

Workers power

INSIDE

**Interview
Bosnia needs
solidarity**

For Internationalism, Socialism and Workers' Revolution

No 194 NOVEMBER 1995 ★ Price 50p

As Tories play the race card:

Stop Howard's racist rampage!



Michael Howard



Campsfield—Britain's racist detention camp

ABDUL ONIBIYO, a Nigerian who has lived and worked in Britain since 1964, was forcibly deported on 26 October. His wife and five children remain in Britain. Mr Onibiyo, a Unison member, is just the latest victim of Home Secretary Michael Howard's racist rampage.

The dying Tory government is determined to go down kicking us as hard as possible. It has shamelessly played the "race card"—bringing in workplace immigration checks, new blanket bans on asylum seekers fleeing British-backed dictatorships, withdrawing benefits and rights of appeal from asylum seekers, and speeding up the heartless process of harassment, detention and deportation.

Howard's racist rallying cry is not just designed to divide and rule. It is also a crude attempt to distract us from the fact that, in their final year in office, the Tories are going all out to destroy the welfare state.

Health, education, benefits and pensions will be savaged in the coming budget so that the Tories can pay for one last tax handout to try and claw back electoral support from the most reactionary and racist sections of society.

Hundreds of ordinary working class people await deportation, families are torn apart, asylum seekers are cynically

turned away—all so that the Tories can buy time to finish destroying our services.

When the race card is played in British politics, it is not only black people who suffer. Every claimant, every school kid, every pensioner and hospital patient suffers if the Tories succeed in their divide and rule offensive.

While the Labour politicians limit their response to pious declarations against discrimination, it is the organised working class movement that has the power to rip up Howard's race card. All workers should boycott the immigration checks. We must fight to commit the union leaders to action against all deportations.

We must demand that Labour gives a positive guarantee—now—that it will repeal all racist laws.

And we must link the struggles to defend our services into an unstoppable movement to drive the hate-monger Howard and this vicious racist Tory government from office. ■

**Smash all
immigration
controls!—page 3**

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Domestic Violence

Tories defend marriage, not women

DUBBED "THE Live-in Lovers Bill", legislation which would have given more protection to women suffering domestic violence looks set to be dropped by the government.

The Family, Home and Domestic Violence Bill, sponsored by the Law Commission, was expected to pass quickly through parliament and become law.

That was until the *Daily Mail* decided it was a good opportunity to stir up a few mad right wingers, attack women who have the nerve not to get married, and pose as upholders of the sacred family unit.

The "problem" with the Bill was that it would give women living with violent partners certain rights, even if they weren't married to them.

What is so dreadful about this? It will, we are told, encourage women to live with their partners rather than marrying them, thus undermining the sanctity of marriage. According to some this means the breakdown of society.

Any moves to give women who choose not to marry the same rights as those who do are opposed by these supposed "defenders of the family". Only if the state recognises your relationship can you expect any

legal protection. Otherwise we would have women being able to live with whoever they choose and being independent. That would never do! For the Tory right it would be the breakdown of society—their society.

The second reason that the Bill made the right wingers squeal is that it would threaten the rights of property owners. Even if these property owners happen to be brutal abusers of women, the likes of Nicholas Winterton and Lady Olga Maitland are worried about these poor men losing their homes. It may seem staggering, but it shows all too clearly that for these people property is much more important than the lives of working class women.

The truth is that the Bill would have given only a few additional rights to women

who have been violently abused. First you would have had to prove mental cruelty. An unmarried cohabitee, if she is not a joint owner of the house or flat, would then have the right to remain in the home temporarily. The ownership would not be challenged. The only men who would lose rights to their home would be council tenants, where the council might be prepared to transfer the lease to the woman.

This is the reality of the rather timid proposals set out in the Bill. But, of course, the furor wasn't about reality. It was about continuing the Tories' disgusting attacks on single mothers.

And just in case you are thinking about walking out on a violent partner, the Tories have got another trick up their sleeve.

Don't expect any single parent benefit because they're planning to scrap it. The budget looks likely to include plans to remove the £6.30 a week One Parent Benefit and the £5.20 Lone Parent Premium. The result of these cuts will, according to the National Council for One Parent Families, be devastating. They estimate that 2.3 million children will be seriously harmed by the cut. Already 58% of single parent families have difficulty heating their homes and a third cannot even afford hot water.

Will the defenders of the family be fighting these changes? No, they're supporting them. That should teach women with children to live on their own! And, of course, these cuts can go towards more tax cuts for the rich.

Once they have successfully scuppered the Domestic Violence Bill the Tory right are setting their sights on changes to Divorce Law due to be announced in the Queen's Speech.

The proposed changes would allow couples to divorce after a year, if they had sorted out arrangements for children and financial matters.

The divorce could be granted on a "no fault" basis. It is unlikely that such divorces would be any easier, but they would get rid of the senseless situation of someone having to take the blame when a marriage simply breaks down.

This is a horrendous idea for the Tory right and the Church. Marriage, we are told by Archbishop Carey, head of the Church of England, must be defended because it binds our society together.

Binds what? Binds hundreds of thousands in loveless, senseless, hopeless and sometimes violent marriages, for better or for worse. Thanks a lot Archbishop!

For the Tories it has never been a case of women and children first. As the British economy starts going under, the cry from the bridge is 'Money!'—first, second and third. ■

Repatriation

No answer to racism

MICHAEL HOWARD was having a bad month. His blatant attempt to play the race card (see pages 1 and 3) had met with angry resistance from immigrant welfare organisations, refugee groups, unions and even the Labour front bench.

Millions were coming to see him as the man responsible for the most sustained campaign of state harassment against black people for years. In particular, he was the one behind the attempt to use a scare against "bogus" asylum seekers as a way of trying to keep black people out of the country.

