

Workers power

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

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ICM POLL

52% LABOUR

27% TORIES

DESPERATE & DIVIDED



TORIES TARGET THE DEFENCELESS

WHAT DO a homeless people, Kurdish refugees and single mothers have in common? They're all on Major's latest hit-list. Desperate to reverse their slide into electoral oblivion, divided over Europe, the Tories have turned on the most defenceless people in society in a series of new laws to be pushed through parliament.

■ They are planning to tighten the already draconian immigration and asylum laws. At a time when border controls within the EC are being relaxed, Britain will turn its ports and airports into interrogation centres designed to keep out those fleeing from famine and war.

■ They are planning to fine employers who "knowingly" employ illegal immigrants—a move that will inflame racist employment practices and lead to more violent and murderous deportations, such as the one which led to the death of Joy Gardner in 1993.

■ A new Criminal Justice Bill—yes another one!—will drastically reduce the rights of defence lawyers to see the evidence cooked up by police and prosecutors before the trial.

■ A further law will further reduce councils' obligations to house the homeless, leaving greater numbers of young people to live in cardboard cities. They have pledged to deny single parents access to council hous-

ing. The Tories claim these laws are in response to popular demand. If they really listened to popular demand, they would have cleared out of office long ago. The real demand for these new measures comes from police chiefs and racist Tory backbenchers, like ex-Minister Charles Wardle, who are urging Major to "play the race card" as the election draws nearer.

It's the oldest trick in the book. Divide the working class by stirring up hatred against the homeless, black people and the many innocent defendants framed up in Britain's corrupt, criminal justice system.

It's a trick the Tories have tried many times before. They've attacked "job culture". They've threatened single mothers with dole cuts. Time after time they heap the blame for crime, poverty and unemployment on the victims.

But millions of people know who the real criminals are—the desperate gang of rich Tories bent on destroying the health service, education and local democracy.

None of the new Tory laws are due in parliament until November.

We should turn the struggles against the Tories—the anti-cuts revolt, the fight on pay, the fight against the CJA—into one big movement to kick the Tories out long before November comes. ■

KICK THE TORIES OUT!



Fighting the cuts: reports page 4

OUTING

Should we out the hypocrites?

ULSTER UNIONIST MP James Kilfedder died last month of a heart attack. Speculation about the effect of this on Major's ever narrower majority was pushed into the background by accusations that his death was caused by the gay rights group OutRage! Apparently he was one of many MPs who received a letter from OutRage! urging them to come out of the closet over their sexuality.

This and other recent events have focused attention once again on the issue of outing. Three bishops have recently come out about their sexuality following an OutRage! campaign against hypocrisy in the church.

Outing as a political tactic was developed in the United States in the late 1980s. It was taken up as a form of direct action: a number of Hollywood stars were outed in a series of press adverts.

The British experience of outing has been altogether more sedate. In August 1990 a group called Faggots Rooting Out Closet Sexuality (Frocs) announced that they planned to out a number of prominent people. They then held a news conference and announced that it was all a big hoax.

Since then gay rights activists have tried to use outing to pressurise closet gays into voting for progressive legislation around, for example, the age of consent. Most recently it has been used by OutRage! to expose hypocrisy.

It has had some success at least in forcing the church to alter the tone of some of its still homophobic announcements. Now godly people should feel sorry for homosexuals—provided they are not expressing their sexuality by actually having sex.

MPs, bishops and other pillars of the community should be exposed for their hypocrisy over issues of sexuality as in all other areas. But outing is not the way to do this.

There are closet lesbians and gay men in all walks of life. Those who are in prominent positions suffer from much of the same prejudice and oppression as other lesbians and gay men. They often hide their sexuality for fear of losing their jobs, being socially ostracised and legally harassed. Ruling class lesbians and gay men have greater resources to offset their oppression, but they can't escape it completely.

Outing of these people may be appealing as a way of exposing hypocrisy, or to demonstrate that homosexuality is common, but that is not enough to outweigh its negative aspects.

Outing is an attack on individual privacy and fosters the notion that people's sexuality must be public, ignoring the fact that for millions of people, to be open about their homosexuality could lead to massive problems at work and in the family. It is up to individuals to make that decision, not a group of self-selected activists.

The OutRage! campaign is based on a fundamentally wrong premise—it suggests that all homosexuals, whatever their class, will automatically have a progressive position on gay liberation.

This sows dangerous illusions that working class lesbians and gays may find allies amongst Tory MPs, judges and bishops. Experience shows that just because someone is a woman does not mean that they will automatically support the struggle against women's oppression. Every time abortion rights are debated in parliament, a number of women MPs vote for greater restrictions. Simply experiencing oppression is no guarantee that someone will fight against it. For many their support for the system which creates oppression is more important than fighting oppression.

The letter sent by OutRage! to twenty MPs in January is full of pious hope that somehow they are going to see the light and do the right thing:

"Coming out is empowering and fulfilling. It is the ethically right thing to do.

You have a duty to yourself for your peace of mind, as well as a moral obligation to other lesbians and gay men to be open about your sexuality."

What's the point of talking to people who voted for the poll tax, and to cut off benefits to single mothers about ethics! The same people sell arms to some of the most reactionary regimes in the world and refuse to allow Bosnians to defend themselves against genocide. Be serious.

It is here that the bankruptcy of OutRage!'s politics become clear. They have rejected class politics and increasingly follow an individual, rather than collective solution.

Workers Power is opposed to the strategy of outing. This is not because we are concerned that a few more MPs might drop down dead. We won't lose any sleep worrying about how nervous gay cabinet ministers must be feeling at the moment. But OutRage!'s strategy will not stop lesbian and gay oppression. It makes that fight harder. That is why instead of outing we should fight for a united working class-based lesbian and gay movement, aimed at pulling up the roots of oppression in the profit system itself.■



Let's kick racism out of football.

CANTONA

Drop the charges!

"FUCKING CHEATING French cunt. Fuck off back to France, you motherfucker". These were the words which earned Crystal Palace and BNP supporter Matthew Simmons a boot in the chest from Eric Cantona.

For a footballer with the consummate skills of Cantona, it was not the greatest of footwork, since the loathsome racist was left standing. Nevertheless, the at-

tack was considered severe enough for Croydon magistrate Jean Pearch to sentence Cantona to two weeks imprisonment.

Under 4% of offenders are sent to prison for common assault, the charge which Cantona pleaded guilty to.

Those imprisoned have usually been found to have committed a premeditated attack, or have previous convictions. Given

also the extent of the provocation, the sentence on Cantona can only be seen as bizarre.

But it was not only the magistrates who had it in for Cantona. No less than ten plain-clothes police officers took part in the investigation of the incident. The state was clearly prepared to allow any amount of resources to make an example of Cantona. Why?

As magistrate Jean Pearch said, Cantona is "a high-profile public figure... looked up to by many young people". She might have added that he is a foreigner, an avowed anti-racist, and is currently starring (with QPR and England striker Les Ferdinand) in an anti-racist advert sponsored by Nike. His action, in such a context, was an example to young people which terrified the racist establishment.

The judgement on Cantona must also be seen in the context of the England-Ireland debacle and the experience of Chelsea fans travelling to Bruges for the European Cup-winners Cup tie.

In the former, fascists with far more violent records than Cantona were freely allowed to travel to Dublin. In the latter, Belgian police indiscriminately rounded up English fans for no other reason than they were young and working class.

For our rulers, the working-class en masse evokes fear and paranoia. When they are exhibiting racism and patriotism, football crowds are—though occasionally embarrassing to the government—no danger.

However, the thought that the working class, collectively, can act with intelligence in an anti-racist direction, is one which our rulers dread. This was the real reason why they could not allow Cantona to become a figurehead.■

TONY BLAIR AND "NOISY NEIGHBOURS"

Talking out of his "R"s...

TONY BLAIR is steaming ahead on his mission to become indistinguishable from the Tories. While the bosses he wants to win over care mainly about stocks, shares and directors' pay, the average Tory voter is obsessed with the crimes and misdemeanours of the "underclass". Hence Blair's recent outburst against truants, noisy neighbours and irresponsible youth.

Speaking to a conference organised by the *Spectator*—a mouthpiece for male, middle aged, middle class, middle England—Blair promised a series of laws to punish anti-social behaviour.

Truants' parents will be fined. Noisy neighbours will be evicted. Youth will be "encouraged" to join voluntary citizens' service schemes.

Of course these problems will strike a chord with many working class tenants. Many of our lives are made a misery by anti-social behaviour on crowded council estates. Nobody likes seeing young

people waste their lives truanting from school.

But what is the root cause of these problems? Is it personal irresponsibility, to be cured with a good dose of collective discipline? No. It's the decaying social fabric of working class communities—poor housing, overcrowding, inadequate schools and social facilities, and, crucially, the lack of any decent prospects for jobs or security that many youth and workers face.

What is Blair planning to do about building thousands of new council homes? What is he planning to do to give youth real jobs, not voluntary work schemes? What is he going to do about the many excellent centres and schemes for truants that have been axed under the education cuts?

The answer is nothing. He won't make a single commitment to tax the bosses and spend the necessary resources to take the pressure off hard-hit working

class communities.

It is no use lecturing the working class on the need for "duties as well as rights"—no use promising that "responsibility will be the fourth R taught in schools" if you leave the capitalist profitmakers to run riot over our lives.

While preaching responsibility and restraint to the poorest layers of the working class, Blair tells the bosses that Labour is becoming "the party of aspiration and ambition". Labour is going to "eliminate the social evil of welfare dependency" Blair says. Well, there are two ways to do that. You can eliminate the need for welfare by providing jobs for all and living wages, or you can do what the Tories and the bosses want: coerce young people and single parents off benefits and into low paid jobs.

And you can't do the right thing without getting right up the noses of the big businessmen Blair is busy wining and dining.■

Still resisting after all these years
Keith Swan reviews a new pamphlet
from the Greater Manchester
Immigration Aid Unit.

"IT IS, and always has been, the policy of the ruling classes to attribute the sufferings and miseries of the masses (which are natural consequences of class rule and class exploitation) to all sorts of causes except the real ones. The cry against the foreigner is not merely peculiar to England; it is international." ("A voice from the Aliens" 1895 leaflet by Jewish trade unionists)

This passage, from the Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit's latest pamphlet, *Still resisting after all these years* is just one example of the long and hidden history of the struggle of the oppressed against immigration controls.

The fight began in the run up to the 1905 Aliens Act, which was an attempt to prevent Jewish refugees from Czarist Russia coming to Britain. Jewish trade unionists, through leafleting and holding mass meetings, achieved some success in winning British workers to oppose the Act. A good example was Manchester Trades Council which in 1893 was in favour of controls, by 1903 neutral on the subject and by 1904 had come out against controls on immigration.

A similar story emerges with the strug-

IMMIGRATION STRUGGLES

New pamphlet reveals hidden history

gles of the post war period, especially against the 1962, 1968 (introduced by the Labour Party) and 1971 Immigration Acts—all of which were attempting to control immigration from the ex-colonies such as the West Indies, Africa and Asia. The pamphlet stresses the role of the self organisation of the oppressed, such as the associations of West Indian and Indian workers against these acts, who in the face of opposition from the TUC were able to win white workers to oppose immigration controls.

If there is a weakness in the pamphlet it is the belief that "the struggle against oppression is always led by those most directly oppressed".

The self organisation of the oppressed is an important part of the struggle, and the pamphlet is good at showing how these groups campaigned to win white workers and against collaborationist lead-

erships within the racially oppressed communities.

But it is the organised working class, black and white, which needs to be won

PUBLIC MEETING

"The love that dare not board a plane"
Lesbian and gay relationships and immigration controls

Thursday 27 April

Follies, 6 Whitworth Street
Manchester M1

Speakers from Stonewall,
UNISON and solicitors

not only to support these campaigns but to take responsibility for leading a struggle against the bosses' reactionary legislation.

The pamphlet explains that immigration controls are part of the capitalist state, and even goes as far to say that "it would probably require a revolution to get rid of them". But it misses the opportunity to spell out the need, short of the maximum goal of the destruction of the capitalist state, for a national anti-deportation campaign which would struggle against all immigration controls on the basis of solidarity not sympathy.

However this pamphlet is well worth ordering for your union branch or community organisation, and the sterling work of the Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit deserves the continued and widest support of the labour movement.■

To affiliate to the GMIA, or to receive details of its work and wide range of advice leaflets and publications write to:
**GMIA, 400 Cheetham Hill Road,
Manchester M8 9LE.**

CLAUSE FOUR

Why the left has failed

UNLESS THE trade union bureaucracy wakes up on 29 April with a collective attack of socialist principles, Labour's Clause Four is as good as dead this month. The majority of trade union votes have swung behind Blair's new version of the party constitution, as have most of the constituencies. And all this less than six months after the Labour Party Conference reaffirmed its commitment to the old Clause Four.

In part Blair's victory has been secured by a skilful drafting process, designed to include words and phrases to please every potential opponent of the change. The result, like anything written by a committee, does not make pleasant reading. But it was not designed to. The new clause had to signal to the bosses that the profit system is safer than ever in Labour's hands. At the same time it had to convince the union leaders that they, and their members, would not be giving a blank cheque to a middle class closet Tory. The result seems to have achieved both aims.

But it is not only the bureaucrats who have been won over. Workers in UNISON, the T&G and GMB did not push hard to defend Clause Four.

The reason for this lies, ultimately, not in any political "backwardness" amongst Labour voters and trade union members. It lies in the flawed character of Clause Four itself, the fact that it has always remained a dead letter, and the uselessness of the Labour left. They were not able to persuade workers to defend what they called the "socialist heart" of Labour's politics because their arguments were unconvincing and their tactics self-defeating.

Clause Four was written, at the end of World War One, specifically to combat the rise of revolutionary socialism in the working class. Up to then Labour, had not had an individual membership structure separate from that of the unions, socialist parties and societies which formed the party. At the same time

Labour's politics had been little more than an echo of the radical reforming wing of Liberalism. To confront the rise of revolutionary socialism, Labour needed both a party structure and a set of "socialist phrases" to cloak its thoroughly pro-capitalist politics.

So Clause Four was written. In its seventy seven year history its commitment to "common ownership" has meant many things to many people inside the Labour movement—everything from socialist expropriation to wider share ownership.

The Labour left has never had control of the Labour Party—not even in 1945 when a landslide election victory swept Labour to power on a programme of widespread nationalisation. But the left has traditionally consoled itself with two myths: first that Clause Four leaves open the possibility that Labour will one day abolish capitalism; second, that working class participation and pressure are the means of forcing the party to do so.

History has proved them wrong. When working class pressure pushed Labour Conferences to the left in the early 1980s, the bosses and the Labour leaders used every trick in the book to make sure Labour was never in a position to implement the policies they didn't like. The thing most Labour-voting workers want now is a Labour government. It is nothing new for them to be prepared to see Labour's policies move right in an attempt to achieve this—Kinnock and Smith were both put at the head of the party to do just this. Many Labour activists think that if dropping a set of words, which never achieved anything in practice, will ensure a Labour victory then that's better than another five years of Tory rule. Wider layers of Labour voters have been convinced that nationalisation and state socialism are outmoded, and believe that the Labour Party needs a "modern" economic programme with a managed market.

The left had no serious answer to this. The Labour left's economic programme was based on the old capitalist consensus of

EDITORIAL



The labour left had no answers to Blair's claim that socialism was outmoded. Their "socialism" was always based on the post war capitalist consensus.

state intervention and state ownership. They called it socialism, but it was only a form of managing the capitalist system.

That consensus is long past. Having re-invested and got the state to re-equip these industries the capitalists want them back, preferably with monopoly profits from the utilities like gas and water thrown in.

So why defend Clause Four? To answer this, we have to understand the real reason Blair wanted to ditch it: to signify that, once elected, he intends to govern Britain ruthlessly in the interests of the bosses.

To the union barons huffing and puffing over Clause Four we should say: if you really want the workers to get the "full fruits of their labour", fight to commit Labour to a decent minimum wage, linked to inflation. If you want "common ownership" throw your weight behind a fight to force Labour to renationalise all the industries privatised by the Tories, with no compensation to the big bosses and investors.

