses of the big corporations that really run South Africa.

When the pro-apartheid Nazis of the AWB tried to invade the "black homeland" of Bophuthatswana last month, they were smashed by South African troops and even by the armed forces of the corrupt Bophuthatswana statelet.

Any white racists who try to resist majority rule or use terror against black people should be put down with the utmost ruthlessness - not by relying on the state, but by the armed action of the black masses themselves.

The forces of the Inkatha Freedom Party of Chief Buthelezi have been continuing their savage campaign of violence against ANC supporters in the townships. But the election results will prove what black workers and youth have been saying all along.

Inkatha is a puppet of the racist right, a force that has been deliberately used for years to try to divide the black working class. Last month two top generals in the South African army were suspended for supplying weapons to Inkatha for its war against the young fighters for democracy in the townships.

Inkatha has not even registered for the elections. Buthelezi now claims that he is preparing to declare his apartheid homeland of KwaZulu an independent state after the elections. But the majority of Zulus will defy Buthelezi. They should give him and his murder gangs no quarter, before

or after the election.

After decades of being denied the most basic democratic rights, millions of black South Africans are mobilising for the elections with tremendous enthusiasm. All estimates suggest that they will return a massive majority for the ANC on April 27, as the largest organisation to have fought against apartheid, and which suffered severe repression of its fighters and activists for years. The ANC has tremendous prestige among the masses.

But the ANC does not deserve the votes of the black working class and youth. It has done a deal with the former rulers of apartheid in De Klerk's National Party, guaranteeing them a place in government for years to come, no matter what the result of elections. The ANC has dropped any policies that threaten the interests of the big corporations and the white money men. The racist civil servants will stay in their posts. Whites will retain massive privileges. Wealth and power will stay concentrated in their hands.

The black masses have won the vote. But the terrible conditions under which they live and work will remain. 21 million black people have no proper toilets in their homes. 7 million live in shacks rather than decent houses. 12 million have no clean water.

The big corporations are responsible for this. They should be made to pay for it by massive taxes on the rich and by putting ownership and control of their resources into the hands of the black workers and township populations. But that is exactly what the ANC has said it will not do. It will rule on behalf of the monopolies, not the working class.

South African workers need a party of their own. That way the compromise with the old apartheid bosses can be broken, the struggle against the racists and Inkatha can be carried through to its conclusion, and the new democratic freedoms can be used to organise a fight for decent living conditions, education, land and real equality. That means overthrowing the power of the big capitalists and fighting for a socialist South Africa.

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TAX THE RICH, NOT THE POOR!