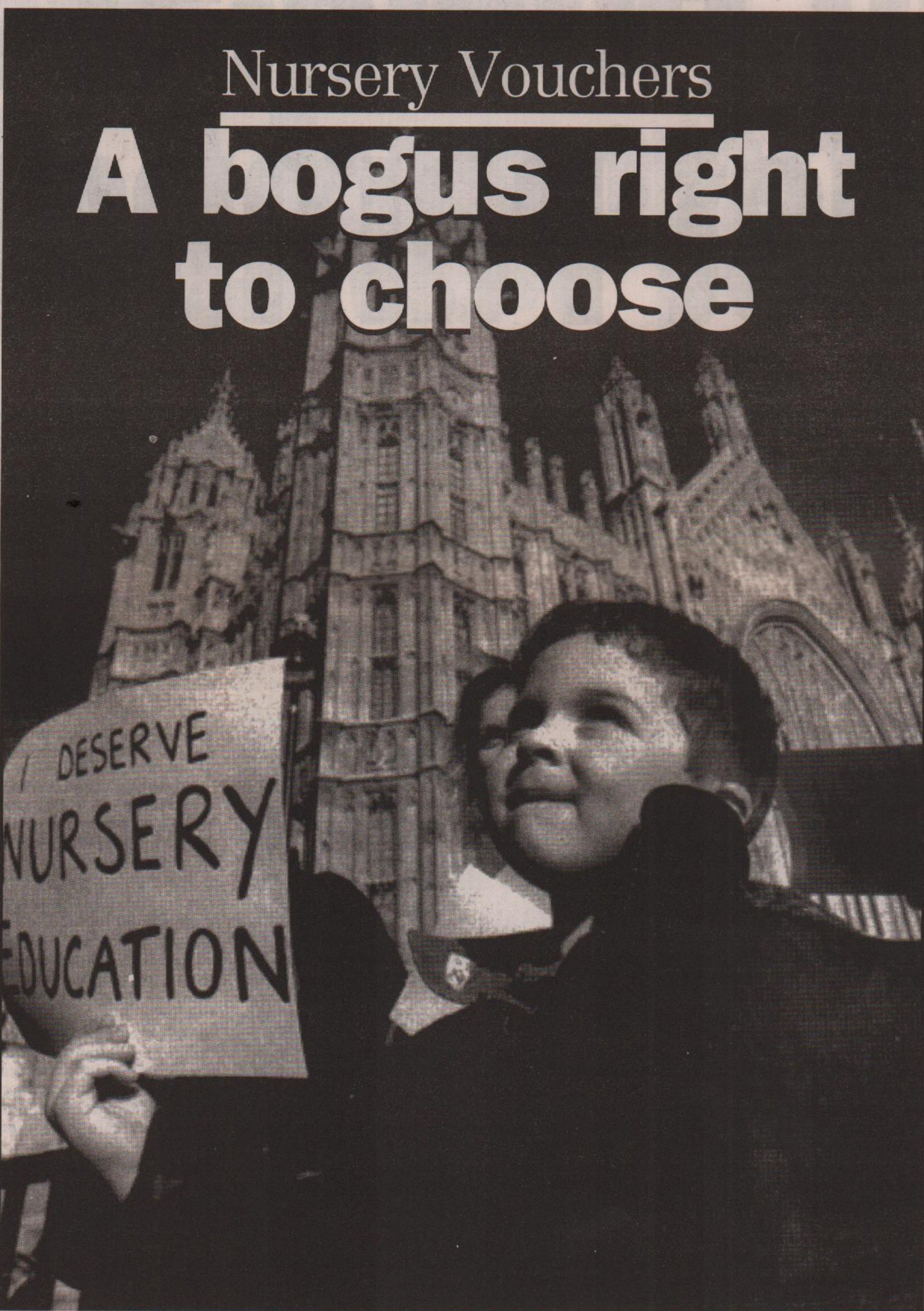
Would anyone come to his rescue? Step forward Bernie Grant. As the best known of Labour's black MPs, the man responsible for declaring that the police who attacked the black community at Broadwater Farm got a richly deserved "hiding", you might have expected Grant to respond with a virulent attack on Howard.

Quite the opposite. To his eternal shame, Grant is busy doing a deal with the racist Howard to help him encourage black people to leave Britain for good. Grant's proposal for state funded grants for black people wanting either to return to or to resettle in the Caribbean has met with a warm response from the racist Tories.

He is even prepared to remind the Tories how much money they could save if they adopt this scheme. The *Independent on Sunday* reports Grant as believing that repatriation would save the Treasury money on the NHS and social services.

This is where the politics of nationalism and the ideology of Returnism get you. Instead of launching a fight against the racist Howard proposals, Grant is propping them up. As Bernie Grant has made clear in a series of meetings held jointly with the reactionary Nation of Islam, he is putting more stress on encouraging people to leave racist Britain rather than stay and join in a working class challenge to the racists.

To the Bernie Grants and the Farrakhan's of this world, black workers and youth should give a firm reply: *we don't have to run from the racists—we can fight them!* ■



THE TORIES' voucher scheme for nursery education is under fire from all sides. And no wonder. Designed as an election bribe for better off parents, it is worse than useless for parents on low incomes.

Under the scheme parents of four year olds get £1,100 to spend on nursery education. This covers only half the cost of a year at nursery school. At the same time councils that spend most on nursery education will lose most money.

The scheme will actually lessen the quality and availability of nursery education across the board.

Even Tory educationalists have written to Education Secretary Gillian Shephard complaining that quality will slip

below acceptable standards under the new scheme.

This is a textbook case of how Tory ideology of "more choice" for parents translates into less choice and higher costs.

Only three hard-line Tory councils—Wandsworth, Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea—have signed up to pilot the scheme. But the Tories are determined to go ahead.

They are determined to smash up the welfare state before they lose the next election.

Parents, school students, education unions and Labour councils must join forces now in a campaign to boycott the voucher scheme and fight for free full-time pre-school education for all, funded by the rich, not the poor. ■

Nursery Vouchers

A bogus right to choose

John Lloyd

Labour selects apartheid informer

ALAN HOWARTH, the former Thatcherite Tory who voted for the Poll Tax and VAT on fuel, is not the only self-seeking hypocrite Blair wants to usher into Parliament at the next election.

It turns out that John Lloyd, Labour candidate for Exeter, is a one-time informer to the apartheid South African government.

A former member of the African Resistance Movement (ARM)—which organised white intellectual opponents of apartheid and engaged in armed actions against the racist regime, Lloyd informed on his erstwhile comrades, turning state evidence and helping secure the conviction of several anti-apartheid militants.