Although the Clause Four fight is almost over, the real fight—to put Labour into office, then force them to meet our immediate needs—is only just beginning.

In that fight the worthy socialist speechmongers who have defended Clause Four over the last few months will be faced with a choice: sit back and mourn the passing of Labour's golden past, or get on with the job of organising resistance to future government attacks, Tory or Labour. They should be building now to put Blair under the pressure of a mass campaign for renationalisation under workers' control, for concrete commitments on the minimum wage, on health and education spending.

That won't give the workers the "full fruits of their labour". But it will claw some of them back from the parasites who are rubbing their hands at the prospect of a Blair Labour government. ■

What it really means...

"The Labour Party is a democratic socialist party."

"The Labour Party is no longer subject to the demands of trade unionists"

"It believes that by the strength of our common endeavour we achieve more than we achieve alone"

"It believes the boss cannot make a profit unless a lot of other people are working very hard"

"... so as to create the means for each of us to realise our true potential"

"... so Tony Blair can get to be Prime Minister"

"and for all of us a community in which power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many, not the few"

"and put his powers of empty socialist rhetoric into overdrive"

"... where the rights we enjoy reflect the duties we owe"

"Watch out single mothers, truanting kids and the long term unemployed"

"... and where we live together freely, in a spirit of solidarity, tolerance and respect"

"and please don't smash up my Volvo"

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workers power

MEETINGS

BIRMINGHAM

• Should socialists vote for "New Labour"?

Tuesday 25 April 7.30pm
Union Club, 723 Pershore Road, Selly Park

LONDON

• Defend Clause Four
Thursday 6 April 7.30pm
Room 157, London School of Economics, Aldwych, W1
Nearest tubes: Holborn, Temple.

UNISON FIGHTBACK CONFERENCE

Open to delegates from Branches and Shop Stewards' Committees
Saturday 29 April 10.00am
The Union Club, 723 Pershore Road, Birmingham

FUND DRIVE £2014

This month the fund drive has advanced to £2014. Donations large and small, from readers in Hampshire, Lincolnshire, Leicester and London, as well as our regular standing order payers have taken us a big step towards our £3,000 technical fund target. Please keep the money coming. We have only one month until the deadline - May Day - and we owe money on the vital technical purchases we've made already. Next month we will publish a full report of the fund drive. ■

TI 16 get yours while stocks last!

Trotskyist International Issue 16 is selling so fast that we're down to the last few boxes. Only £1.50 (£2.20 P&P) this is the best magazine of international politics and Marxist theory available. Order your copy now from the address, on the right. ■

SUMMER SCHOOL 1995



This year's Workers Power Summer School will be held from 26 to 30 July inclusive. It takes place at a residential college in the Midlands and features courses on Engels, World War Two, Sub Saharan Africa, Ireland, plan and market, Marxism and religion. All for only £50 including bed and breakfast. Apply for your ticket now. Write to Workers Power. ■

RELAUNCH NEWS: Thanks to the success of our fund drive we are now in a position to carry through a long planned redesign of Workers Power. Next month we will bring you a new look paper, with new regular columns and features, better quality pictures and a wide appeal to a whole range of activists! ■

FIGHT FOR WORKERS POWER!

- I would like to know more about Workers Power & the LRCI
 I want to join Workers Power

I would like to subscribe to:

- Workers Power £7 for 12 issues
 Trotskyist International £8 for 3 issues
 Both for £10 £10!!!

Make cheques payable to Workers Power and send to:
Workers Power, BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX

Name:

Address:

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Telephone: Trade union:

TWENTY FIVE thousand people marched through London on 24 March in opposition to the education cuts. The demo was called by FACE—Fight Against Cuts in Education. The demo was lively, and clearly showed the widespread opposition to the cuts.

The majority of the marchers were parents, school students and governors, with countless homemade banners from schools around the country. But there were far too few trade union banners.

Local NUT groups were represented, with teachers and parents hiring coaches and chartering trains to get to London. But the NUT leadership scandalously boycotted the demonstration.

NUT chief Doug McAvoy initially tried to sabotage the demo, encouraging members not to support it. Once the level of support from teachers and parents became clear, rather than do a U-turn he grudgingly said that the union would remain neutral about the demo.

Justify

Many teachers facing the sack may well ask themselves how the largest teaching union can remain neutral on the question of education cuts! McAvoy has attempted to justify his neutrality on the grounds of not wanting to upset his new friends in the more right wing teachers' unions.

Other trade unionists were there, including the Southwark NATFHE strikers. But the official labour movement, the Labour Party and TUC, had not mobilised to support the demo.

The problem with the upsurge in anger against the cuts is that it is vast but unfocused. As an organisation FACE has no clear answers, although there were plenty of suggestions on offer on the demo, ranging from governors appealing to Tory Education Secretary, Gillian Shepherd, to the Socialist Workers' Party's "Save our schools—sack Major not the teachers!"

What is really needed is a fighting strategy that can unite those wanting to stop the cuts and defend state education throughout the country.

Blows

Cuts in education have not occurred at the same rate across the country. In the past the inner-city boroughs have been hit hard, but this year the county councils like Warwickshire, Derbyshire and Shropshire have been dealt the biggest blows.

But everyone who works in education, every student and every parent knows that education in general has been massively under-funded for years.

School buildings are falling apart, class sizes are rising, school libraries are closing and courses being cut. The crisis within education is clear. What we need is a united and determined answer.

SCHOOLS REBELLION

Thousands say "Stop the cuts!"



Thousands marched against the education cuts—what we need now is strike action against the cuts!

The only coherent answer is to demand that education is funded according to need. We—parents, teachers and students—must be the ones who decide how much money is needed to run our schools and then we will fight for the funding by greater taxes on the rich and big business. The vast majority, working class students and teachers, should not have to suffer at the expense of the bosses' profits.

FACE is a broad alliance linking teachers, parents and governors. Many of those involved are middle

class parents and governors frustrated with the government's reforms which promised them "choice" and "quality", but which have clearly failed to deliver. Such people are unlikely to want to fight for a clear working class solution to the crisis in education. The danger is that those involved in FACE will get pulled along with the middle class parents and governors accepting a few cuts here and there, if they can keep their school open.

The opportunity which the mass anger of the demonstration represented must not be squandered. ■



LAMBETH COUNCIL is pushing ahead with its planned £29 million worth of cuts. Education in the borough will be particularly hard hit. In response, last month Lambeth teachers went on strike for a day, closing all the borough's schools. They organised a march of over 1,000 teachers, parents and school students through Brixton.

The council is so hard up that it has just managed to find £89,000 to pay off the Director of Education. She has been given the bullet because of a "breakdown in trust and confidence" between her and the interim Chief Executive of the council. Rest assured sacked teachers will not find such fat cheques when they get redundancy notices!

Another service up for the chop was Lambeth's Unemployed and Trade Union Resource Centre. "New Labour's" Chair of Environmental Services, Cathy Ashley, proposed withdrawing the grant and closing

LAMBETH COUNCIL Support the occupation

the centre ahead of the Liberals, who were thinking along the same lines.

As the process of closure got underway the local Unemployed Action Group, led by Militant Labour, went into occupation, along with some other users of the centre. This occupation could have been used by the local labour movement as a spark

to organise a real fightback against the closure of libraries, old peoples homes and day nurseries, many of which are due for closure at the end of March.

Instead the Executive of the Lambeth Trades Union Council, and the majority of the workers at the centre came out against the occupation. The reason was that they were deep

in negotiations with the council to re-open the centre on the basis of a reduced grant and a "no politics, no campaigning" pledge demanded by Ashley.

Despite the Executive shouting about a "lockout", with local members of Socialist Outlook taking the lead in this, many trade union branches in the area are supporting the occupation and organising to reverse the Executive's decision at the next full Trades Council meeting.

Lambeth Unison "A" branch, representing Lambeth Town Hall workers, is the latest to support the occupation.

Instead of fighting each other, the left and the trade unions need to organise a united fightback against the council cuts.

This means organising a strategy of strikes and occupations, linking the workers and the users in a militant defence of Lambeth services. ■

LEICESTER UNISON

We need an indefinite strike!

LAST MONTH Leicestershire UNISON agreed to campaign for an all out, indefinite strike to smash the Tory cuts and to save jobs and services. Workers Power is the only political force that has consistently fought for such action.

Why do we fight for this? Because it is the only way to force the councillors to set a no cuts budget. We have argued consistently that a one day strike is ineffective because management know we will be back the next day, and they will happily sit it out.

Leicestershire UNISON at a recent Special General Meeting unanimously

decided to call a ballot where members are given the chance to vote for both all out, indefinite strike action and a one day strike. The branch has already sent out a stewards' briefing, arming them with arguments for all out, indefinite strike (See WP187).

The campaign was delayed by a month, while the branch waited for Regional Office to approve the ballot for indefinite action. The Head of the Local Government Service Group—John Freeman, an unelected, unaccountable and highly paid employee of UNISON, has the right to veto the call for strike action. Surprise, sur-

prise . . . John Freeman, after delaying and stalling for a month, has now refused the ballot for indefinite action and wants instead to limit the campaign and ballot to a one day strike.

This is blatant sabotage of a democratic decision reached at a Special General Meeting. His excuse? He has "real doubts whether such a ballot could be won convincingly" and that it is "well in advance of the present campaign"—that is, the bureaucrats' non-campaign.

He also argues that a fight for an all out, indefinite strike will have "negative effects" . . . "on our campaign" if

we are not confident of winning a "yes" vote. Nothing about what is actually needed to win, what we need to do in order to protect jobs and services.

Freeman's arguments are nonsense. They basically boil down to: "Don't campaign for action that can win because, if we fail to convince the membership this time, it will have undermined the campaign." Make sense of that if you can.

The branch has appealed to the General Secretary of UNISON, Alan Jinkinson, against this decision but of course he has backed Freeman all

the way. The branch has effectively accepted this decision as the next stage of appeal would mean postponing the ballot until May.

Workers Power supporters in the branch will be putting a motion of no confidence in Freeman to the branch, but even if it is passed under the current rulebook there is no guaranteed means of ousting these bureaucrats. We will also propose that the branch organises its own strike ballot for indefinite action along side the ballot for one day action. If we then win a "yes" vote the bureaucrats will have to repudiate any action we take.

The bottom line though, and the key task for activists in the branch is the building of effective rank and file organisation, it has to be strong enough to force the bureaucrats into effective action and, if they still refuse to act, get rid of them and get on with the job ourselves. ■

FURTHER EDUCATION

Quango colleges

NOT SO long ago Colleges of Further Education were run through democratically elected Local Education Authorities (LEAs). These set out the rules for the composition of governing bodies, academic boards etc. Bureaucratic as these systems were, local people, through their elected councillors, had at least some influence on these bodies, as did the staff and students in the institutions.

The Tories changed all this two years ago. In April 1993 colleges were removed from the control of local authorities. They are now self-governing "business corporations" with small Boards of Governors dominated by local businessmen and women and managers from the big corporations.

Market

State funding for the colleges is now directed through the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC)—yet another business-driven quango. The FEFC was set up by the Tories to "promote efficiency" through market competition between the colleges.

Predictably the whole exercise has been dressed up with the usual buzz words: for "improving educational quality through appraisal" read performance-related pay; for "emulating best practice through convergence" read driving costs down to the level of the lowest college; for "greater flexibility of professional contracts" read longer hours, more teaching and Saturday and Sunday working!

BYA NATFHE MEMBER
wolverhampton

The new corporate culture has produced a bonanza for managers. College principals (or in quango new speak "Chief Executives") have engaged in real competition to see who could award themselves the highest pay increases. Some have doubled their pay in the last two years.

New fleets of company cars now grace many a college car park while the majority of young lecturers strug-

Despite a pathetically weak union leadership in NATFHE the majority of college lecturers have resisted the new contracts. A series of local and regional strike actions have forced a number of colleges to break with the employers' hard-line contracts and make concessions.

gle to work in their old bangers. Human Resource Managers, Directors of Finance, Accountants, Directors of Computer Services and Marketing fondle their mobile phones and cra-

dle their laptops, the essential prerequisites for the growing number of jet-setting foreign trips of managers and members of governing bodies. Meanwhile most teachers in FE have not had a pay increase since September 1993.

A central part of the drive for increasing efficiency has been a move to introduce a new contract of employment for lecturers. The employers' favoured "enabling contract" would have lecturers on a longer working week, working for more weeks of the year. Existing limits on classroom teaching time would simply be abolished.

Despite a pathetically weak union leadership in NATFHE the majority of college lecturers have resisted the new contracts. A series of local and regional strike actions have forced a number of colleges to break with the employers' hard-line contracts and make concessions. The resistance of the members shows no sign of weakening with some 200 colleges having been involved in strike action.

The latest threat to the further education system comes from the turning of the screw by the FEFC on student funding.

The government target is to increase enrolments in the FE sector by 25% over four years. College funding now depends on setting, and meeting, those targets.

If, as has happened to many colleges this year, targets for an increase in numbers are missed, the FEFC will impose a "holdback" on funds the following year. If students drop out, through financial pressure or personal problems during a course, more money is deducted.

Crisis

Already many colleges are going into financial crisis. A rash of staff redundancies are the result. This is all part of the FEFC's strategy. Colleges fight each other for students. The most "efficient", that is those with cheapest costs per student, will survive; the others will go to the wall.

Meanwhile managements are planning future educational provision by dividing courses into "core business" and other courses. Priority will go to the former, to those courses where the students (or less likely the employers) will cough up fees to cover the full costs of the course, or to those where high student demand is matched by low running costs.

In the new "corporate culture" of FE the last priority is delivering appropriate courses and high quality education and training. The name of the game is cheapness. Can the course hours be cut? Can the students learn on their own in the "study centre"? Can lecturers teach 25 or 30 hours a week in the classroom and do preparation and marking on top? Can instructors or technicians do the job of a lecturer at half the price?

This is the "market driven" training sector that the Tories intend to create.

At the moment it is the resistance of the teaching staff to erosion of conditions that is defending the education service. Further Education used to provide some of the educational needs of working class students. For many, it provided a "second chance" when those needs had not been met at school. However, if the Tories get their way, FE will increasingly become college production lines to meet the bosses' need for low skilled "flexible" workers.■

Cheques to: Southwark College NATFHE Strike Fund, c/o Christ Church Industrial Mission, Blackfriars Road, London SE1 (0171-401 7374)



THE SHOP STEWARDS' COLUMN

Getting away with murder

New figures show that one in a hundred men aged 50 will die of asbestosis. Brian Higgins, Secretary of Building Worker, puts the blame on the bosses.

RECENTLY THE Health and Safety Executive, a government body, released so called new facts about the dangers of asbestos. These included some very frightening statistics, so worrying for the capitalist system that they've received nothing like the UK-wide media attention or publicity they warrant. This is par for the course.

One of the facts is that approximately one in a hundred of all British men aged about 50 will die of mesothelioma. This incurable cancer of the respiratory system is better known as a form of asbestosis. The figures for those who worked in the asbestos and building industries are much higher. A much greater proportion will die of this horrendous disease.

Yet manufacturers of asbestos, building employers, governments and their health officials have known about the deadly dangers of asbestos since the last century.

Of course, as vast profits were involved, lies, misinformation and low key publicity were and always are the order of the day, literally. Especially for the workers who processed and used asbestos.

It is no exaggeration to write that those responsible for this are guilty of murder on a vast worldwide scale. But then mass murder by capitalist profiteers is not confined to industry. In fact their whole system of profit and control is based on one form of mass murder or another. Disguised as, and euphemistically called, famine in some areas, civil war in others, "fighting communism" in South America, the death penalty in North America; recently in Ireland called "keeping the peace"; here "at home", cuts in public expenditure. In cases like asbestosis it is called "an occupational health hazard".

I'm particularly angry and extremely concerned about asbestosis because I'm a building worker, I'm over 50 and I've worked in areas where asbestos was out and used on site in the past. I just hope I'm lucky. I also write as a trade union and political militant who has been very severely blacklisted because of fighting for things such as health and safety in the construction industry.

So what of the unions? In the past, earlier this century, they were just as hoodwinked and confused as the rest of the general population. However, the last 25 to 30 years has seen increasing awareness among workers, the advance of technology, better access to medical research and more information, so ignorance is no longer the case with the unions or the TUC. After pressure from below, the TGWU took up the case of the "Glasgow Lagers" in their fight for medical recognition of and compensation for asbestosis as an industrial disease.