Socialist Baruch Hirson spent nine years in an apartheid jail because of Lloyd. John Harris fared worse—he was hanged on Lloyd's evidence for his part in a bombing.

Lloyd has never even apologised to his former comrades or to John Harris' family.

His main concern is to defend himself from far-right Tory MPs who are denouncing him for ever having fought apartheid in the first place. But there is no need for any democrat—let alone a socialist—to justify oneself to such people. No doubt they would still call Nelson Mandela a terrorist.

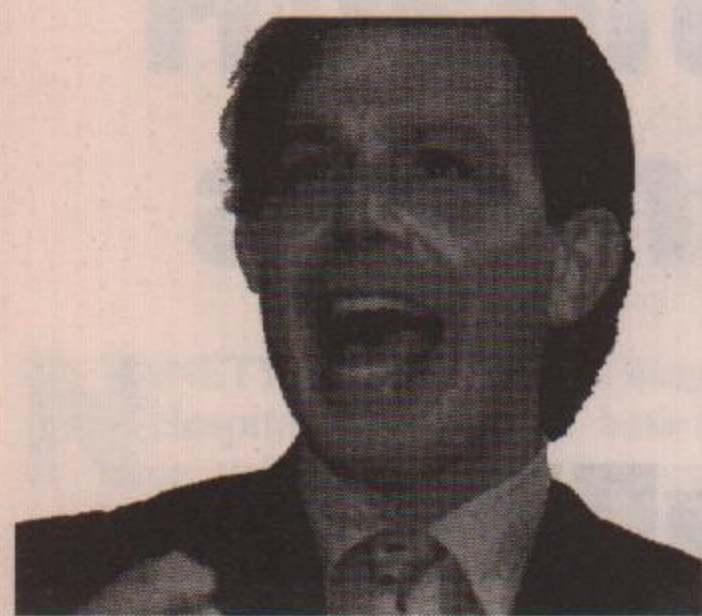
Lloyd should not be apologising to long-standing supporters of apartheid. He should be taken to task by the left and all supporters of the movement against apartheid in South Africa for what he was and is—a grass.

The rule for all militants under interrogation was known to Lloyd then as it is known to every revolutionary worth their salt today: **WHATEVER YOU SAY, SAY NOTHING.**

Now Lloyd has the gall to claim that Harris "lost all reason" when he was arrested. But John Harris, a young and brave fighter, went to the gallows singing "We shall not be moved". Lloyd sentenced him to death to save his skin.

And Blair wants the working class of Exeter to trust this man? ■

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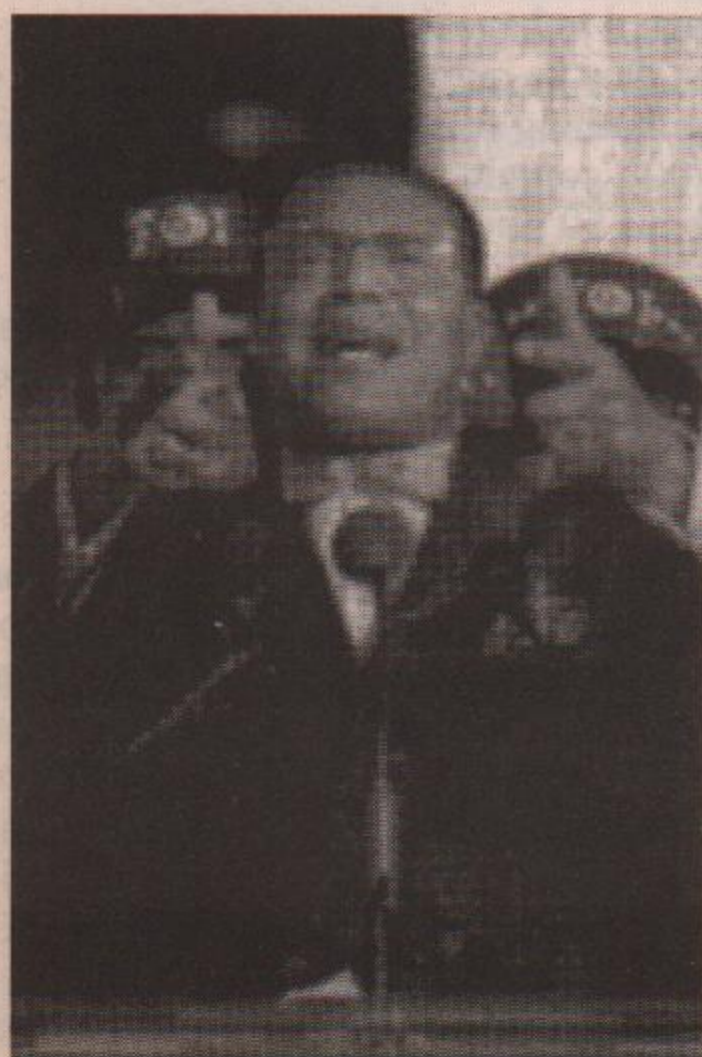


What will Blair deliver?

Richard Brenner details new Labour's promises and finds them falling far short of the real needs of working class people—centre pages

Bosses' budget

Can Chancellor Kenneth Clarke save the Tories' bacon in this month's budget?—page 6



The abuse of black anger

As over half a million march in Washington, G.R. McColl examines the crisis of leadership in the American black community today—page 12

F is for Fascism

What it is, where it comes from, how to fight it—page 9

Democracy and the SWP

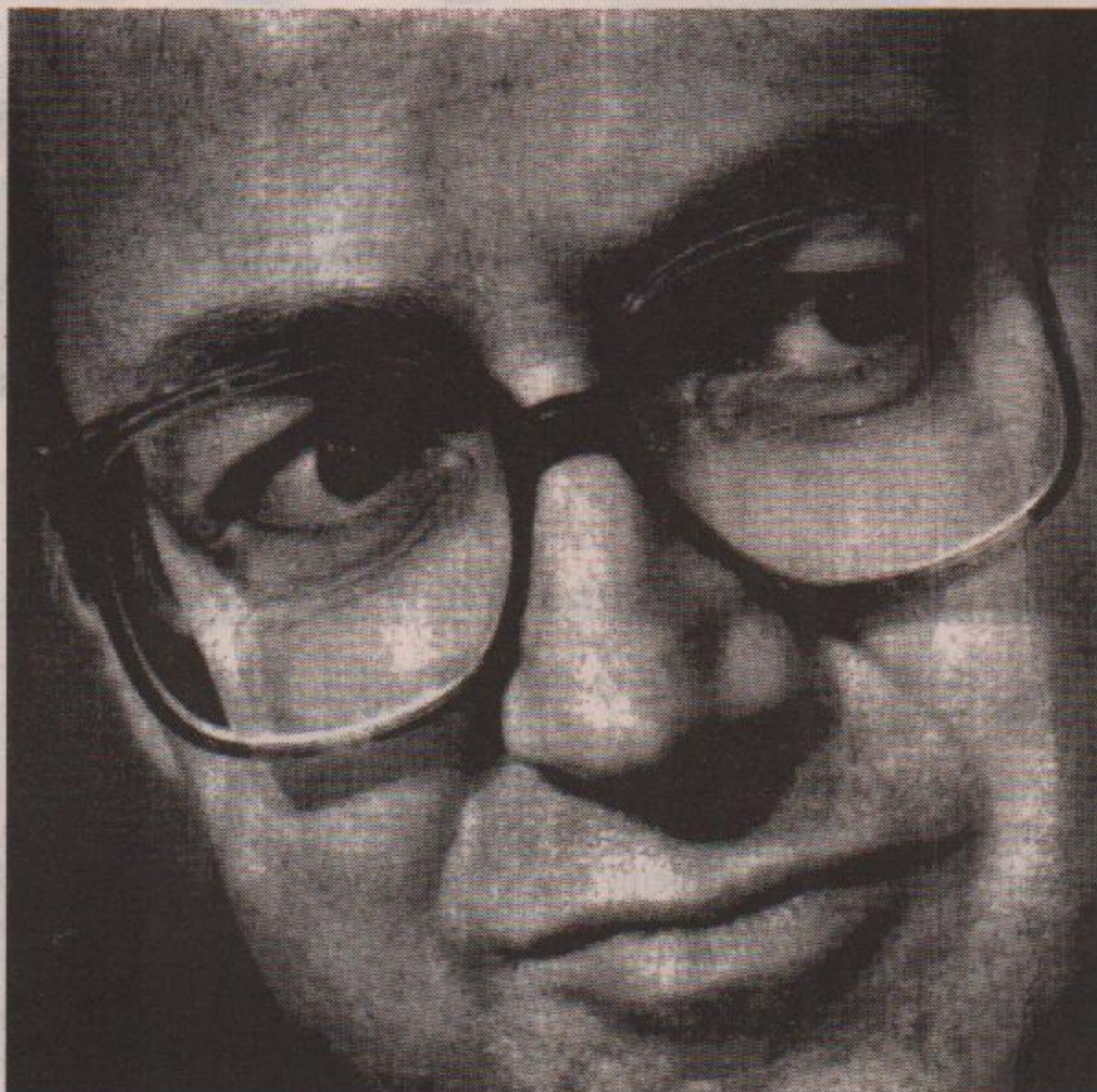
With the emergence of ever greater numbers of "loyal oppositions" in and around the SWP, Mark Harrison argues that politics is the key to understanding Tony Cliff's bureaucratic party regime.—page 14

Letters

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In next month's Workers Power

Africa-imperialism's lost continent • Art and dictatorship in the '30s • Perspectives on the British class struggle • A to Z of Marxism: G is for God...



Asylum

Boycott Howard's racist checks

Michael Howard and the Tories are preparing the most serious barrage of new racist legislation for years. Desperate to win back support before the next election, they are playing the "race card". Hundreds of thousands of black workers and youth are their targets. This is what the Tories have in store...

A new system of racist harassment at work.

Employers will be obliged by law to carry out regular checks for "illegal immigrants" amongst workers and report to the immigration authorities. The consequences of this are so obviously racist that even Tory Employment Secretary Gillian Shephard attacked it, as a recent leaked memo has shown.

Hackney Council gave a taste of what this will mean earlier this year when a highly suspicious leak resulted in the names of every African council worker being sent to the immigration authorities. Bosses will be able to claim lack of resources, time and funds as an excuse to simply report all African, Asian, Caribbean, Turkish and Latin American workers. This will lead to more dawn raids, more threats and harassment, more out and out murders like that of Joy Gardner.

And that's not all. Racist employers will have a blank cheque to refuse to take on black applicants on the grounds that they have to be careful to avoid taking on "illegal immigrants".

A new bar on refugees

The new Asylum and Immigration Bill to be announced in next month's Queen's Speech will contain a new sinister measure, on top of the existing proposals to

abolish asylum appeal hearings and withdraw social security from 50,000 asylum seekers.

The Tories want to rule out refugees from certain countries altogether, without any consideration of their case.

Which countries are to be deemed so safe that no asylum is necessary? Incredibly, the list includes:

Nigeria, where oil industry strikers, trade unionists and the democratic opposition have been beaten down and repressed by the military dictatorship.

Algeria, torn apart by a virtual civil war

make it compulsory to take part in the state's persecution of black workers. Some people will claim that we have no alternative but to comply. That is as bad as saying "I was only obeying orders".

No worker should be required to spy on their fellow workers. The TUC should put its full weight behind non-implementation. But we can't wait for them. We should begin the job now by setting up delegate-based cross union committees to organise non-implementation. In the event of any worker or group of workers being victimised for refusing to carry out these racist

All these controls are racist. The labour movement should commit itself to their abolition, and to the fight for a socialist world without borders, in which all workers can live together in solidarity rather than fear, rivalry and hatred.

between the dictatorship and the right wing Islamic opposition; where women wearing Western clothes and even pop singers are subject to right wing assassination campaigns.

Sri Lanka, where a civil war rages between the Tamil people fighting for independence, and a chauvinist Sinhalese-dominated state.

With these countries on the Home Office's sickeningly named "White List" of nations that are "safe", the real aim of the Tory proposal should be clear to everyone.