But the TGWU are tiptoeing when they should be barnstorming.

UCATT has produced quite a lot of literature on asbestos and actually advise workers not to use it or derivatives, or even handle it. However, they do F-all if any workers are sacked for doing just this. On its own, literature is almost useless.

So what's the real problem? UCATT has added to the problems with massive internal corruption against which we, the UCATT members, are fighting back. But the largest problem is a general political one. How can any group of workers win, or expect to win, on any difficult issue when the organisations they join to represent them in all aspects of their industrial lives, collectively called the TUC, have completely and utterly surrendered to the capitalist offensive since Thatcher came to power? Their craven capitulation to the anti-union laws has been particularly debilitating.

The real answer to this offensive and capitulation is a determined political fightback, not only against the ruling class, its state and anti-union laws, but also against the TUC and the very old Labour Party—in or out of government.

This will require political and industrial united fronts of communists, socialists and militant workers. Industrially it is called the Rank and File Organisation within the unions, but it needs to be organised and committed to action and policies independent of the labour and trade union bureaucracies, with a policy of defiance, and for the repeal, of the anti-union laws. We defied these successfully in the "Laing's Lock Out" of 1985-1986. Let's struggle more widely and get rid of them once and for all this time. This is the only way we will win on health and safety and all the other myriad of "ills" inflicted on our class by capitalism.

The Facts About Asbestos

● Asbestos comes in three main varieties: blue (crocidolite), brown (amosite) and white (chrysotile). The Department of Employment estimates that six million tonnes of these types had been imported to the UK by 1986.

● The fire-retardant qualities of asbestos led to its widespread use in the construction of buildings, ships and power stations, as well as vehicles and household products. Asbestos is commonly found in schools and system-built housing estates. Asbestos is a known cause of lung cancer, mesothelioma (another virulent form of cancer), and asbestosis, a crippling scarring of the lungs. It is the single greatest cause of cancers in the workplace.

● Despite government regulations suggesting otherwise, there is no "safe" level of exposure to asbestos.■

Southwark strikes



SOUTHWARK COLLEGE NATFHE is on all out strike against management proposals to make 38 lecturers redundant. College managers are reporting a financial crisis because of lack of funding, compounded by the collapse of the South Thames TEC which owed the college £400,000. Their answer? To sack staff.

A strike ballot on a high 76% turnout delivered a narrow majority in favour of an all out strike. Despite management hopes that some lecturers would cross picket lines the strike has been absolutely solid. Students have given their support recognising that these redundancies will deliver a body blow to a college which serves some of the most deprived areas in London.

NATFHE members have been picketing all five sites and over 200 NATFHE members and other trade unionists lobbied the recent meeting of college governors.

Southwark College is very much a

test case in London. The FE Funding Council thinks there are "too many colleges" in London, in the same way that Virginia Bottomley thinks that there are "too many" hospitals.

Hackney Community College has also voted for four days of strike action in the face of the proposed closure of two sites and 150-200 threatened redundancies.

NATFHE members must demand a London wide response if the college managements refuse to respond to union demands to withdraw the redundancy notices and enter into negotiations.

Donations to the Southwark strike fund are urgently needed. The lecturers are not receiving strike pay and every NATFHE branch should be taking regular collections.

WRITE TO WHISTLEBLOWER BCM BOX 7750 LONDON WC1N 3XX

ROAD PROTESTS

We need a rational transport system!

IF YOU go down to the woods today... be prepared for bulldozers and battle fatigues, rather than teddy bears or boy scouts.

There is a war going on in the British countryside. In the eighties there were inner city riots but in the nineties the action is all in the woods.

In every area of Britain you are likely to come across a campaign involving opposition to a new road. From Newbury in Berkshire to Stanworth Woods near Blackburn, by-passes and motorway extensions are being resisted.

More and more evidence is being produced which shows that road building is expensive—the 12 mile Newbury by-pass will cost £77 million: six miles in Strathclyde will cost £52 million.

Roads are also environmentally damaging and, rather than just meeting existing needs, new roads often prompt more traffic and thus the need for more roads.

Minority

So why are so many new roads being built? The Tories don't plan transport on rational principles but on the needs of a small minority of bosses. The Tories' love of the private car combined with their hatred of public transport resulted in a massive road building programme.

Newly radicalised activists involved in the road protests believe they can be forced to rethink their plans. Many young people are being brought into politics by getting involved in these protests. High profile campaigns such as the one in Leytonstone, East London provoked a massive amount of media coverage as the protestors built their own city—Wanstonia—amongst the squatted houses targeted for demolition to make way for the M11.

Certainly these protestors have shown determination and amazing bravery against the bulldozers and bailiffs. Being prepared to resist the road builders means being prepared to resist the full power of the state—as the Wanstonia protestors rapidly discovered. The entire area was put under siege. Riot police, helicopters, road blocks (ironically), searchlights and ultimately mass arrests under the Criminal Justice Act were deployed against the protestors. It was more like the L.A. riots than a few "crusties" in Leytonstone.

If the news media is to be believed, road politics along with animal rights demonstrations have replaced the class struggle as we approach the year 2000.

Large cross-class alliances have been built to fight against road building in many parts of the country. Yet in the vast majority of these actions the protestors have been defeated despite the obvious commitment of the campaigners.

Failed

In some cases this is because the campaigns have failed to win mass support in the localities. But campaigners are learning the importance of local support—so are the police.

In the battle against the M77 extension in Pollokshaws in Strathclyde, youth from Glasgow housing estates are being mobilised. The purpose of



the road blocks in Leytonstone was to stop local people bringing food and other supplies to the squatters.

If a campaign against a specific road is going to win, it is vital that it has the mass support of local residents and workers. In order for this to happen it is important that inquiries are held when new schemes are planned. Such inquiries should discuss whether the road is indeed unnecessary or wrongly routed.

However it is wrong to insist that all road building is wasteful. It is also wrong to argue that only those who are obviously affected by it should have any input into an inquiry.

Nobody would judge a hydro-electric scheme, bringing power to millions of homes, simply on the effect it might have on some farmland and wildlife. If we did, less developed countries could never achieve a higher level of technology. Potential benefits for the entire community, including users, will obviously have to be taken into account, but this evenhandedness will never be realised while the

discussion lies in the hands of the capitalists. That is why we fight for workers' inquiries where human need will be the decisive factor, not the bosses' profits.

Unfortunately many of the middle class protesters involved in the campaigns are wedded to the profit system. This is the fundamental weakness in the campaigns. Whilst they may oppose certain roads, they often have a "not in my backyard" mentality which means they cannot look for the wider answers which are necessary if road building is to be contained and the environment protected.

Progress and an increasing population have escalated the changes in the transport system and inevitably affected the environment.

Technological change and economic development are not intrinsically negative. Far from it. Combined with the power of the working class they unlock a future without poverty and exploitation for the whole of humanity.

Alteration of the natural environ-

ment just like improved technology—if used for the benefit of humanity—could ensure a better life for all.

To those utopians who wish to turn the clock back to an earlier "golden age"—without cars, without power stations—Marxists point to improved medical techniques, massively increased food production etc.

To others who believe that we should not "interfere" with the environment (often the same people who love walking in environments heavily changed by human beings, such as the Lakeland fells) we insist that such "interference" can, and has been, beneficial.

As with all other human activities, travel has changed dramatically as human society has developed. With the invention of the petrol engine and the massive growth in car ownership since the war serious pressure has been put on the road network. The ever-escalating number of cars in use has meant the roads are clogged, especially during rush hours and specific holiday times. Previous coaching roads through small towns and villages can no longer cope with the volume of traffic, and tons and tons of pollutants are spewed into the atmosphere.

Freight

All governments have attempted to relieve this congestion by building by-passes, ring roads and urban motorways. At the same time long-distance motorways have been built to facilitate the speedier and cheaper transport of freight. Despite this increase in road-building all the evidence points to congestion getting worse with many cities close to gridlock. Motorway extensions simply allow more journeys to be made and move traffic

jams to different locations.

The problem of road-building cannot be solved in isolation from other forms of transport. Commuters will not be persuaded to give up their cars while the alternative is to be herded like cattle onto overpriced, dangerous and infrequent trains or buses—which themselves are slowed down because of congestion.

For many people who live in rural areas faced with the closure of local branch lines and the savaging of local bus services, using a car is their only alternative.

The working class of Sheffield knows what happens when you stop cheap public transport. The South Yorkshire transport system used to have extremely cheap, subsidised fares—two or three pence per journey in the early 1980s! The city centre used to be lively, full of people, arriving on frequent, reliable, cheap buses. The Tory cuts stopped the cheap fares policy. Sheffield is now clogged with cars stuck in traffic jams. If you don't have a car, then you could use the new SuperTram—but it will only take you to Meadowhall Shopping Centre! So much for the wide range of choice and freedom guaranteed to us all under capitalism.

Pedestrian-only areas, cycle ways, park-and-ride schemes and car parks should be actively encouraged, but in and of themselves they will not solve the present problems. Unless and until these improvements are supported by a massive increase in public transport infrastructure for the vast majority of people their own car will be the most convenient means of travel.

Funding for improved public transport would have to come from increased taxes on businesses and the rich. In a rational planned economy money would be channelled into providing reliable, cheap public transport, massively subsidising it and ensuring that it covered even remote areas of the countryside. Alternatives would also be researched in order to reduce pollution.

There is clearly no reason (except for the profit motive and the power of the oil companies) why electrically and ultimately solar powered vehicles could not be developed faster. Alongside this the canal system could be redeveloped and brought back into use for the transportation of freight while riverbuses could provide passenger transport in many major cities. ■

YOUTH DESPAIR

"Waiting for something to happen"

THE DISAPPEARANCE, and feared suicide, of Manic Street Preachers' guitarist Ritchey James has provoked an unexpected and alarming mass response from Britain's teenagers. Young people have bombarded the music press with letters about Ritchey's disappearance. Some have threatened suicide. Many young people appear to identify with James' lifestyle and lyrics, which are dominated by depression and self-mutilation.

Now everybody from the Samaritans to Radio One and Melody Maker seems to be in a panic over the culture of despair that is spreading amongst youth. Ritchey is not the first rock musician to make a living out of singing about misery. Nor will

he be the first to embrace self-destruction, if that's what he has done—his car was found abandoned near the Severn Bridge two months ago. Nirvana singer Kurt Cobain killed himself one year ago, sparking a wave of attempted suicides amongst his fans.

Suicide

But what is alarming youth agencies and cultural organisations is the growing phenomenon of young male suicide and self-mutilation. Over the past decade the suicide rate among young men has risen by 71%.

Amongst the youth themselves there is no doubt as to the cause of such high levels of despair. Most of



Ritchey James' disappearance has prompted an outpouring of despair. But to fight depression we've got to mobilise against oppression!

them see no future, not just for themselves but for human society as a whole. Full employment and adequate public services are things of the past. Traditional family life is crumbling. The "peaceful" imperialist heartlands, where youth are expected to while away their time watching MTV and drinking Coca-Cola, are being encroached upon by a rising tide of war and barbarism—from Bosnia to Chechnya.

It is not just that decaying capitalism offers the youth no future. It is that many have given up on the struggle against the system. They see socialism as an alternative system that has failed.

This is a message reinforced by Labour and ex-Stalinist politicians,

as well as Tories. And many young people despise a labour movement which they have yet to see fight and win a significant battle. Radiohead's new album, *The Bends*, captures the mood:

"I'm just... waiting for something to happen and I wish it was the Sixties."

The answer is, of course, don't just wait for something to happen! Workers Power supporters who produce the youth magazine *REVOLUTION* are active campaigning against the CJA, the education cuts, the rise of racism and fascism and loads of other evils created by capitalism.

We're glad it's not the Sixties! The 1960s saw the start of a period of youth and working class rebellion that produced some courageous struggles—from Vietnam to South Africa to the streets of Paris and London. But ultimately these struggles failed. They failed because those who should have led them in a revolutionary direction were ill prepared. They too had been "waiting for something to happen".

Instead of waiting we are preparing, by building a fighting, revolutionary socialist working class youth magazine, by learning about politics seriously, and by getting organised.

It's the system that is sick, not the youth. We need to smash that system before we can liberate our minds from the threat of depression and our lives from oppression. ■

BRITISH ECONOMY

The State We're In, a new book by Will Hutton, is topping the bestseller lists. **Bill Jenkins** explains its popularity with the "new Labour" leaders and shows why, in his search for a kinder, more moral capitalism Hutton is ...

Clutching at straws

Will Hutton
The State We're In
Published by Cape
£16.99, pp352

Will Hutton is the Guardian economics editor. Through his weekly column he has established a reputation as a perceptive critic of the Tories' monetarist excesses. But his popularity as a journalist alone cannot explain the success of his book, which is riding high in the best seller lists.

Hutton has found a natural constituency amongst the Labour Party modernisers in desperate need of a new economic orthodoxy. Hutton is the answer to their dreams.

The State We're In is more than just a critique of the failings of British capitalism. Through a wide ranging analysis of the relationship of the British economy to its state and institutions, Hutton aims to explain the roots of Britain's decline.

Hutton's hero is Keynes, the Liberal economist credited with designing the post war system of full employment and state intervention. Like Keynes, Hutton is a liberal with a mission—to save British capitalism from its sins:

"The demand for a moral economy is not simply the assertion of a different value system. It is a call to arms in a world in which time is running short".

But like all current attempts to revive the Keynesian economic policies popular during the post war boom, Hutton ends up distorting capitalist reality—idealising the "successful" imperialist economies and relying on moral persuasion to get the British capitalists to follow suit.

Values

At the heart of Hutton's theory lies the notion that British capitalism has developed a set of values which are "extraordinarily favourable to finance, commerce and administration—but not to industry". This manifests itself in the lust of British financial capitalists for short term profits, and guaranteed high rates of return. And apparently explains Britain's decline relative to its major competitors.

British capitalists, and the British people as a whole, have no tradition of co-operation, according to Hutton. The British capitalists have their roots not in the domestic economy but in their overseas investments. Their values are selfish and conflict with the need for all sections of society to co-operate in the interests of a competitive national economy.

Describing the industrial revolution he concludes: "what was notably different from later experiences elsewhere was that the state was not involved, and the urge of the financial system remained distant from large scale industrial lending".

As British capitalism developed individual capitalists invested without the active intervention of the British state. The British bosses had no qualms about investing across the world in the dash for the highest rates of return available, even if this was to the detriment of the British economy as a whole.

Define

Hutton believes that this short term culture derives from the social mores and state institutions which define British society. The concentration of power in a highly centralised state, based upon the principle of parliamentary sovereignty derived from the monarch, means that there are no checks and balances within the British system capable of correcting the bias against industry and the short term investments which define British capitalism.

As a result, when the Conservatives came to power in 1979 they could simply call upon a massive reserve of support inherent in British society for their monetarist programme. The Thatcher revolution made things worse, but Thatcher was not the cause of the British malaise. For Hutton, her brand of conserva-

tism was natural; an unquestioned assumption automatically approved of by the British ruling class.

In placing the thrust of his criticisms, and the basis of his alternative, on challenging the culture of British capitalism, Hutton inverts the real relationship between economy and society.

The shape of British capitalist development in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century was not the result of the culture of British capitalists. The culture was produced by real material conditions. The relative separation of industrial and financial capital, the global spread of British imperialism, the laissez faire attitude of British government, are factors in Britain's economic decline. But they are a direct result of Britain's dominant role in the nineteenth century world economy.

Conquest

British capitalism used its predominance in colonial conquest and the world market to develop to the highest degree the imperialist export of capital. Its ruling capitalists have always been prepared to sacrifice productivity in the domestic economy to profitability abroad. This fact has accelerated the decline of British imperialism.

But Hutton is wrong to ascribe the decline fundamentally to Britain's specific features—be they patterns of investment, state structures or bourgeois culture. Britain's decline is part of the general phenomenon of imperialist decline. Ignoring that decline, allows Hutton to argue that a healthy, state regulated, "moral" capitalism is not only possible but the best guarantee of capitalism's survival.