It is a blatantly racist measure designed to keep black people out of Britain. *The whole labour movement must resist these attacks.*

Howard's Law can be stopped in its tracks if trade unionists refuse to implement the internal checks. The Law will

orders, we will need strike action to force employers to back down.

Labour Councils and Labour-controlled authorities should declare now that they will not comply with the new laws.

We also need mass opposition to the asylum ban. A mass demonstration in London, called by the TUC jointly with anti-racist and asylum groups, should be based on the explicit slogan *Stop the racist asylum ban!*

A mass movement against this racist law should be built in every town and city across Britain, with trade unionists taking the lead in setting up local co-ordination. We must build the closest possible international collaboration with trade unionists and activists from the tyrannical countries cynically declared "safe" by the racist Tories.

The Labour Party announced its opposition to all discrimination at this year's party conference. Now it must put its money where its mouth is. Instead of attacking beggars, Shadow Home Secretary Jack Straw should announce Labour's total opposition to the proposals and pledge to repeal them when they get into office. The special immigration police squads that killed Joy Gardner should be disbanded.

Trade union branches should be drawing up and passing resolutions now to commit the party, which is funded and backed by our movement, to act in the interests of all workers—black and white—by scrapping these scandalous racist laws.

At the core of Howard's proposed laws lies an attack on "illegal" immigrants. But Britain's immigration laws have all been introduced to restrict the entry of black people and workers from poor and oppressed countries.

The system of immigration controls allows the bosses and their money the privilege to wander the globe investing wherever they can, whilst real human beings are denied the same right to live and work where they choose. The myth of "overcrowded" Britain is used to present immigrants as the cause of unemployment, poverty and waiting lists, whereas in reality they are their greatest victims.

The reality of all the immigration laws has been exposed by the latest Tory proposals. They are designed to keep black people out and stigmatise them as criminals. That is why there can be no compromise on this question.

All these controls are racist. The labour movement should commit itself to their abolition, and to the fight for a socialist world without borders, in which all workers can live together in solidarity rather than fear, rivalry and hatred. ■

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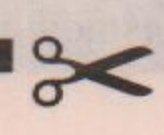
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Interview with Liverpool dockers

"I believe we're winning"

Workers Power (WP) spoke to striking Liverpool dockers about the origins and present course of their dispute. We urge all readers to raise support for this strike in their unions and workplaces.

WP: How did this dispute begin?

Liverpool Dockers: It started with the lads at Torside. Torside was set up about four years ago to bring in new blood on the docks. A lot of us are getting a bit past it now - two-thirds of the workforce are over 50. So we did need young lads on a kind of training scheme. The problem was that once started, their terms and conditions were well below ours, so we were against Torside being set up originally. We needed to protect our jobs and pay.

So Torside were undermining Mersey Docks and Harbour Company (MDHC) dockers' pay and conditions?

That's right. After a lot of negotiations, Torside was set up with our backing with the promise that after three years they would be on the same terms and conditions as ourselves, but after three years they were still not anywhere near them. Then the three years progressed to four. Also MDHC do own a lot of other companies such as Liverpool Cargo Holding (LCH), the timber terminal etc.

Torside were moved into LCH and LCH dockers moved elsewhere like the container base. But their rates of pay and terms and conditions were worse and in fact were deteriorating. They had to work 12 hour days. So what was happening was they were infiltrating throughout the docks with the poorer terms and conditions.

Were Torside a more casual workforce?

Yes, they were introducing casual labour here and there. We'd been told that the next ship to dock at the timber terminal would be handled by casual labour. Even though Torside were an employed workforce and had been promised a pension and sick pay, in fact they had to have a collection amongst themselves to cover it.

So did MDHC contract in Torside to work for them?

No, they were set up as an independent company. But we've got information and proof that Torside was set up by MDHC. They must have very close connections because they moved MDHC staff out of LCH and the timber terminal and moved Torside workers in. Torside were supposed to supplement LCH dockers, but the only reason LCH was set up was to get the agency workers onto the dock. Eventually they spread out all over the docks on their terrible terms and conditions.

How was the current situation brought about?

Torside workers won a ballot in a dis-

pute around part time workers. The 28 day period for the industrial action to take place lapsed because they reached a settlement at the last minute. Four days after the 28 days had expired, the management asked five workers to work overtime. But instead of being paid the two hour block for any overtime, they were only going to pay them one hour. They refused to work the overtime, completed their 8 hour shift and went home. Management immediately sacked them. When the other lads heard about this, they refused to work and were all sacked. The company then announced it had gone into liquidation. There was then a problem in that there could be no official ballot because all the workers were sacked and there was no company in existence. Torside lads then looked for support and put up picket lines, which we refused to cross.

On Thursday 28 September, we all got

letter by taxi saying if we didn't return to work by Friday we would all be dismissed. We refused to cross the picket lines on Friday so we all received another letter saying we'd been dismissed. At Seaforth out of 350 dockers, 200 got new contracts to sign. These contracts were different. Work had been changed, rates of pay were up to £3,000 per year less, with other conditions tagged on. Only 40 signed the contracts, but they didn't report for work. Some were on long term sick. So the management plan to get maybe 100 to 200 back to work completely backfired, which I think took them by surprise.

What have the TGWU done?

When we first started we put posters up but the local official was pulling them down. He's never done what he gets paid for and given us support. We then had a meeting with the legal representative of the

TGWU, who recommended we try and get back into work so that we could have a legal ballot. We met again on 5 October and decided to return to work on the Monday. MDHC almost immediately issued a statement saying that we were all sacked and there would be no point in returning to work on Monday. We turned up anyway on Monday morning, about 250 of us, but they had the police there in force and wouldn't let us in. From then on it's been stalemate. They have had meetings with the union and ACAS which are still going on. At the moment despite being sacked I believe we're winning.

Is there any movement on the docks at all?

There is some. There are some scabs being brought in, but we're getting a lot of local support and support from around the country and they are having to take no-

tice. They need a workforce on the docks that is trained and knows the job. There are about 15 scabs in. The scabs that have been brought in are operating the timber terminal and a copper ship. The container terminal is being operated by supervisors and the 14 to 15 who have returned. In the three weeks we have been on strike, the container terminal would have expected to have dealt with 40 ships, but so far they've only had four small ships. So it's nothing like capacity, which is about 1,000 containers a day, they're down to about 50 now.

Are they being diverted to other ports?

Yes, a lot of them go to Thames port and Felixstowe.

Are you trying to get this stopped?

We are making contact with other ports but since the end of the National Dock Labour Scheme a lot of these places are already in the position we're trying to prevent i.e. casual labour. So it's very difficult to organise. Now they're getting in Drake International, a well experienced strike breaking agency. They won Southampton.

What do you think management's next move will be?

They've backed themselves into a corner. They need a workforce and would prefer the existing one, or most of them anyway. But they'll have to lose face to take us back on. Maybe that's naive but that's the way I see it. They might bring in Drake International to recruit from around the country, but when they advertised in Liverpool the response was very low given the high rate of unemployment. It's going to be very difficult to replace the workforce, so I'm fairly confident we'll do well in this dispute. We're getting support from all over the country, despite it being kept out of the news. It's going to be raised in parliament by one of our local MPs, hopefully it will develop from there. The dock company are now talking which is also an improvement. We're not talking over pay, we're not talking over terms and conditions, we're talking about an employer that thinks they can ride rough-shod over a workforce that's served them in some cases for 35 years. To do this to a loyal workforce is a disgrace.

Send money and messages of support to:
Edinburgh Park Dockers Club
Townsend Lane
Liverpool

Cheques payable to: Merseyside Docks Shop Stewards Appeal Fund
Abbey National K26513650 EMP



No smiles at Tate and Lyle

ON 22 October production workers at the multinational sugar giant, Tate and Lyle, began the first of a series of two day strikes at factories in Silvertown, Plaistow and Millwall in London.

The workers are striking against management's attempt to impose changes to long standing working conditions without the agreement of the unions. The ballot for action resulted in 87% voting in favour, and the strike was solidly supported by the 500 GMB and 100 AEEU members. New rules now require workers to ar-

rive at work, change into their protective clothing and be at their work stations prior to their paid start time. Washing and changing time at the end of the shift will no longer be paid. One worker on the picket said that this would add at least 45 minutes to his working day.

Rules

Extra minutes on break times to allow workers to walk long distances, for example from the jetty to the canteen, have also been stopped. The new rules stop workers arranging the handovers, which must be

done whilst maintaining continuous production, with staff from the incoming shift. Now everyone will have to hand over at exactly the same time. Again this will lead to an increase in work time.

Workers on the picket line said that trouble has been brewing for several years, as union negotiators have given way to management on the harmonising of working hours between the three sites. One picket suggested that the sugar giant is trying to push for as many changes to working practices as it can while the Tories are still in government.

This is undoubtedly true, but Tate and Lyle are obviously hedging their bets since they recently decided to donate, not only to the Tory, but also to the Labour and the Lib Dem political funds!

Rewarded

Admin staff, who are Apex members, have voted not to take part in the strike. They have been rewarded by management telling them to cross the picket line and get their hands dirty on the production line!

Lorry drivers in the TGWU have also crossed the picket line. The TGWU mem-

bers have not been balloted on supporting the strike.

The two day strikes are set to continue, starting every Sunday. A local march supporting the strikers is also being planned.

But if the strikes are to succeed, GMB and AEEU members will have to make the picket lines effective. And that means persuading their fellow trade unionists in the TGWU and APEX not to cross the lines so that production at the factories is completely halted.

That will wipe the smile off the face of Tate and Lyle! ■

Hillingdon

Hospital workers strike against new contracts

NINETY CLEANERS at Hillingdon Hospital, West London, have been on strike since 2 October against their employer, the cleaning sub-contractors Pall Mall, owned by the massive Davis Service Group.

The workers, mainly Asian women, refused to give in to management intimidation when they were told to sign new contracts by 1 October or be sacked.

The new contracts were disgusting. Already earning only £3.19 an hour basic pay, workers were being asked by management to sign away their overtime rates of time-and-a-half for Saturdays and double time for Sundays, and to give up their London Weighting Allowance.

In the run-up to the 1 October deadline, management harassment reached extraordinary lengths. Pall Mall managers demanded to see workers' passports and threatened to photocopy them.

No wonder strikers gave UNISON full-time official Pete Berry short shrift when he warned them against striking because of management's threat to sack them all. After an overwhelming vote for strike action an 11-strong strike committee was elected. With all the courage workers have come to expect from their officials, Berry then went off sick!

Hardship

UNISON has donated £25,000 to the strikers' hardship fund, which is a good start. But events on the 21 October UNISON demonstration in London show both the support that can be won from rank and file members and the sort of obstruction the strikers can expect from the union

bureaucracy. The strikers won warm sympathy and pledges of support from other workers, but were shocked when the officials tried to stop a representative from the Hillingdon strike from speaking on the platform. The strikers only got a speaker after persistent protests from the crowd.

UNISON is now balloting the strikers, and all Pall Mall workers at the hospital, for strike action.

Workers Power says:

- Build now for a massive YES vote in the ballot.
- For a real push to unionise Pall Mall

and Davis Service workers.

- Shut down the scab agencies with militant lobbies and direct action.
- Build the pickets to keep the scabs out.
- Don't wait for the officials: build rank and file solidarity committees of UNISON workers and press for solidarity strike action across the NHS if the anti-union laws are used.
- Vote Roger Bannister for UNISON General Secretary. Push for all union officials to be paid the average wage of the workers they represent and be subject to recall.■



Manchester University

Student rent strike

STUDENTS AT Manchester University arrived at the start of this term to find out that their grants been slashed by 10% and that fees for accommodation in its halls of residence had been raised. The union's response was to do nothing. They wrote to all students in residence: "Don't panic—we are discussing the matter with the management of the University."

Students were too angry to follow this pathetic advice. Increasing numbers of students began withholding their rent. The union officials realised they would have to do more if they were to keep control of the situation. Following a well-attended General Meeting, the union was forced to agree to an official rent strike. But the union leaders still managed to keep the movement in check and pave the way for a cynical sell-out.

An amendment to the executive's position submitted by the Socialist Worker Student Society called for a campaign against any rent increases—this was supported by the executive, to the surprise of many militant students.