Hutton berates British bankers for failing to invest in long term improvements in industrial productivity. For Hutton, short-termism is the fundamental fault with the British economy. It explains its inability to compete with its imperialist rivals and the rampant individualism which denigrates collectivity, leading to the erosion of the core values of British society such as the family.

Hutton's analysis certainly points to some features which have undermined the ability of British imperialism to compete effectively. The state does eschew involvement in economic innovation and development. Banks are able to take advantage of an especially favourable access to world

markets and investment opportunities. British companies have chronically low rates of investment in the most advanced sectors of the capitalist economy.

But Hutton's Keynesianism blinds him to the global causes of imperialist decline, rooted in imperialism's inherent tendencies to decay and stagnation, to falling profits and deeper crises.

At the root of Hutton's outlook lies a belief that markets can be made to work. In describing the cause of the 1990-92 recession he writes: "the dogma of inequality lay behind every gyration of the old spiral of boom and bust, as the colossal misallocation of resources that it represented".

Hutton concentrates on the effects of the increasing inequality which had resulted from the Tories' policies. For Hutton this meant that the proportion of the available income changed, as those groups with higher incomes save at a higher rate than those with low incomes. As the recession exacerbated income differentials, the level of "aggregate demand" declined, expectations worsened and the economy slid into recession.

But this ignores the fact that the recession was not limited to Britain alone, and occurred almost simultaneously across the globe, even in "those countries with the type of "moral capitalism" favoured by Hutton.

Hutton criticises traditional bourgeois economists because they abstract from real society, and so fail to describe real relationships and behaviour in the market place. But his method is similar.

Hutton bases his description of economic behaviour on an ideal type of "economic individual" without any conception of class conflicts. Instead we have "savers and consumers", "producers and consumers", "employers who value their team", and "workers who enjoy the work". This is Hutton's idealised cast of "economic actors". The class dynamics of capitalist accumulation are lost in a hazy reverie about an ideal market economy.

Hutton's mistakes are most clearly exposed when he attempts to use

"game theory" to update Keynes' idea of the "rational economic actor". He shows how, in various game theory scenarios, co-operation is more successful than competition.

He quotes psychologists, who point to the logical evidence that we do not equate future rewards with present ones, and that we favour the short term over the long term.

This pop psychology is no use in explaining why one set of capitalists, like the German bosses, should be able to pursue long term goals, whilst others, like the British, pursue short term ones.

It abstracts from the real conditions which make monopolies and trusts successful, and replaces them with an all embracing psychological "law". It abstracts from the real dynamics of capitalist society, driven by the necessity to accumulate capital, and treats all economic actors as fundamentally the same—facing different choices but with the same problems and dilemmas ahead of them.

Hutton is laughably selective, subjective and superficial in his description of Britain's more successful rivals. Any "fact" no matter how slender is celebrated in his support; no generalisation is too great:

"East Asian and particularly Japanese capitalist structures emphasise trust, continuity, reputation and co-operation in economic relationships."

Forgotten

The dictatorships, sweat shops and slums of East Asia are conveniently forgotten. The vast network of insecure, and low paid workers, savagely exploited and oppressed, which underpins the Japanese system of lifetime work for the workers of big companies, is overlooked.

Hutton venerates the Japanese and German "success stories" at a time when the institutional framework, of their success—the post-war order—is starting to creak and decay. These two systems will not be viewed as such tremendous models in ten years time.

Just as Hutton's political economy

rests upon a superficial framework, so does his political and economic programme.

Hutton hails debate about a republic in Britain, but favours the retention of the monarchy. He calls for a constitution with a republican "attitude". He calls for the electoral system to become "more proportional". He calls for firmer regulation of the privatised utilities. The trade unions must become partners with business. Britain needs to create a "stakeholder capitalism".

Chord

No wonder Hutton has struck a chord with Blair and his cronies. This recipe for the revival of British capitalism requires simply a moral revolution—and it costs nothing. Change the constitution and the government, and the economy will follow.

Unfortunately for Blair, things are not so simple. Capitalism is a system in decline. Even the "successful" imperialist economies have vast pools of unemployed, disgusting poverty and oppression. On a world scale whole continents have undergone steep falls in real income. Old diseases have returned. Famine and malnutrition stalk the third world.

All that cannot be reversed by a change of morals or culture.

You could radically change Britain's economy—if you were prepared to tax the rich, channel state spending into industry and services, nationalise the banks, regulate the international movement of capital and place the whole running of industry under workers' control.

But that would involve a fight between two classes, not simply a change in moral values at the top. And that is something which Hutton, along with his Blairite allies, cannot even contemplate. ■

For an in depth Marxist analysis of Britain's economy, read "British capitalism under the Tories—results and prospects" by Paul Morris and Keith Harvey, in Permanent Revolution 10, available from Workers Power price £2.50.



Dealers make fast bucks gambling on world capital markets while investment in production always comes second. But Hutton's answer ignores the class struggle altogether.



MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

"We need more than just an SWP front"

THE SOCIALIST Workers Party trade union conference at the Manchester Free Trade Hall brought together hundreds of trade union militants and socialists from all over the country. Virtually every area of struggle in the unions in the last period was represented: health, education, local government, the RMT.

The conference was opened by Tony Cliff. His message was clear and was echoed by party speaker after party speaker throughout the day. The downturn was over, we are in a "transitional period" to a new upturn, a period that has elements of the past and elements of the new. Militants should not aim too high, but victories are possible in the workplace: a dramatic contrast to the 1980s, "a decade of defeats".

Despite the overwhelming predominance of public sector white collar workers, in the many three-minute contributions from the floor it was possible to get a picture of what is going on in workplaces: the small successes, the victimisations, the growing mood of resistance to the bosses' offensive on jobs, re-organisations, productivity deals.

This was the strength of the conference. But it was also its weakness. In the

corridors and cafes, which were almost the venue of an alternative "conference", delegates discussed in depth some of the issues facing militants, which were not getting much of an airing in the hall. As one SWP member put it "There is only so much you can take of branch reports".

Indeed the whole day had the character of a cross between a rally and a school for new SWP trade unionists.

As such it did not grapple with how to tackle many of the real problems facing experienced trade unionists trying to organise to fight, struggling to win their members to action often against the outright sabotage of the bureaucracy and the Tory anti-union laws.

The resolution to the conference from *Socialist Worker*, which was meant to sum up and guide the conference, was generously allowed 15 minutes for discussion! Attempts by Workers Power delegates to amend this resolution were denied. It was finally agreed to allow us five minutes to speak against.

What was wrong with the resolution, which was reprinted in the following week's *Socialist Worker*? There was plenty in it that we supported, as our speaker said: from rebuilding shop floor

organisation, recruiting workers to the unions and fighting the anti-union laws to opposing the Labour Party ditching Clause 4.

The fundamental weakness of the resolution was that it enshrined the SWP's current opposition to building a rank and file organisation in the unions today.

Instead the resolution restricted itself to building "networks of activists" with the implication that this would be done simply through selling *Socialist Worker*.

The question for many at the conference may have seemed one of timing. To launch a rank and file movement now—or even to build groups in particular industries under acute attack—would be premature, so this argument goes. Chris Harman in his summing up even seemed to give this perspective some succour when he said that such a movement was not possible today but neither was it a distant prospect.

But the crucial argument is not just about timing. Does anybody seriously doubt that trade union militants who want to fight against a do-nothing bureaucracy should be organising themselves in the unions at the moment? Shouldn't they be standing against these sell-out merchants in union elections and building groups of class struggle militants organised demo-

cratically across the union? Unfortunately the SWP leadership thinks not!

They think this should all be done through *Socialist Worker* and the SWP. In the process they conveniently "forget" that there are other political tendencies in the trade unions, Labour Party militants, workers still influenced by Stalinism, other socialists and anarchists and many non-aligned militants not yet ready to be organised by a "revolutionary party". All these are being given an ultimatum, "build through *Socialist Worker* or go your own way". This is self-defeating sectarianism.

The conference had no workshops to assemble delegates into industry or union groups, no chance to discuss the existing "networks" or Broad Lefts, or how to create organisation where none exists. The conference was an important opportunity squandered.

The SWP organises thousands of militants who want to build in the unions and struggle for socialism. It could help organise tens of thousands more struggling to transform the unions into fighting organisations of our class.

In Manchester, to its shame, the SWP turned its face resolutely against that task. ■

The Socialist Workers Party hosted a 1,500 strong trade union conference in Manchester last month.

Aimed in part at co-ordinating the SWP's current turn to the unions, the conference was also a concession to those in the SWP who have been arguing for building a rank and file movement in the unions, a perspective abandoned by the party in the early 1980s.

Jeremy Dewar reports on the highs and lows of the Manchester conference, while Mark Harrison looks at a new book by SWP leader Alex Callinicos and what it tells us about the SWP's approach to building such a movement.

CALLINICOS BOOK

Wrong in the 70s, wrong today

TO ACCOMPANY its turn to the unions, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) has published *Socialists in the Trade Unions*, by Alex Callinicos.

The book is an amended version of an article "The Rank and File Movement Today" which first appeared in 1982 in the SWP's theoretical journal (ISJ 2:17). Unfortunately it contains the same errors.

The principal difference between the book and the article is that the new version has an upbeat introduction and a happy ending. The old article was written during the "downturn", whereas today, according to the SWP, we are in the "transition" towards the "upturn".

The 1982 article was an epitaph for the SWP's trade union work of the preceding decade. It ended with the comment: "We must make sure we do better next time."

Will they do better this time? The signs are not good, since the SWP do not appear to have learnt any political lessons since 1982.

The SWP (formerly the International Socialists—IS) was, until 1982, in favour of building rank and file movements inside the trade unions. Against the Communist Party's "broad lefts" (bureaucratic electoral machines) the SWP/IS championed the rank and file movement.

They argued then, and Callinicos repeats it in his book, that the bureaucracy as a whole, left and right, have material interests different from and frequently counterposed to those of the mass of rank and file workers. As such, while united action with bureaucrats is possible, they could never be relied upon to conduct a struggle to the end. Only independent rank and file organisations can be relied upon to do this.

On this basic proposition Workers Power and the SWP agree. Where we disagree is on exactly what a rank and file movement is, how it should be built and what its political character ought to be.

The first weakness of the SWP's approach to the rank and file movement is that it sees a largely unproductive bureaucracy inside the unions, that avoids the bureaucracy.

Callinicos quotes the Clyde Workers' Committee's first leaflet, written during the First World War, which read:

"We will support the officials just so long as they rightly represent the workers, but we will act independently immediately they misrepresent them."

He argues that this, "remains the best summary of the nature of rank and file organisation".

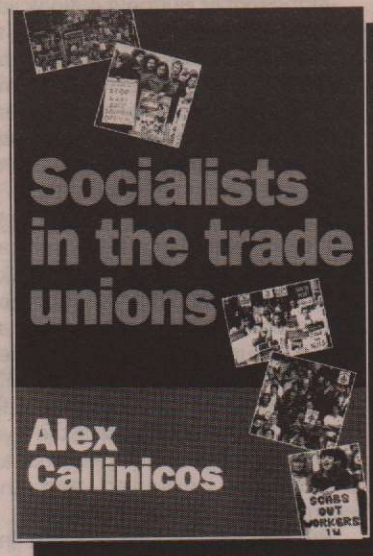
But a rank and file organisation that limits itself to either supporting officials or acting independently of them is inadequate. The history of the Clyde shop stewards' movement demonstrates this.

The officials were able to isolate the Shop Stewards' and Workers' Committee Movement, leading to the failure of their attempted "independent" anti-war strike during the First World War. They were able to outmanoeuvre the militants in 1919, keeping disputes led by the stewards fragmented, and helping the bosses pull Britain back from the brink of a revolutionary crisis.

The SWP concludes from this is that the shop stewards simply under-estimated the need for a party to "generalise" the struggles. While this is partially true, the fact that many of their leaders became founder members of the Communist Party suggests that it was not the decisive mistake they made. Their real failing was their fear of the bureaucracy and their refusal to challenge its hold on the unions—a failing which stemmed from the syndicalist traditions of the movement.

"With the officials when possible and against them necessary" is only part of the task of a rank and file organisation. We need to challenge the bureaucracy, break its hold on the unions, defeat its political hold on the mass of the working class.

"The best of the shop stewards' movement learnt this lesson. It was this that pushed them towards communism. But their weakness was with an independent party. They saw the limitations of the party and refused to build an independent organisation. They learnt this lesson in the years of the war years in the Communist-led Minority Movement of the 1920s.



Independent rank and file organisation is necessary. But this independence does not mean abstaining from the fight to get rid of the bureaucracy. It means fighting to transform the nature of union officialdom—electing militant fighters to the leadership, placing them under the direct control of the rank and file, regularly elected by it, accountable to it, and making sure it has the same material conditions as the workers it represents.

For the SWP mounting a challenge to the bureaucracy in this way is almost a no-go area.

For a long time during the 1980s the SWP maintained the absurd line of refusing to take any union positions, for fear that they would be tainted by bureaucratism. Today they recognise that in certain circumstances they have to take positions, but their approach is still one of fear of the bureaucracy. As Callinicos puts it:

"Some involvement in the official machine is unavoidable. Particularly in conditions where the trade union bureaucracy still has the initiative, socialists will have to adopt a careful approach." (p59).

The SWP retains the syndicalist preju-

Another missed opportunity

dices of the early shop stewards with regard to the "official machine". Callinicos cringes at the thought of taking over the union organisation Why? Because for the SWP rank and file independence is organisational, not political.

For the SWP, as long as rank and file organisation is action-based, not controlled by the officials, it is good; it is independent. Its logic will be to push workers towards socialism. It may be limited to the workplace, but it is self-activity, and that is decisive.

This was the thinking that inspired Tony Cliff's infatuation with what he called the "do-it-yourself reformism" of the post-war British shop stewards. In the engineering and car industries shop stewards developed a large degree of independence from the national bureaucracy, negotiating piece rates, organising and settling disputes. Their action was limited to the narrow concerns of the workplace, but it was "independent".

Yet, the rank and file movement that is independent only by virtue of its abstention from a political fight with the bureaucracy, is doomed.

The proof of this lies in the fate of the SWP's own rank and file initiative, the National Rank and File Movement.

In 1982 Callinicos was writing that the National Rank and File Movement (NRFM), set up by the SWP/IS in 1974, was "stillborn". Its brief period of existence, he argued, was marked by the "triumphalism" of the SWP and marred by the organisation's "substitutionism" (a belief that the party could substitute for the working class). The result was that the rank and file groups it organised became sectional and "immune from general problems of the class".

These criticisms have disappeared in the new version of history. Callinicos pins the failure of the NRFM on the objective situation of that time:

"More fundamental, however, was that IS's rank and file initiative was launched just as the pendulum of class struggle began to swing back in the bosses' favour." (p51)

The bad objective situation is a convenient scapegoat. (See article, above, right) It absolves the SWP and its political method of responsibility for the failure. It is a

AND THE RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT



1984: Miners rejoice as Scargill makes the strike official. But control of the action was always from above. SWP stood aside from the National Rank and File Miners' Movement . . . because of the "downturn" in the class struggle!

"economism".

It was eloquently stated by Tony Cliff as early as 1957:

"Every struggle of the working class, however limited it may be, by increasing its self-consciousness and education, undermines reformism . . . The main task of real, consistent socialists is to unite and generalise the lessons drawn from the day-to-day struggles. Thus can it fight reformism."

Between 1970 and 1974 this theory was put to the test. The workers struggled on a massive scale, culminating in a miners' strike that effectively brought down a Tory government.

Yet, within a year, a Labour government was able to impose wage cuts on a massive scale and workers accepted it. Their "do-it-yourself reformism" had not transcended Labour's "we'll do it for you" reformism—reformism from above. For all the strength of the industrial struggle the militants were disarmed by the Labour victory.

The SWP, which had predicted the demise of reformism in a matter of months, was helpless in the face of this political crisis of leadership within the layer of rank and file militants who had previously led such remarkable battles. Economic struggle alone did not undermine reformism. And that left the NRFM high and dry.