But the union's Communications Officer, Richard Stacey, went on to explain that to be "realistic" some rent increase had to be accepted, and the executive hoped they could "limit the extent" of the increase.

The executive however opposed a further amendment that would have forced them to bring any deal back to students at a general meeting for approval before agreement. With utter cynicism they concealed their real motives, by claiming that only those taking action should be in control of the strike, not students living outside halls. Of course the only people that really had control, as a result of this, were the executive themselves. But this manoeuvre fooled the majority of students. They agreed to place their rents in a central Rent Strike Fund controlled solely by the executive.

Approach

The Executive duly went on to call off the strike, paid the Rent Strike Fund straight to the University and declared a victory for a "common sense approach". Their true aim was therefore revealed—to prevent any resistance to the rent rise and to act on behalf of management in collecting the rent. What are the terms of the executive's claimed "victory"? Surprise, surprise, they don't yet know the full details!

There have been some commitments given by the University: that £1.6 million raised from the sale of one of the Halls will be used for improvements. Students in temporary accommodation in Salford,

because of the sale of their Hall, will have their charges dropped by £5 a night. Increases next year will "not be substantially above inflation" (ie will still be above inflation). Those who have through rooms (ie no privacy) will have a reduction of £4 a week.

These minor concessions cover up the real scale of the defeat. For example, students in Owens Park Residence, the largest of the Hall complexes, have already been told by the University officials that there will be *no* cuts in their rent. Other Halls like Cornbrooke House have been told that their reduction will be a pathetic 60p per week!

Students are furious that they had not been consulted before a settlement was reached and that their strike fund was paid to the University. They were even more furious when they discovered that any reductions on this term's rent will not be paid until next year!

Strategy

From the outset, a simple strategy of rent striking alone was not enough to make the university back down. Even campaigning for no increases in Hall Fees accepts that a greater proportion of our reduced grants will go on rent—and is therefore in real terms an increase on rent.

With no plans for how to deal with potential victimisations or evictions, and crucially no plans for escalation of the dispute, there had been no preparation for the scale of action that would have been needed to win. Students needed to be clear from the outset that, to defeat the University and force the withdrawal of all rent rises, without victimisations, the strike would have needed to be extended to an occupation of the University.

Students should not give up the fight for decent rents. But they do have to learn the lesson: never trust the union officials! A strike committee should have been elected with delegates from every hall and every department, to co-ordinate the action democratically and prevent the sort of sell-out that eventually took place. Manchester University students have to build for an emergency general meeting to replace this executive with one that will fight for action designed to win, and that will freely place itself under the control of students in struggle.■

TONY BLAIR'S supporters on the NUS executive are busy preparing to derail opposition to the Labour leaders' plans to extend the student loan scheme. That is why London Area NUS, which opposes the loan scheme and stands for decent grants for all, has been suspended from the NUS.

Students need a new type of union leadership to resist student poverty.

All local student union officials should be elected at mass meetings and subject to recall.

They should receive only the average grant of the students they represent, so that they are not immune from the effects of the attacks students face and have a direct interest in fighting back, not just using their

position as another impressive entry on their CVs.

We can't leave the fightback to the official NUS. We need joint committees to fight student poverty, and attacks on Further and Higher Education. These should unite delegates elected by the rank and file from every course, every year, every Hall and every section of workers on campus.

They must insist on controlling their own action and take it out of the hands of those who will work overtime to defeat any effective action. They must campaign with NUS officials wherever possible, but against them whenever necessary—which on their current record looks like being most of the time!■



Finger lickin' rip-off

Young workers get the crappiest jobs and get paid the worst wages. And that's the way the bosses want it to stay. Karen, who works for Kentucky Fried Chicken, spoke to *Workers Power* about how young workers are exploited at her workplace, and what she thinks can be done about it.

“AT KENTUCKY the shifts are really long, as much as 10 hours on Friday and Saturday nights when it's busiest. The thing is that we only get one 15 minute break, which is disgusting when you think about it. You haven't really got time to do anything in your break to get yourself back together before it's over and you're working again.

A lot of workers don't want to say anything about it though, because at least we get paid for our break. It's even worse at McDonalds... they get a 45 minute break, but they don't get paid for it!

The worst thing is the pay. It's so low - just £3.15 an hour, and new workers only get £3. It's a poverty wage - the European Union says that anything under £5.88 an hour is below the "decent" threshold. So its official - Kentucky's wages are indecent. And even this is not the worst pay I've ever seen. In my last job people worked through their breaks to get more pay, because the ordinary wages were only £2.30 an hour!

At the moment my pay works out at just £110 a week after tax, which isn't enough to cover anything much. I'm 21, and with wages like this I can't even think about saving up for anything. You constantly have to worry about every little thing, how to pay the bills, whether you can afford a few beers when you go out and so on. The managers decide when your pay goes up to £3.15 - they just make the decision off the top of their heads. Workers are encouraged to keep quiet about it, so we are kept divided.

Conditions

The conditions are terrible. The work is so boring - people say I look like a zombie half the time. In the summer it gets very hot, with all the cooking going on, and the uniforms we have to wear just make it worse. They're made of polyester, which is incredibly uncomfortable in the heat. I haven't worked there during the winter yet, but I'm not looking forward to it. Other workers say it gets really cold, especially because we're not allowed to wear socks or tights (don't ask me why!)

If you step out of line in any way

then the managers can just swap your shifts around whenever they want, making you work say 3 shifts one week and then 7 the next. That way they can pile the pressure onto workers they don't like, stopping them settling into a routine. I've already seen them get rid of somebody like that.

With the shifts being irregular, it keeps the workforce separated, so you never really get to meet together on a regular basis. That makes it much harder to organise the workers to stand up for themselves against the employers. It also makes it easier for the workers to be turned against each other.

Missing

Recently the managers discovered that the till was down - there was some money missing. The worker who was suspected of it ended up blaming somebody else. It's difficult to get people to stick up for each other when we're so isolated from each other.

I've been thinking about what we could do about it, and I think the main thing we need is a union. Nobody at Kentucky seems to know anything much about them.

I know that various unions have been asked but they don't seem to want to do anything about helping us to organise.