The NRFM was not politically equipped to deal with this crisis of leadership. It refused to adopt a programme that could have confronted the politics of reformism. This was quite deliberate. In 1974 Andreas Nagliatti, the IS Industrial Organiser, spelled out what the rank and file movement should be limited to:

"What can bind [the militants] together is a programme for fighting around certain minimal demands—against wage freeze and incomes policy, for an end to the Industrial

The truth about the downturn

THE SWP blamed the failure of the NRFM in the 1970s on the objective situation, yet it was not as bad as they would have us believe. It is true that the arrival of a Labour government in 1974 changed the political landscape. But it did not obliterate either the militancy of sections of the working class, nor the role of the trade union bureaucracy in sabotaging that militancy. The same can be said of the 1980s.

The "downturn" was certainly marked by defeats—but they were defeated struggles. Any one of them could have been turned into a victory given a fighting leadership. During each one the urgent need for rank and file organisation was posed—from the firefighters in 1977/78, through the "winter of discontent" in 1978/79, the 1980 steel strike, the health strikes of 1982, the miners' strike of 1984/85 to the print strike of 1986 and beyond. In each case rank and file workers needed to organise themselves into a coherent opposition to the bureaucracy.

As late as 1979 the SWP apparently recognised this. Although now they claim the "downturn" had started some four years earlier, Cliff wrote:

"The possibility of once more building a rank and file movement, far more independent of the trade union bureaucracy than in 1969-74 is with us." (Socialist Worker, 26 May 1979)

Yet from that day to this the SWP opposed building a rank and file movement.

Their obsession with the "downturn" turned them into hopeless pessimists. They obstructed the building of rank and file groups. In the building industry their members were expelled for carrying on the tactic. In the health strike of 1982 Workers Power initiated a rank and file conference that drew together more than a hundred rank and file delegates. The SWP abstained from organising these militants.

The SWP also stayed away from the National Rank and File Miners' Movement conferences which had drawn together militants from nearly every coalfield in 1984/85.

The "downturn" was an excuse not just for ditching the old rank and file movement tactic, it was also a justification for their deeply entrenched sectarianism. It left the SWP, despite its claim of 10,000 members, with feeble roots in the trade union movement. Its presence as a fighting socialist opposition at a national or regional level is still negligible in most unions.

Today the SWP's sectarianism is emerging in a slightly different form. The objec-

tive situation is changing for the better. A rank and file movement may come back onto the agenda. But in the meantime their policy is largely based on constructing a party front.

Dutifully following this line, a new section in Callinicos' book deals with the Communist Party in the 1930s. In the 1982 article he argued that between the Minority Movement of the 1920s and the NRFM of the 1970s there was no serious attempt to build a rank and file movement in Britain.

Now, however, we get a whole section of the book on the Stalinised Communist Party in the aircraft industry and in the Hackney factories. The Communist Party's Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions (LCDTU) of the late 1960s and early 1970s—denounced as the party's "industrial front" front in the 1982 article—is lauded as "a rank and file body co-ordinated by the Communist Party and its supporters".

Callinicos was right in 1982, wrong today. But why the change of heart? Because what the SWP wants to build is not a rank and file organisation, but a party front. Showing the importance of the "network of socialists" in the 1930s in building shop stewards' organisation justifies their own emphasis on this today.

They are playing the role of the CP. They can do the job of the rank and file movement via the party. And when a rank and file movement is launched, it will be their property—their very own "industrial front" but with its name changed to rank and file movement.

The SWP account of history leaves out one important fact. Whatever the good work of the CP in building stewards' organisation in the 1930s and 1960s, the political purpose to which they put this work was a reformist one—electing left officials, promoting cross-class alliances and sabotaging any genuine independent rank and file movements.

Of course the SWP have not become Stalinist reformists. But their praise for the work of the Stalinists should raise alarm bells. The Stalinists' "networks of socialists" were notoriously sectarian—both towards the Trotskyist and anarchist militants who opposed them from the left, and towards the Labourite workers with whom they were supposed to be uniting.

You have been warned. Unfortunately, when the SWP does decide to turn its "network of socialists" into a rank and file movement, we are likely to get something like the LCDTU, rather than the Shop Stewards Movement or the Minority Movement. ■

Relations Act and laws against picketing, for the democratisation of the unions, for a fighting policy on wages. In this lies the rationale for the rank and file organisation.

The revolutionary party, in contrast, sees the need to smash the state, build a workers' council state and so on.

In 1974 Cliff outlined a programme for the NRFM that was explicitly limited to militant trade union questions. Any idea of a "transitional programme", a programme that started with the immediate needs of

against the police. Nothing, in short, beyond what militant, but reformist, trade unionists were themselves saying.

This was no oversight. It flowed directly from the SWP's conception that economic struggle leads spontaneously to a political break with reformism. It does not. This political method, not a "downturn" in the class struggle, led the NRFM to shipwreck.

Far from learning this lesson, Callinicos' prescription for overcoming the divide between politics and economics in the unions repeats the same old mistakes. Politics are for the party. Economic demands are for the trade union struggle and the rank and file movement.

In preparation for the upturn, Callinicos calls for socialists to build strong sectional organisation, encourage solidarity with other struggles, and spread general socialist ideas. As for the rank and file movement, if and when the SWP decide to try and build it:

"The actual programmes of these movements may consist chiefly of straightforward trade-union demands. Moreover, to succeed they have to unite workers of all political views in support of these demands. But their leadership has to come from revolutionaries." (p57)

Talk about back to the future! The rank and file movements will be technically led by revolutionaries, but these revolutionaries will limit the politics of these movements to "straightforward trade union demands".

In other words the SWP will once again set up rank and file movements that fail to address the political crisis of the militants. They will be militant trade union bodies but politics will be left to the party. The SWP have learnt nothing from the failure of the NRFM. ■

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the workers and developed demands and action which broke with reformism and led onto the struggle for socialism, was rejected.

The Cliff/Nagliatti minimum programme did pose the need to democratise the unions but it said absolutely nothing about the Labour government that was imposing the social contract, nothing about the struggle for workers' control in the factories against a government plotting workers' participation schemes, nothing about expropriating and nationalising bankrupt firms, nothing about defending picket lines

ity...

alibi and an excuse for a long period of passive refusal to fight for a rank and file movement.

Callinicos argues that the bane of trade unionism is the inevitable creation of a bureaucracy, and the inevitable imposition of a rigid separation of politics and economics on the trade unions by this reformist bureaucracy.

This understanding surely tells you something about what sort of rank and file movement revolutionaries should try to build. It implies that we should fight to build a rank and file movement that is politically independent of reformist politics. This can only mean fighting for revolutionary politics within the rank and file movement.

Of course, the rank and file movement is a united front. We can't impose revolutionary politics on it. But we should try to win leadership of such a movement on the basis of our politics.

Yet in the NRFM the SWP/IS did no such thing. They refused to fight for, or even to raise, their own politics within the rank and file movement. They controlled the NRFM through bureaucratic manipu-

lation, deliberately limiting the scope of its politics to the economic, albeit militant, trade union level. At the first conference they even rejected an attempt by some politically organised trade union militants to commit the NRFM to a clear anti-racist position!

This flowed directly from their theory about "do-it-yourself reformism". The economic struggle itself would, they believed, generate a militant political class consciousness. Workers would spontaneously break from reformism and embrace political class consciousness.

The party could help this by generalising struggles, but it would not seek to transform the economic struggles of the class through a political programme counter-posed to that of the reformist worker militants. That would be running "too far ahead of workers' consciousness". Instead the party would merely be the "glue" sticking the different sectors of struggle together.

This view that the "generalising" of economic struggle automatically generates a political break with reformism is deeply rooted in the SWP's politics. We call it

MEXICO

Roots of the Zapatista rebellion

Last month **Mark Abram** explained why Mexico's economy is in a mess. This month he looks at the politics of one of the main opposition forces, the Zapatistas.

“THE GOVERNMENT will need to eliminate the Zapatistas to demonstrate effective control of the national territory and security policy.”

This memo was written by the bosses of Chase Bank in New York on 13 January this year. It was issued during negotiations for the \$50 billion rescue package for the Mexican economy put together by banks such as Chase.

One month later the Mexican President, Ernesto Zedillo, tried to oblige. His troops went into the Lancondoña rainforest in the southern state of Chiapas on a search and destroy mission for the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) and its leader, Subcomandante Marcos.

The EZLN simply withdrew deeper into the forest and Zedillo called off the hunt. A new unstable stand-off now exists in the Chiapas.

It was on 31 December 1993 that the Zapatista guerrillas first emerged from the mountains and rainforest in this small south-eastern corner of Mexico. Their explosion into Mexican politics was to ruin the ruling class' celebrations over the start of North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA)—the free trade agreement between Mexico, USA and Canada that took effect from 1 January 1994.

Subsidies

For the poor peasants of Chiapas NAFTA was “a death certificate for the Indian peoples of Mexico”. Corn, the region's chief commodity and staple food, is set to have its subsidies reduced under NAFTA as cheap US corn comes in.

NAFTA was the latest in a long list of measures that have impoverished the peasants. The region is rich in natural resources. Although it occupies less than 4% of Mexico and holds less than 4% of the country's population, Chiapas produces half Mexico's hydro-electric power, is the second largest producer of oil, and the largest coffee exporter.

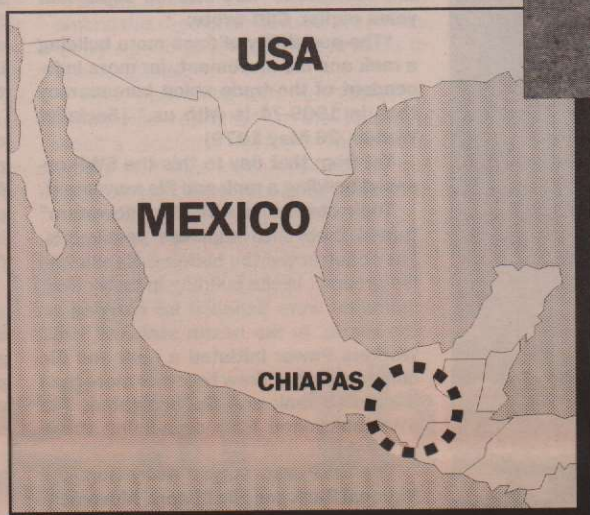
By contrast, the people of Chiapas live in miserable conditions. The region boasts the worst statistics on poverty of the country's 32 states. One in five receive no income at all. Another 40% receive less than \$3 a day, the ridiculously low level set for the minimum wage. Three-quarters of the population are under-nourished. In the last twenty five years Chiapas has been torn apart by rapid capitalist development. That development has pauperised a majority of its people and enriched a few.

Intimidation

Through bribery and intimidation land was concentrated in the hands of large landowners. By 1983, 100,000 peasants were landless. Many more were robbed of their land to make way for the dams on the Grijalva river which took some 100,000 hectares of the best land, displacing a further 90,000 peasants.

In 1992 the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) removed the final obstruction to a rapid concentration of land ownership.

Article 27 of the Mexican constitution had allowed some 54% of the lands of the area to fall under the control of communal associations after the revolution of 1910. The PRI effectively abolished this clause, enabling the big cattle ranchers and plan-



tation owners to carry out massive land grabs.

These are the social conditions that created the EZLN. It is all the more remarkable that the EZLN should emerge at a time when guerrilla movements all around Latin America are disarming: shedding their fatigues for suits and setting aside their rifles to take their seats in parliaments and other bourgeois democratic forums.

The emergence of the EZLN can, in part, be explained by what sets Mexico apart from other countries in the region.

Elections

Elsewhere a wave of demilitarisation and elections in the late 1980s and early 1990s convinced many guerrilla groups to get involved in the “democratic process”. From the M-19 group in Colombia to the FMLN in El Salvador, guerrillas came to terms with their failure to win state power by armed struggle. No longer able to rely on aid from the Soviet Union or Cuba, the guerrillas abandoned the armed struggle.

Yet Mexico presented a paradox. It has always had contested elections since the revolution early this century. But every election returned the same party to power—the PRI.

Widespread electoral corruption, monopolisation of the media, control of the trade unions and a universal system of bribes and pay offs to its supporters, all ensured the PRI victory after victory for 60 years.

Only in the 1980s did the first crack appear in the State-Party edifice. When the US-trained economic technocrats took over the PRI in the wake of the 1982 debt crisis, the old policy of state domination was abandoned in an orgy of privatisation and free trade.

Some of the traditionalists objected to the neo-liberal open market policies that the US demanded. In 1988

Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, a leader of the PRI, split from the ruling party and contested the 1988 Presidential elections. He was widely held to have won, but the PRI pulled the plug on the computer counting the vote and declared itself the winner.

The Zapatistas are also a product of this disillusion and frustration with the PRI. But no new guerrilla movement could be unaffected by the end of the Cold War and the defeat of various guerrilla movements.

The EZLN have around 2,000 poor peasants under arms. They have renounced the idea of seizing state power on the model of Castro or the FSLN, either in Mexico City or the Chiapas. They have renounced the idea of small groups of insurgents (*foci*) moving around the country harassing the cities from the rural strongholds.

But they have also reflected on the massacres carried out by the Guatemalan military in the 1980s against tens of thousands of peasants who were left unarmed and unprotected by guerrillas as they retreated in the face of the enemy.

The EZLN exist, by their own admission, simply to publicise the misery and resistance of the peasants, to condemn the system that caused it and to provoke a political response from the left in the rest of the country.

Truce

Militarily, the EZLN declared a truce within weeks of their first seizure of some towns in Chiapas in January 1994. Since then have withdrawn, only emerging to seize and hold towns for a few hours or days before withdrawing again. They are aware of their military weakness in the face of the Mexican army.

Despite its democratic character and inspiring struggle, the grave political weakness of the EZLN is its conception of the kind of political



While many guerrilla movements have made peace with imperialism, economic privations have forced Mexican peasants into armed struggle. But the Zapatistas have not broken with the bourgeois opposition.

movement it wants and the goals it aspires to.

In August 1994, on the eve of the Presidential elections, the EZLN helped convene the National Democratic Convention (CDN) in Chiapas. Six thousand representatives of struggles from all over Mexico gathered, in the words of the EZLN leader, Subcomandante Marcos, “to fill the void on the left in Mexico” and “to search for new ways of fighting, new ways of being political, of engaging in politics.”

Yet there has been nothing new about the CDN. It is what revolutionary socialists call a “popular front”. It combines the grievances of poor peasants, assembly line workers and well-heeled Mexican bourgeois opposition figures into one movement for “democracy”. It papers over the underlying class contradictions that divide all those forces.

Worse, the movement is explicitly limited to recognising the leadership of the bourgeois, and hence the most conciliatory, forces within this loose coalition for change.

Intellectual

In the time-honoured tradition of guerrillism, Marcos, the intellectual who has donned fatigues and lives with the people in the rainforest, pays his respect and declares his allegiance to the bourgeoisie:

“Cardenas became the indisputable representative of the Mexican forces of democracy... In the August 1994 election Cardenas represented the hope of a passive change for millions of Mexicans who live on the ground floor and basement of Mexico. Not only for the disinherited but also for the middle and well-off classes. Before August 1994 the way to civil and passive transition to democracy, liberty and justice was personified in Cardenas who was a serious, honest and effective leader.”

But Cardenas and his Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) do not represent the interests of the poor peasants and workers of Mexico. Cardenas has considerably modified his criticisms of neo-liberalism in Mexico since the 1988 elections were stolen from him.

The signs are that the EZLN is now disillusioned with the results. Marcos had hopes that their military strategy would encourage a renewal of civil society. But few reforms have been offered by Zedillo and even the basic demands for new elections for the governor in Chiapas have been turned

down so far by the PRI. Marcos has said that:

“we naturally reach the conclusion that arms will give us the space to manoeuvre again and open hostilities to put us back in the political arena.”

But this armed struggle is not even designed to win political power. It is designed to bring broad political movements into existence that can pressure for change. But since the trauma of the PRD's defeat in August 1994 these forces have been in retreat. Only 400 representatives came to a CDN meeting last November. Moreover, on 18 January the PRD signed a four-way pact to work on electoral reform with the PRI.

Reforms

It is clear that Cardenas could be tempted to accept reforms which promise the PRD a minor share of the spoils of power at state and national level even if it is not allowed to hold power itself.

The current course of the EZLN will not defeat Zedillo. A combination of isolated armed actions and popular front politics cannot forge the working class and poor peasants into a force capable of overthrowing the PRI or Mexican capitalism.

The alternative path for political change in Mexico lies in building a revolutionary party of the working class and urban poor. It needs to break the hold of the PRI over the trade union federation and set out to fight industrially and politically around a set of independent working class and poor peasant demands. ■

guia
APRIL 1995

ABAJO EL GOLPE DE YELTSIN!

DESPUES LA CAIDA DE COLLOR...

A dónde va Brasil?

Somalia: Hambre, guerra e invasión
Rusia: Restauración estalinista
Breves: Japon, India, Irak, Rigoberta Menchu

Guia, Spanish language publication of the LRCI. Issue 9 out this month. For details of this and previous issues write to LRCI, BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX

Until the beginning of December 1994, the clear favourite to win the French Presidential election was the man the Eurosceptics love to hate, Socialist Party member Jacques Delors. When he refused to stand, right-wing Prime Minister Edouard Balladur, of the Gaullist RPR, took over as the sure-fire favourite.

So confident were Balladur's backers that they called on the other RPR candidate, Jacques Chirac, to drop out of the contest, claiming that Balladur could win in the first round.

Now the opinion polls are showing Chirac as the clear winner, with Balladur uncertain of reaching the second round!

With 40% of the electorate undecided and a further 20% saying they could change their minds, anything could happen between now and the second round of polling, on 7 May.

Delors was popular despite his membership of President Mitterrand's Socialist Party (PS), which got barely 14% of the vote in last year's European elections. Having spent ten years in Brussels, he appeared untainted by the disastrous results of Mitterrand's 14 years in office. Furthermore, his stint as head of the European Union had given him a reputation as a "statesman", ideal for standing "above" party politics and deploying the considerable powers of the French presidency in the interests of the whole ruling class.

Substitute

But since Delors was not prepared to save the PS, the merry-go-round of candidates and opinion polls had to begin again. Delors' substitute, Lionel Jospin, has had to present himself as a critic of Mitterrand to have any hope of winning support. However, he was totally implicated in the past 14 years of Socialist rule.

During Mitterrand's first presidential term, Jospin ran the PS without a

FRENCH ELECTIONS Balladur's fading fortunes



Dodgy arms deals with Iran, illegal phone tapping, ministers profiteering from privatisation. Sounds familiar? For once this is not about Tory head office or Margaret Thatcher's favourite son. These are the scandals haunting French Prime Minister Edouard Balladur in his bid for the Presidency. Christina Duval from Pouvoir Ouvrier explains the twists and turns of the election campaign in France.

word of criticism. During the second term, he introduced student loans and encouraged the opening up of higher education to capitalist privateers.

Try as he might, Jospin cannot pretend that he had nothing to do with Mitterrand. The same Mitterrand who organised a systematic attack on workers' living standards, whose government knowingly allowed blood contaminated with HIV to be used for transfusions; who agreed to the destruction of the Greenpeace boat Rainbow Warrior; who presided over the crushing of the Kanak rebellion in New Caledonia, and who organised the systematic phone-tapping of 1348 "suspects"—journalists, actors, lawyers and even former Prime Minister Laurent Fabius!

Given such a record it is hardly surprising that the workers who once voted for Mitterrand are now turning their backs on Jospin. Jospin will not promise to reverse some of Balladur's

most unpopular measures, such as privatisations and anti-immigration laws, despite saying he is against them.

Working class distrust of the PS is so great that there is no guarantee that Jospin will even get through to the second round.

Balladur, who took over from Delors as front runner, was initially promoted as the same kind of safe, bank manager figure that everyone could trust. His complacency has since been shattered by a series of damaging scandals that have sent his ratings plummeting.

The key player in these events—as in so many of the "affaires" that have rocked France over recent years—is the shadowy Interior Minister, Charles Pasqua.

In a complex plot designed to block a corruption enquiry that might implicate him, Pasqua used the police to tap phones in a totally illegal manner, with Balladur's agreement.

Balladur made another gaffe by outlining his planned attacks on higher education, provoking the third major youth rebellion against his government in the space of 18 months. Tens of thousands of youth took to the streets and the government had to perform yet another ignominious backdown.

Fortune

Balladur was then revealed to have made a fortune out of shares in GSI, a company he had privatised in 1988 when he was Finance Minister. Furthermore, GSI paid him £10,000 a month for doing nothing!

Finally, Balladur and Pasqua have been implicated in a shady deal selling missiles to Iran. All this has made Balladur look less like a future president and more like an incompetent spiv.



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With this atmosphere of scandal and corruption, it is perhaps surprising that the two far-right candidates have not made more headway.

Le Pen's "respectable" face of fascism has, as usual, run up against the electoral liability of his more ardent supporters. Last month, a black youth was shot and killed by National Front (FN) thugs flyposting in Marseilles. More recently, 2 FN members were convicted of GBH on two school students. Le Pen has yet to reach 14% in the polls—the vote he got in the first round of the 1988 election.

Le Pen's support has partly been diminished by his nearest rival, Philippe De Villiers, the more "reasonable", populist face of the extreme right. Concentrating less on immigration, De Villiers espouses traditionalist, Catholic values on the family and a strong nationalism. However, it seems unlikely that he will get more than 10% of the vote.

Jacques Chirac has gained from Balladur's loss of support. Chirac's campaign is heavily populist, stress-

ing the need for change and a more humane face of government. He has attacked companies for not giving workers the rewards of the recovery, and has called for across-the-board wage increases. Faced with the hundreds of thousands of homeless, he has called for empty apartments to be requisitioned.

Aside from the breath-taking cynicism involved—Chirac has twice been Prime Minister and has run viciously anti-working class governments—the fact that a large part of the population are prepared to consider voting Chirac speaks volumes about the state of the French left.

The French Communist Party (PCF) supported the Socialists and was part of the government from 1981-1984. Increasingly discredited because of its bureaucratic reformism, the PCF is trying to reverse its decline by claiming that it has changed.

However, the new PCF leader and candidate, Robert Hue is currently tipped to get around 7%, less than half of the PCF's 1981 score.

Pledges

The PCF's increasingly right-wing trajectory, its promises to small business, and its nationalist, anti-European stance is not a winning recipe, despite its pledges to reduce the working week without loss of pay and to raise salaries.

A perpetual feature of the last five presidential elections has been the candidature of Arlette Laguiller, member of Lutte Ouvrière, a uniquely French left group that has thousands of members but concentrates on passive propaganda. Laguiller has traditionally got around 2% of the vote.

Having finally been taken seriously by the press—after 21 years!—Laguiller seems to be set to double her vote. Nevertheless, her campaign, with no clear calls to action or even a sharp anti-racist line, can offer nothing to workers or youth.

Despite the weakness and the politics of the PS and the PCF, an important section of the working class still retains illusions in these parties and will be hoping for a victory of the left against the right.

For this reason, Pouvoir Ouvrier (the French sister organisation of Workers Power) is calling for a vote for either Jospin or Hue. But we do this with no illusions. Whoever wins the elections, the result will be a further erosion of the living standards of the working class.

The only way that French workers can really change their lives is by taking up the road of struggle against unemployment, low wages, attacks on health care, and racist immigration laws. Already there have been a wave of strikes over pay, in particular at Renault, foreshadowing what the future President can expect. That fightback must let the workers break from their reformist leaders who tie them to pro-capitalist electoral politics. ■



French youth have been instrumental in spoiling Prime Minister Balladur's bid for the Presidency.

PERU - ECUADOR

Down with the reactionary war!

Earlier this year Peru and Ecuador went to war over disputed frontier territory. In the midst of the clashes between the two armies, the LRCI's sister organisation in Peru, Poder Obrero, issued a leaflet condemning the war. We reprint key excerpts from the leaflet:

On 26 January the national press announced the Ecuadorian military incursion into Peruvian territory in the frontier zone of the Cordillera del Condor, where there are still no boundary posts to mark off the frontier. Both sides (Peru and Ecuador) have begun a series of mutual accusations over who began these territorial violations. Both countries have mobilised enormous numbers of soldiers and supplies.

In 1942 (after the 1941 war in which Peru was triumphant) the two

PODER OBRERO (PERU)

Lima, February 1995

countries signed a protocol witnessed by Chile, Brasil and Argentina, with the USA acting as guarantor for the defining of the disputed frontiers. It was North American imperialism which drew up the maps of the frontier in the Cordillera del Condor, granting the spoils to the victor. It did so without taking any account of the wishes of the native population living in the region. A demarcation was made without considering

the cultural, historical or linguistic traditions of the population.

The left and the trade union bureaucracy have once more blatantly adapted to the bourgeoisie's revered patriotism. Many of them call for participation in the war front in order that our young brothers, the students, workers, and peasants of Ecuador, are shot.

They call on us to join ranks with the military—those genocidal, corrupt, violators of human rights, colluding with the drug traffickers—as if these gorillas had authority from

on high to defend "national sovereignty".

This war will only help them; in the case of the gorillas, to improve their deteriorating image. The government will use it as an escape valve.

We say:

- Peruvian soldier, don't take up arms against a young Ecuadorian worker like yourself! Use them against your genocidal and corrupt officers, use them against the government which wants to take your job away, use them to defend your workplace against the privatisations!
- Down with all frontiers which divide peoples according to the whim and petty interests of the bourgeoisie and imperialism!
- Brotherhood with our Ecuadorian class brothers at the front!
- The CGTP [Peruvian TUC] must initiate huge mobilisations and demonstrations against the war, bringing together all those sectors in conflict to declare a strike against the war! ■

SCIENCE

JACK TULLY

Agribusiness and apple genes...

THANKS TO modern technology and agricultural techniques, enough food could be produced to feed everybody. But people still die of starvation. And that is largely due to the absurd priorities of capitalism.

In principle, using today's methods, every human being could have sufficient quality and quantity of food to keep them alive and healthy.

This confounds earlier Malthusian predictions that world population would grow faster than food production. How has this major expansion in agriculture been possible?

This has been achieved primarily by concentrating on and developing a relatively limited number of crops. Capitalist production—including agriculture—insists on uniformity, in order to cut costs.

There used to be 400 varieties of apple available in Britain, with an incredible variety of textures, flavours and scents. Today you'll be very lucky if your local supermarket stocks more than half a dozen kinds.

The other 394 types were not inferior in terms of their taste or nutritional value. It was just less profitable to produce them in vast quantities. The result is that we all eat the misnamed Golden Delicious.

While a visit to your local supermarket may reveal all kinds of exotic new fruits on the shelves, the chances are that these too have been "standardised" in their country of origin.

The globalisation of our diet that seems to offer ever increasing variety is in fact a two way process, leading as well to ever increasing uniformity.

It is not just the McDonald's wrappers littering most cities on the face of the earth which are the same. The corn that produces the bread that makes the McDonald's bun, and the grass that the cow in the burger eats, are increasingly identical.

The same highly productive strains of vegetables—and animals—are tending to be used all over the world.

This may have extremely dangerous consequences.

By biological selection and, increasingly, by molecular genetic techniques, the productivity of each strain is improved. But there is a price to pay. At the same time the strain becomes more and more vulnerable to disease, with less and less genetic variation which would enable it to resist.

In the 1970s and 1980s Dutch Elm Disease decimated British elm trees, changing the landscape. Imagine if the same kind of thing hap-

pened to corn.

In the 1970s, agribusiness began to realise that there was—literally—a wealth of resources that could be exploited. Seeds from domesticated and wild plants from all over the world were collected by the International Board for Plant Genetic Resources.

Over 125,000 specimens were collected, with the aim of enriching the genetic stock of currently used crops and preserving plants with characters that might be useful in the future.

By definition, most of these plants came from countries dominated by imperialism. In the imperialist heartlands, capitalist agriculture has long since bulldozed away "unprofitable" crop types.

And what was done with this magnificent collection of resources? It was plundered by the multinational seed companies, who made new hybrids, patented them, then made massive profits selling the new plants back to "third world" countries.

The trade in hybrid seeds highlights one of the most perverse aspects of recent developments in biotechnology. Genes—the blueprints of life—can now be patented. They are being converted into the private property of a few capitalist multinationals, despite the fact that the genes themselves are there in our bodies, in plants and animals.

Will the technological advances guarantee world food production for the future?

No. Despite the introduction of new genetic characters from the pool of plants collected in the 1970s and 1980s, there will be no major change in the practice of world agriculture.

The introduction of new genetic varieties could protect world corn crops against the threat of a new virus, but for the moment the food companies are more concerned about producing bigger, glossier and brighter fruit and vegetables. They won't taste any better, in fact they'll probably taste of very little.

On their own, these techniques will neither guarantee world food supplies for the generations to come, nor enable us all to enjoy the incredible variety of food the earth holds in store.

If the capitalists are left to run things the agribusiness companies will make massive profits out of their monopoly over the plants and animals of the "third world". Much as they have done since capitalism first began to raid the world's larder. ■

our bodies.

Legal battles are going on to determine how far this patenting can go. The European Union has recently refused to allow human genes to be patented, although they are quite happy for companies to patent genes from cows or plants. It is only a matter of time before they will apply this to humans.

This will mean that someone can "own" the right to exploit, make money out of, a gene which everyone has millions of copies of in their own bodies. Marx defined capitalism as generalised commodity production—he couldn't anticipate quite how far capitalism would go in turning the very code of life into a commodity! ■

Patent nonsense?

THE OPPORTUNISM of the biotechnology companies has been most clearly expressed in the Human Genome Project. This multi-national billion-dollar scheme aims to provide the full genetic code of all of our genes.

The pharmaceutical companies are involved in it up to their necks, and they have already begun trying to patent bits of genes that they have decoded.

What do these genes do? For the vast majority, no one has any idea. But the patent lawyers hope that one day it will prove profitable. So "just in case" they whack a patent on something that you and I, and every other human being, carries in every cell of

BOSNIA

On the brink of a new Balkan war?

IT USED to be called the "Balkan powder keg", in the days when gunpowder was the most advanced way of killing people. A more modern metaphor for the fragile peace in former Yugoslavia might be the "Balkan cluster bomb". Like a modern hi-tech weapon, the next war in Bosnia, when it explodes, will wreak devastation across a huge area.

Last year's fighting ended with a UN-sponsored ceasefire which solved nothing. It left 70% of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the hands of its minority Serb community. It left millions of refugees without the right to return to their homes. It left all sides with the opportunity to re-arm and train new soldiers.

On the diplomatic front, the fourth partition plan for Bosnia was conjured up by the "Contact Group", a self appointed club of imperialist countries and Russia. The Bosnian Serbs threw out the Contact Group plan which requested that they hand back 21% of the captured territory. The Bosnian Serbs demanded that the plan be "adjusted" to allow Sarajevo to be split in two, the "northern corridor" (connecting Serbia with Serb-held land in Bosnia) to be widened and the three Bosnian government enclaves in the east of Bosnia to be handed over. In short, the Bosnian Serbs wanted imperialism to help them forge a Greater Serbia out of other peoples' territory.

The Bosnian Serb leadership have defied the combined might of Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the USA, secure in the knowledge that the imperialist "peacemakers" are fatally divided.

Germany, which helped instigate the break-up of Yugoslavia, backs Croatia. Britain and France seek to force the Bosnian government into making more concessions to Serbia. In Russia, Yeltsin's government has buckled under the pressure (since the December 1993 elections) from far-right chauvinist forces which demand unconditional solidarity for Russia's Serbian "brothers".

The USA, unable to achieve internal support for sending troops into Bosnia, has generally backed the Muslim-dominated Bosnian government. But Clinton shies away from an open conflict with Serbia. Such a conflict would further weaken Yeltsin's precarious position in Russia, and with it the US-backed restoration process. The US tries to square the circle of its pro-Yeltsin and pro-Bosnian government positions by quietly backing Turkish arms flights to the Bosnian city of Tuzla.

Imperialism, having meddled in former Yugoslavia, has no workable political solution to the turmoil it has helped create. All sides increasingly agree with the Bosnian Serb General Rado Mladic: "the conflict will only be decided on the battlefield".

With spring approaching, the Croatian government of Franjo Tudjman threatened to expel the UN forces in Krajina—the eastern 25% of Croatia controlled by the Serbs since the end of the Croatian-Serbian war of 1991.



Serb forces in Krajina wait for Croatia's onslaught

The four month ceasefire in Bosnia is crumbling. The spring thaw may bring renewed fighting along several fronts with disastrous consequences for the workers of the Balkans. Paul Morris surveys the battle lines.

The Krajinan refugees form an important social base for the war faction in Zagreb. But last month Tudjman drew back from ordering out the UN buffer forces. He feared drawing Belgrade into a renewed war behind the Krajinan Serbs. He also feared the withdrawal of Germany and the EU's economic aid to Croatia.

Another war in the Serb-held, and in many cases Serb-inhabited, areas of Croatia would have immediate repercussions in Bosnia. It would turn working class cities like Tuzla, whose Social Democratic council and multi-ethnic workers' movement have made it the primary destination for international solidarity, into huge battlegrounds. It would sound the death knell for the Muslim enclaves like Gorazde in eastern Bosnia and presage a "Berlin wall" in Sarajevo.

A war involving Bosnia, Serbia and Montenegro and Croatia could mark the beginning of a slide into general conflagration in the Balkans.

The Macedonian Republic's large ethnic Albanian minority has been agitating with increasing stridency for national rights. Kosovo, the predominantly Albanian region of Serbia, remains under Serb military occupation, with much of its education and legal system shut down in an effort to quell demands for national rights.

Meanwhile Greece and Albania are conducting a low level border skirmish, with regular shootings and kidnappings by border forces. In this conflict the 400,000 Albanian migrant workers in Greece and Albania's own minority of ethnic Greeks, are the bargaining chips.

What can be done? Amongst the workers of the rest of Europe and the world, effective action has to start by recognising the class lines within the war. The governments of the states lining up for slaughter are, without

exception, reactionary, pro-capitalist, nationalist criminals.

If Croatia goes to war with Serbia over the Krajina it would only be to impose renewed national oppression on the Serb majority in the Krajina, who have declared their own autonomous republic. It was Tudjman's oppressive nationalist policies in the Krajina which sparked the first shooting in the Balkan conflict, nearly five years ago.

Thus any Croat-Serbian war will be, like the last one, a reactionary war on both sides. It will be a war of two rampantly nationalist governments pursuing an ethnic-geographical solution to a problem that cannot be solved progressively on the terrain of capitalism. However, the Bosnian Muslims war of self defence—until last year conducted against combined Croat and Serb hostilities—has been qualitatively different: a just war of survival by a people who did not fit in to the plans for a Greater Serbia and Greater Croatia. It was a war to keep alive the idea of a multi-ethnic state in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Renewed fighting in Bosnia between its government and Serbs has already broken out after a Bosnian offensive around Tuzla. Bosnia's war retains the character of a just war on the part of the Bosnian government, justifying the solidarity of internationalist workers. But the pragmatic alliance between the Croatian and Bosnian governments holds dangers for those fighting for a multi-ethnic solution in Bosnia.

Meanwhile, we need to campaign for an immediate pull out of UN troops, who cannot and will not protect the rights of the Bosnian Muslims, for the lifting of the arms embargo and for increased working class solidarity to Bosnia and aid to all the victims of the conflict. ■

ON HIS first visit to England between 1842 and 1844 Engels was able to observe at close hand a mass, revolutionary workers' movement—the Chartists.

But before he returned to England for good as a refugee in 1849, Chartism had its last chance for success and failed. A huge demonstration from Kennington Common in London in 1848 was due to march on parliament, but was called off by the Chartist leaders. After this the movement went into sharp decline.

One reason for the decline was the onset of a long economic boom from 1851 to 1873. Skilled labour was in high demand during these years. The so-called "New Model" unionism developed on this basis, and by the end of the 1850s it held sway in the British labour movement.

The Amalgamated Society of Engineers, founded in 1850, was typical of this development. They had an office in London and a full time general secretary. Its "newness" lay in its sharp break from the influences of Owenism, syndicalism and Chartism which held sway in the 1830s and 1840. (See *Workers Power* 187)

The goals of these movements—radical democracy, co-operative production, and the general strike—were swept aside in favour of the narrow objective of organising the skilled trades.

Engels saw all this as a distinct step back. As early as 1858 he observed the strong tendency toward "bourgeoisification" in the English workers' movement.

Nevertheless, while the "New Model" union leaders liked to present themselves as the very model of Victorian respectability, the rank and file engaged in a number of important struggles in the 1860s.

Trades Councils, consisting of delegates of local unions, came into existence in London, Birmingham, Glasgow and many other cities. A working class press came into existence on both a national and local level. Most prominent was *The Beehive* edited by George Potter which generally advocated a militant line.

The trade union leaders—full-time secretaries of mainly skilled or semi-skilled unions—were pushed into the formation of an unofficial council, the so-called "Junta". They tried to centralise the unions as a nationwide movement and called the first Trades Union Congress together in 1868.

Support

In addition to the growth and centralisation of the unions an increased interest in political and international issues manifested itself. There was widespread union support for the Italian unification struggle, and active solidarity with the North in the American Civil War.

Renewed activity around the fight for universal male suffrage led to trade union participation in the Reform League from 1865 onwards.

All of these issues radicalised, albeit temporarily, the skilled workers' unions, based on the "aristocracy of

FROM CHARTISM TO THE NEW UNIONISM

The challenge of the "labour aristocracy"

Frederick Engels, co-founder with Marx of modern revolutionary socialism, died 100 years ago this year. In the latest in a series of articles on his life and work, Dave Stockton outlines Engels' view of the British working class after the defeat of Chartism.

labour", as Engels and later Marxists were to refer to this privileged stratum of workers.

E. J. Hobsbawm has assessed that in the second half of the last century this strata made up somewhere between 10 and 20 percent of the working class as a whole.

In 1867 the skilled workers earned an average of 50 shillings a week (£2.50) whereas the average unskilled worker earned half this. In some industries the differential might reach three or four times the level for labourers.

Skilled

However, even the skilled engineer worked a 57-60 hour week on average. Thus the demands for the abolition of overtime and piece rate were heard repeatedly from the rank and file, and sometimes the leaders were forced into action.

Their very political activity and more radical campaigning in this decade had an impact on the bosses' parties.

These parties moved to head off trouble and the development of independent working class politics by carrying out limited electoral reforms. The bosses' aim was to make only the layer of skilled workers into voters, thus dividing them off from the more "dangerous" and radical elements of the population.

Disraeli's Tories and Gladstone's Liberals vied with one another to win the support of the union leaders. Through the medium of a Royal Commission they agreed to reform of the anti-trade union laws so as to incorporate the union leaders into a mechanism of class collaboration.

The result was 1867 Reform Act. Whilst it doubled the electorate the Act still excluded the majority of men, and all women, from political life.

But it did give the vote to the "upper" layers of the working class. In addition the Trade Union Act of 1871 gave their unions a wide measure of legal recognition. These two Acts were enough to mollify the craft union leaders and, throughout the 1870s and 1880s, to tie them to the Liberals.

As a result, organised labour remained largely the preserve of the pro-Liberal "labour aristocrats". The Labour Representation League, formed in 1869 turned into a direct expression of this new "Lib-Labism". It proclaimed its commitment to "avoiding Utopian theories".

Engels watched with renewed disgust this second retreat of the English labour movement.

When asked to report for the press of the growing German labour movement in 1882, he repeated his view that the secret of the trade unions' bourgeois policy and leadership lay in British capitalism's dominance of the world market. Here, in embryo, was an understanding of the material roots of the growing reformism of the British workers' movement, in the fruits of colonial expansion and the conscious policy of incorporation carried out by the bosses.

ENGELS



1820★1895

The British workers, Engels claimed: "gaily share in the feast of England's monopoly of the world market and the colonies".

At the same time Engels recognised that the effect of this world domination was not uniform throughout the working class and that it was most strongly felt by the upper skilled layers:

"These benefits were very unequally parcelled out amongst them: the privileged minority pocket most, but even the great mass had at least a temporary share now and then. And that is the reason why, since the dying out of Owenism, there has been no Socialism in England. With the breakdown of the monopoly the English working class will lose that privileged position; it will find itself generally, the privileged and leading minority not excepted, on a level with its fellow workers abroad. And that is the reason why there will be socialism again in England."

With the opening of a chronic state of economic stagnation after 1876 Engels saw the dawn of a whole new period of capitalism.

He expected this to be characterised by the clash of several industrial powers—Britain, Germany, France



Dockers celebrate the victory of the mass strike of 1898. Masses of unskilled workers flocked to the new unions, challenging the grip of the privileged layers of "craft" workers who had monopolised trade unionism.

and America—in which Britain would lose its stranglehold of the world market.

Whilst Engels could not be expected to fully anticipate the transformation of capitalism into the world imperialist system of the 20th century, he certainly identified many of its most of its salient features. Not least amongst these was the new role of the leaders of the labour movement—that of "labour lieutenants of capital".

Engels noted the lavish attention paid to the union leaders by "Members of Parliament, by Lords and other well-born rabble". He also noted the eagerness of some of these leaders to get into Parliament themselves, not as militant representatives of their class, but by doing a deal with the Liberals to gain votes and money for themselves as individuals.

In other words they became a special agency of the bourgeoisie within the working class.

But Engels was clear that the passivity of the working class in England could not be wholly explained by the petty bourgeois conditions of life of the labour aristocracy and its leaders' corruption.

The very structure of the unions and the banning of socialist politics within them, had resulted in excluding the mass of the poorest workers and lowering the horizons of the organised minority.

Within the unions, it was necessary to change workers' understanding of what trade unionism was and to win them to the struggle for the emancipation of the working class as a whole.

Hope

But the only hope of doing this was to break the monopoly of the labour aristocracy and above all to organise the unskilled who made up the vast majority of the working class.

Only in this way would a new class conscious and, ultimately, a revolutionary socialist leadership of the working class be developed to replace the bourgeois leaders and create a working class party, a revolutionary party.

In fact, it required a major upheaval in the working class movement to bring about a fundamental change.

The strikes of 1888 and 1889 constituted a turning point in the history of the British Labour movement.

First the Match Girls' strike of July 1888, then the Gas Workers strike and finally the great London Dockers strike of 1889 transformed the unions.

The dockers formed a new union with Tom Mann as president and Ben Tillett as secretary. Will Thorne, a young and near illiterate gas stoker, led the strike and formed a new gasworkers' union, which was then opened to all workers. Within a year some 200,000 unskilled workers were enrolled in the new unions.

Existing unions were transformed. The Miners Federation founded in 1888 was, in a few years, to pass 200,000 members itself.

Whereas the old union leaders advocated conciliation and arbitration rather than industrial action, and used their union's funds largely for death and injury benefits, the new unions charged very low subscriptions and did not offer these sort of benefits. Their funds were used to support militant industrial action.

Advice

An important role in this new movement was played by socialists including Eleanor Marx, the youngest daughter of Karl Marx. The advice and support of Engels was always close at hand. The new leaders like Mann, Thorne, and John Burns, were socialists. This young generation of militant union leaders became regular visitors at Engels' house in London. Despite his age, Engels took an active part in the work of socialists in and around the new unions.

He joined the demonstration on May 4, 1890 in favour of a legal eight-hour day. It culminated in a big march and meeting in Hyde Park. Engels considered it a great success. In an article in the Viennese *Arbeiter Zeitung* he declared that with this demonstration "the English workers have taken their place in the great international labour movement... The grandsons of the old Chartists are stepping into the front line".

Eleanor Marx spoke from the platform. Engels wrote to Marx's other daughter Laura:

"I can assure you I looked a couple of inches taller when I got down from that old lumbering wagon that served as a platform—after having heard again, for the first time in forty years, the unmistakable voice of the English proletariat." ■



Enfield rifle factory workers celebrate British imperialism's victory at Mafeking in 1900. Engels saw imperialist profits and relative privilege as the material base of their conservative outlook

P RIME MINISTER Tansu Ciller's Turkish government has unleashed a 35,000-strong armed force into the Kurdish "safe havens" of northern Iraq. The stated aim is to destroy the bases of the Kurdish nationalist resistance led by the Maoist-influenced Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK).

The invasion, backed by US-built helicopter gunships and F-16 fighter planes, is a desperate attempt by a regime beset by domestic turmoil to crush a guerrilla movement which, since 1984, has waged a legitimate war for self-determination in the name of the Kurdish people.

The Turkish troops have operated behind a curtain of media censorship, with some western journalists in the Kurdish area of Diyarbakir in south eastern Turkey subjected to beatings and the confiscation of film by local police.

But evidence is mounting of civilian massacres and the forced "repatriation" of Kurdish peasants who had fled into the "safe havens" at the end of the Gulf War in 1991.

Turkey, a long-standing member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), provided a crucial staging post for the air forces of the USA, Britain and France as they bombarded both civilian and military targets in the hi-tech barbarism of the war against Iraq.

The Clinton administration and the Brit-

ish Foreign Office have given their tacit blessing to this dramatic escalation of the war against the Kurds. Other NATO foreign ministers, such as France's Alain Juppé, have issued hollow condemnations of the invasion and muttered about it threatening Turkey's entry into the European Customs Union.

Both the French and German governments have outlawed the PKK and, along with the British authorities, have subjected any suspected "sympathisers" of

the Kurdish organisation to systematic harassment.

Only days before the start of the Turkish offensive, the German state triggered large demonstrations by Kurdish immigrant workers by making it easier to conduct the summary deportation of Kurdish asylum-seekers, who now face the prospect of torture and imprisonment in Turkey.

The Ciller government's intensified drive to "wipe out" the PKK is partly designed

to stoke up widespread anti-Kurdish chauvinism in Turkish society. Ciller has attempted to mobilise Turkish chauvinism to bolster her weak government.

The week prior to the military invasion saw bitter clashes between working class militants and riot police in Ankara and, particularly, Istanbul where barricades were set up to protect working class communities. In Istanbul at least 16 died and hundreds were wounded.

The police killings came amid widespread protest marches, sparked by the murder of members of the Alewite Muslim sect who were gunned down by elements connected to the MHP, an extreme Islamic fundamentalist party.

The military imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew in one area of the capital, while Ciller's government used the events as a pretext to declare yet another state of emergency in the Kurdish south-east.

Ciller's government is increasingly dependent on a military with a high proportion of fundamentalist MHP supporters in its ranks.

The workers' movement has shown encouraging signs of recovery in the past 12 months, after the horrific repression by the military dictatorship of the 1980s.

There were two well supported one-day general strikes in 1994, in response to the regime's austerity programme.

So far in 1995, workers from the mines and railways through to hospitals and the post have staged either large demonstrations or partial strikes in defiance of the country's draconian anti-union laws.

The current social upheaval stands in sharp contrast to the early days of the Ciller government, when a self-confident disciple of Margaret Thatcher spoke of leading Turkey into the European Union.

It has already undergone a massive currency devaluation and now presides over an inflation rate of 150%, with official unemployment rates of over 20%.

As forces from NATO's second largest army continue their assault against Kurdish camps and villages, socialists in western Europe have a particular obligation to mobilise opposition to the Turkish state and extend solidarity to the besieged Kurdish masses.

We must fight for

- the immediate withdrawal of all Turkish forces from northern Iraq
- an end to the state of emergency in south-eastern Turkey
- full asylum and citizenship rights in all European Union countries for Turks and Kurds
- the lifting of all legal restrictions against the PKK and other Kurdish political organisations. ■



Turkish workers take to the barricades in Istanbul to fight fascists and police. Ciller is desperate to divert attention from internal crisis through genocide of the Kurds

NICARAGUA

Strike leader speaks

O N MONDAY 27 February the two main teaching unions in Nicaragua, ANDEN (Asociación Nacional de Educadores Nicaraguenses) and CNMN (Confederación Nacional de Maestros de Nicaragua), launched a strike in the state schools.

Their strike is a response to the policies of the government which are driven by the demands of the IMF and the World Bank. One of the conditions for receiving IMF loans is the privatisation of secondary education. Schools are being pushed to opt out of state control. Parents will then have to pay fees. This is despite the fact that the Nicaraguan constitution states that both primary and secondary education are obligatory and will be provided free of charge.

On 16 March there was a national demonstration held in the capital, Managua, in support of the strike. It was well attended, with at least 20,000 teachers and supporters present. Most Managuans seemed to be sympathetic to the march.

The next day Matthew Clarke visited the national office of ANDEN where he interviewed the General Secretary, Mario Quintana for Workers Power. Below we print some extracts of that interview:

Q. Can you tell me a bit about the background to the strike?

A. The strike has been called jointly by ANDEN and CNMN. In the past these two unions have not always co-operated. ANDEN has a reputation for being a pro-Sandinista union, and it's true many members of ANDEN are also members of the FSLN, including myself. On the other hand, CNMN has been seen as, let's say, anti-Sandinista. However, we are both now co-operating in the strike.

Q. What are your principle demands?

A. There are six key demands. First we want an increase in salaries. Currently the basic monthly salary for a primary teacher is US \$43 a month and for a secondary teacher \$61. Our initial demand was for an 80% increase, but now we are prepared to accept 50% in April and 30% from January 1996. Secondly, we are demanding an increase in the pensions for retired teachers. Currently these are a miserable \$20-\$30 a month. We want them to be equivalent to the teacher's final salary. Thirdly, all victimised teachers must be re-instated. Eighty activists were sacked before the strike began, and since then a further 162 have been sacked, mainly local strike leaders.

Fourthly, the leaders of the two unions must be recognised as the official representatives of the teachers. At the moment, the Minister of Education, Humberto Belli, is saying because we are not full time teachers we cannot be recognised as legitimate representatives. This is ridiculous, as it is a full time job to run the union. Fifthly, primary and secondary education should be free, and no one should be turned away from school because they can't pay. Finally, we want to see an increase in the payments granted for years of service and for obtaining qualifications.

Q. How solid is the strike?

A. As of now 13,000 teachers are on strike, in 16 departments and 89 municipalities. This is out of a total of about 24,000 teachers in the country, but at least 2,000 of these are in autonomous institutions who are not involved in the dispute. Some of these teachers have been assisting the strike by giving donations and even helping in occupations. We've also had a lot of support from parents who were well represented on yesterday's march.

Q. What is the legal position of the strike?

A. Article 83 of the Constitution guarantees the unconditional right to strike. However, the Labour Code puts many obstacles in the way of legal strikes. This was drawn up in 1946, and has recently been amended. However, in nearly 30 years there have only been three legal strikes in Nicaragua, over which period we've had the Somoza dictatorship, the Sandinista government and the present government of Chomorro.

Q. How has the Ministry of Education responded to the strike?

A. They have invoked a series of repressive measures. They have sacked a number of strikers, and have threatened to sack all teachers on strike. They have also been withholding payments due to strikers. They have launched a vicious propaganda campaign in the press against the strike. Belli admitted that this has been paid for by money from the World Bank and the International Development Agency. Belli has also been courting strike breakers, inviting them to meals in fancy Managuan restaurants. He has provided them with official transport to visit schools on strike to try to persuade them to go back to work. They have tried to recruit scabs to break the strike. However, in response to this teachers and parents have occupied schools, offices of the ministry and town halls (since in some areas local authorities have taken over responsibility for education).

Q. What are the next steps in the strike?

A. The strike will continue, teachers are determined to win their just demands in spite of the repression.

Q. How will any decision be reached by

SAVE MUMIA ABU-JAMAL!

Mumia Abu-Jamal is a celebrated journalist and co-founder of the Philadelphia chapter of the Black Panther Party. In 1982 he found himself on Death Row, framed for the killing of a cop. Now, with the election of a pro-death penalty governor in Pennsylvania, the fight to save Jamal has reached a critical stage.

There is no doubt that Jamal is a political prisoner. He grew up protesting against the murderous regime of Philadelphia's Mayor Frank Rizzo; at the age of 13 he was arrested for demonstrating against a visit by George Wallace; throughout the 1970s he was a constant thorn in the side of the racist establishment with his journalistic exposés.

In 1980 he was elected president of the Philadelphia chapter of the Association of Black Journalists; in December of the following year, while attempting to save his brother from a beating, he was shot in the stomach by a cop. Four witnesses saw the cop shot by a third man: but it was Jamal the police wanted for the crime. Following a farcical trial before Judge Albert Sabo—"the King of Death Row", an almost all-white jury accepted the prosecution's contention that Jamal's political beliefs proved him guilty.

In 1991 the US Supreme Court twice turned down Jamal's petition for a review. The killing of Jamal would signify an important political victory for the

racist right, one to which Clinton will happily accede. Jamal's acquittal can only be achieved through the pressure of the mobilised working class, black and white.

The Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal has co-ordinated an international campaign to save Jamal and secure a retrial. The campaign has won the support of the French CGT, the British NUJ, as well as unions throughout the USA, Canada and Mexico.

Rally in support of the campaign, Wednesday 29 March, 6.30pm, Friends Meeting House, opposite Euston Station, London.

Send messages of support and donations marked:

Jamal Legal Defence to BCM Box 4986, London WC1N 3XX



the union as to whether any offer is acceptable?

A. By the National Assembly. This consists of the National Strike Committee of 12 persons, six from each union, together with two people from each department (one from each union) and a representative from each of the 89 municipalities. The assembly met in October, November and February to plan the strike, and has met once since the strike began.

Q. What support can trade unionists in Britain give you?

A. We're asking for messages of support to be sent to the President and the Minister of Education. We would like three points to be made clear:

- That you support our just demands.
- That the victimisations are stopped.
- That the government negotiates

with us as the legitimate representatives of the teachers. ■

Messages should be sent to:
President Señora
Violeta Barrios de Chamorro
Presidente de la República fax: 00 505 228 7911
Dr. Humberto Belli,
Ministro de Educación
fax: 00 505 265 1595
You can also send messages of support to the ANDEN office, fax: 00 505 266 2871

Regrouping the left

Dear comrades,

In your article last month "Uniting a divided left", Mark Harrison included some comments on a recent supplement to *Workers News*, published by the British Workers International League (WIL). I agree with Mark Harrison's conclusions, but much more could be said about the WIL's approach to critical members within the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI).

The *Workers News* supplement is quite dishonest. On

NERDS!

Dear comrades,

After reading your science column in *Workers Power 188* I hot-footed it onto the Internet to see what's going on in the discussion groups devoted to left politics. Excitement mounted as, after a few minutes, I found a "newsgroup" called alt.socialism.trotsky.

Sadly most of the messages and debates here revolved around the question posted by a self confessed pro-capitalist US academic: who are the real Trotskyists - the Spartacists or the American SWP? Predictably, most of the replies had been uploaded by psychologically damaged ex-members of that well known US-based Trotskyist cult.

It seems that whilst in the real world the Trotskyist left is growing and attracting many young activists, in cyberspace it is still full of rather sad, train-spotter types. Is there anything we can do to change it?

In comradeship,
Colin Lloyd

We reply:

Next Month the new-look *Workers Power* will include an e-mail address for letters and articles.

In the meantime we welcome all submissions from readers about interesting sites, newsgroups and networks of interest to socialist and trade union activists and will try to compile a full list of the non-nerdy places to go in a future issue.

Correction: Leicester Unison

Dear Comrades

Your article on Leicester UNISON last month had a couple of inaccuracies that need correcting.

Firstly, there are three old peoples homes targeted for closure in Leicester not 30 as stated in the article!

Secondly, the article appears to suggest that the SWP opposed strike action over the cuts. This is not the case. The SWP proposed a resolution that said:

"the Union will immediately ballot for strike action if redundancies or cuts in services are announced by Leicestershire County Council".

The mover then accepted a replacement to the above which read:

the front page, it gives a good summary of the crisis of the FI during the post-war period. To be fair, it is largely a summary of the analysis made more than a decade ago by Workers Power and the Irish Workers Group in *The Death Agony of the Fourth International*. But when the reader turns to the back page, there is clearly something missing—the concept of centrism.

The contrast with the WIL's fusion document with the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency (LTT) of 1991 is striking. This clearly states that "the major self-proclaimed Trotskyist currents" are centrist, and that they do not represent a Trotskyist continuity.

And now, suddenly, the WIL is talking about the inveterate centrists of the USFI as "not the only Trotskyist organisation in crisis". There is no mention at all of the fact that the WIL/LTT, in its programmatic documents, characterises the USFI as centrist.

The WIL's supplement gives several examples of the crisis in the USFI and its sections. It mentions that many sections are close to collapse, "with members who have given years to the movement quitting in despair". This is all quite true. But, one could ask, is there no resistance to the liquidationist course of the leadership? There is, but according to *Workers News* it has not yet led to any positive break with the USFI.

Well *Workers News* is wrong. I, along with group of former members of the Swedish USFI section, have broken from the

centrist politics of the USFI and have not left politics in despair. It might not count for much in *Workers News*, but the faction which I belonged to, Against the Current, left the USFI in the autumn of 1994 to found a section of the LRCI in Sweden. In terms of members and experience, we would certainly stand a comparison with the new Canadian group of the LTT.

The WIL was aware of our existence before the break, and even tried to initiate a discussion with us. Our reply, informing them of our decision to join the LRCI, was obviously not worthy of a comment from the WIL. The supplement has nothing to say about our organisation, Arbetarmakt, but goes into some detail in giving examples of negative developments among USFI oppositionists. Why not be positive for a change?

The article argues that what is needed is a fight inside the USFI "on a number of programmatic and political tasks". That is true, but again there is no mention of centrism. Perhaps that is not needed according

✓ Agree
✗ Disagree?
! Got something to say?
Write in to:
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BCM 7750
London WC1N 3XX

to the WIL. But it was certainly necessary, not to say decisive, for us. Otherwise we would still be part of all the left centrist groups hanging around the USFI.

The WIL's method for regroupment tends to be confined, as Mark Harrison so accurately writes, to the level of general principles. Their approach runs the risk of being more and more like the eternal USFI oppositionists around Franco Grisolia (the International Trotskyist Opposition—ITO) which is currently considered to be "outside" of the USEC.

Confusing the duty of revolutionaries to fight with every means to keep their place inside the labour movement, with the opportunist desire to be a part of the bigger centrist groups, Grisolia and his comrades will apply for special status as a sympathising group at the forthcoming world congress of the USFI.

Both the dishonest opportunism of the WIL, and the inexhaustible opportunism of the ITO, are a dead end for comrades trying to break out of the centrist prison of the USFI. Left-wing members of the USFI should not be afraid of investigating what the great Marxists meant by centrism. If they pursue this task, they will also find that it is only the LRCI who has understood the essence of that important concept.

Trotskyist greetings,
Per-Olof Mattsson
Stockholm

Reactionary Channel strike?

Dear Workers Power,

The letters page in the March issue of *Workers Power* carried a letter on the French seafarers strike of that month, run under a totally misleading headline, "Reactionary Channel strike".

Meridian is a British ferry

company which has consistently sought to undercut its rivals by employing cheap labour from outside the European Union (EU). Because of the militancy of the French union, compared with their British counterparts, they took the lead in trying to prevent this company from undermining wages and conditions which would have affected seafarers throughout the EU.

The strike was a direct result of the French employers' announcement that they were about to tear up existing agreements with the union in order to compete with Meridian. This was not a "reactionary strike" but a strike that any socialist would have supported and participated in.

Revolutionaries obviously would have advocated very different tactics to those adopted by the trade union bureaucrats. We would have argued for the union to have done everything in its power to address the Polish seafarers contracted to Meridian. We would have attempted to organise them in a joint struggle to raise their wage rates to EU standards.

The fact that this was not done says a lot about the lack of internationalism in the Stalinist leadership of the strike. "European jobs for European workers" was clearly a

chauvinist demand. Of course these sentiments were reactionary and should have been fought tooth and nail, but it did not make the aims of the strike reactionary.

We know that at various times during the British miners campaigns against pit closures the NUM leaders raised calls for the permanent cessation of imports of Polish and other "foreign" coal. We attacked these ideas but we did not as a result declare their struggle "reactionary".

We should not underestimate the difficulties of contacting the Polish seafarers, who were virtually sealed off by the Meridian company. Nor should we naively believe that they would have automatically joined in the action.

If they had refused to respond positively it would have been perfectly legitimate for trade unions to take action. Trade unionists are often forced to do this against non-union or even other union labour which is being used to undermine hard won conditions. Let's not forget the Wapping Print strike and the role of the EETPU.

John McKee
London

The Editor replies: We agree—what do other readers think?

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!★

FILL IN THE BOX ON PAGE 3

Workers power

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South Africa one year on...

The sell-out continues



LAST MONTH in South Africa was a tale of two Queens. First of all the black masses had to endure the stomach churning spectacle of the British Queen catching up on the sights after a near 50 year absence from her old commonwealth playground. President Mandela heaped one compliment after another onto her, declaring her visit an "unforgettable moment in our history".

The £500,000 spectacle was no doubt intended to make the masses forget their present plight. But she had hardly stepped onto her plane for Britain before it had faded from the memory for the majority of black workers. Of more concern to the millions who barely survive in squatter camps, to the fifty percent of workers who have no job, was how they can get their year old ANC led government to build decent houses and create gainful employment.

As one Queen left South Africa last month another returned to a storm of controversy. They did not meet. On Winnie Mandela's office door

a note declared that the real "queen" of South Africa was out of town and unavailable.

The new political elite in South Africa are preparing to get Winnie Mandela sacked from the cabinet. Winnie's corrupt money making schemes may have finally caught up with her. A police raid on her house in Soweto was aimed at digging up the dirt on a charity she runs, the "Coordinated Anti-Poverty Programme" (CAPP).

It's alleged that this is a front for a multi-million rand kick-back scam whereby Winnie had used her government position to hand out contracts to a firm called "Professional Builders". In return cash and shares were alleged to be finding their way back to herself and her daughter, Zinzi, among others.

The police raid came soon after the resignation of nearly half the Executive members of the Women's League in protest at Winnie's secretive business deals and her open defiance of the President.

But why pick on Winnie? Kick-backs and corruption are not-



ing new to ANC leaders. Plenty of other Cabinet Ministers are known to have their fingers in the till. It's all part of the pay-off for protecting the white beneficiaries of apartheid from the claims of the South African masses. Like others Winnie Mandela aims to use her ill-gotten gains to build up a personal following based on financial patronage.

What is so dangerous about Winnie Mandela to the ANC government is her willingness to try and protect herself from being sacked by demagogically denouncing "certain leaders" for selling out the anti-apartheid struggle. Criticising the

Queen's visit at a rally in Port Elizabeth, Winnie Mandela accused her husband's government of indifference to the plight of the poor:

"Nothing has changed. In fact your struggle seems much worse that it was before . . ."

Her speeches strike a chord with the unemployed township youth who see little benefit from years of struggle against apartheid.

This is why the international investors, wine and dined on the Royal Yacht last month, have been pressing the President to rid the government of this dangerously "unreliable" element.

Hospital workers strike for a living wage. Mandela wants to ban strikes in essential services

The real danger to Nelson Mandela is the "unreliable" black masses themselves. To forestall them the government is preparing a new crackdown on protest, factory occupations and labour unrest. In his address to the new session of Parliament the President declared:

"Some of those who have participated in such activities have misread freedom to mean license".

Recently, as a mark of his determination, troops were quickly sent to crush a police protest in the Transkei over pay.

High on the agenda of the new Parliament is a new "Labour Relations Bill". This aims to bring in "workplace forums", trade union participation in management on the German model. It is aimed at co-opting the union plant leaderships and using them to discipline the shop floor workers.

It proposes that strikes in essential services are outlawed while employers will be legally entitled to use scab labour where strikes affect "maintenance services" which

might damage plant or machinery. No new closed shops will be allowed.

While the right to strike is guaranteed outside essential services, so is the employers right to lock out.

Finally, small and medium businesses, employing probably a third of workers in the formal sector, will be exempt from having to bargain with trade unions.

This anti-worker charter has to be smashed.

The key task for the trade unions in the coming period is to campaign and mobilise against this bill.

COSATU must immediately break its ties to the ANC government and demand that the MPs of the South African Communist Party, the party that claims to represent the workers, do likewise.

The crucial task in South Africa remains the building of a genuine party of the working class—a revolutionary workers' party that can unite the workers, youth, the unemployed and the women in a real struggle to overthrow South African capitalism. ■