The Transport and General Workers Union have said that we can join as individuals, but they won't come down and try to unionise the workplace as a whole. The problem with saying we can join as ones and twos is that a lot of people might feel nervous about it, especially if the bosses find out and victimise them.

But it's not just that people don't want to stick their necks out. The union won't say what workers would really get out of it if they joined. So there's no enthusiasm for joining a union at the moment.

At the end of the day there's only one way to improve conditions at work, and that is to get organised. If we all joined a union we'd be able to make demands for better pay and for a decent break - fully paid of course! We'd also be able to call on the union for official support, which would make the bosses think twice about pushing us around.■

Write to: BCM Box 7750, London WC1N 3XX

Budget

Can the economy save the Tories?

Spending cuts for the poor, tax cuts for the rich and a cut in the Tories' opinion poll deficit: these are Chancellor Kenneth Clarke's aims for the November budget. Can the Tories pull another election victory out of the Chancellor's hat? Keith Harvey weighs up their options.

NOVEMBER IS budget time. Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, will announce the government's tax and spending plans for the year ahead. This will be a highly political budget aimed at laying the basis for a fifth Tory election victory.

Clarke wants to find between £2 billion and £5 billion to pay for tax cuts over the next year. The Tories hope that this will restore the elusive "feel good factor" among those in work, as they have more money to spend.

They will cross their fingers and pray that families who have been hit hard by huge tax rises since 1993, as well as cuts in education and state benefits, will forgive and forget, putting the Tories back in office for a fifth term.

At the same time they will be trying to calm the fears of the big bosses and bankers about rising inflation and government debt.

It is a high risk strategy, and one which illustrates the profound economic weakness of British capitalism, despite the current economic recovery.

The shortest possible description of British capitalism in the 1990s is that it is a low-wage, low-productivity, industrial economy which also contains an important world financial centre at its core.

Between the dumping of Thatcher in November 1990 and the general election of April 1992, Britain went through what the *Financial Times* called the "second worst recession since the second world war".

The Tories did not cause the recession. But once it was underway they did have a choice as to how to influence the course of it. They chose to benefit the bosses and the bankers, while making the working class pay.

Likewise, the Tories did not cause the recovery. It was the collapse of their economic strategy, when Britain was forced to leave the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) of the European Monetary System, which allowed the escape from recession.

The UK entered the recession with manufacturing productivity 20% behind Germany and 17% behind France. Britain also had higher interest rates and higher inflation than its competitors.

In October 1990 they agreed to join the ERM. This pegged sterling to the other EU currencies at an ambitiously high level. They hoped that this would stop the financial markets speculating on the movement of sterling and ultimately deliver long term productivity gains.

Costs

The government would set interest rates at a high level to maintain the exchange rate within the ERM. If businesses wanted exchange rates lowered then they would have to cut inflation by cutting costs; above all by holding back workers' wages.

Meanwhile, the Tories implemented an informal public sector pay freeze and abolished regulations that restricted the intensified use of labour. So, for example, the UK was the only EU country to have an increase in the working week during the years 1983-92.

But working for low pay is not a great attraction to millions of unemployed; so an important part of government economic policy was to force the unemployed to take low paid jobs. Driving down the value of benefits, and making it more difficult to qualify for them, has been a goal ruthlessly pursued by Tory social security ministers. Everything from freezing the value of child benefit to the introduction of the Job Seek-

ers Allowance points in this direction.

At one level, this set of policies had its effect. While output fell by 3.6% and unemployment rose from around 4% to over 10% in early 1993, unit labour costs were driven down and productivity improved.

But recovery would never have begun were it not for the collapse of the Tories' ERM strategy.

By the late summer of 1992 the world's financial markets reckoned that it would be impossible for the UK to maintain its chosen, high exchange rate in the ERM. They began to think that Britain leaving the ERM was a good bet. They effectively put all their money on that bet—by selling sterling before it was devalued—and they were proved right. For 24 hours in September 1992 Major and Lamont tried to bluff the markets by jacking up interest rates by 5% before giving up and pulling out of the ERM.

Why were the financiers so sure that Britain would have to leave the ERM? Quite simply because of the contradiction between the UK's financial capitalist ambitions for sterling and the weakness of its industrial economic base.

Withdrawal from the ERM led to the devaluation of the pound by 13% over the next 18 months. On the basis of the improved productivity achieved in the recession, an export-led recovery started in 1993. Nearly 3% growth in 1993 was followed by 4% in 1994. Profits rebounded, increasing over last year by 20% in non-oil companies, the biggest jump since the

sign of the Tories' hoped-for "feelgood factor". The fact is that the middle class and better paid workers have nothing to feel good about.

This year has seen the recovery falter badly. Two-thirds of all output is normally generated by consumer demand. Consumer demand is as flat as a pancake, partly because 36% of our income—the highest since 1978/79—is now being taken away in taxes. Much of the rest goes on high mortgage interest payments.

In addition, job insecurity and stagnant real wage levels have reinforced the reluctance to spend.

Investment in manufacturing jumped 7% last year but has tailed off again despite many firms running at capacity and industry sitting on its biggest cash surplus since the 1970s.

Industry has little faith in a deep and lasting recovery which would justify big capital outlays; many would prefer to speculate on the financial markets with their cash mountain.

Now, even the export-led core of the recovery has hit obstacles.

First, the US economy has started to decline, along with most of the major industrial economies, cutting demand for British goods.

Second, while British exports are still

What is likely is that Clarke will announce substantial tax cuts: not primarily to stimulate the faltering economy but to stimulate the Tory poll ratings. These will be paid for by a combination of a spending freeze in the welfare and education services, deep attacks on Civil Service workers and by borrowing more money.

early 1970s.

But it was a recovery based on exports abroad and low wages at home, not on rising demand in Britain. Indeed, to avoid the need for even further tax increases, Clarke had to implement a vicious round of spending cuts in 1994.

Only when the weakness of "domestic demand"—the spending power of the British public—threatened to stifle the recovery did Clarke finally begin to reduce interest rates. And despite this, there is little

cheaper, resulting from the devaluation following the ERM collapse, the underlying productivity gains of the last years have petered out.

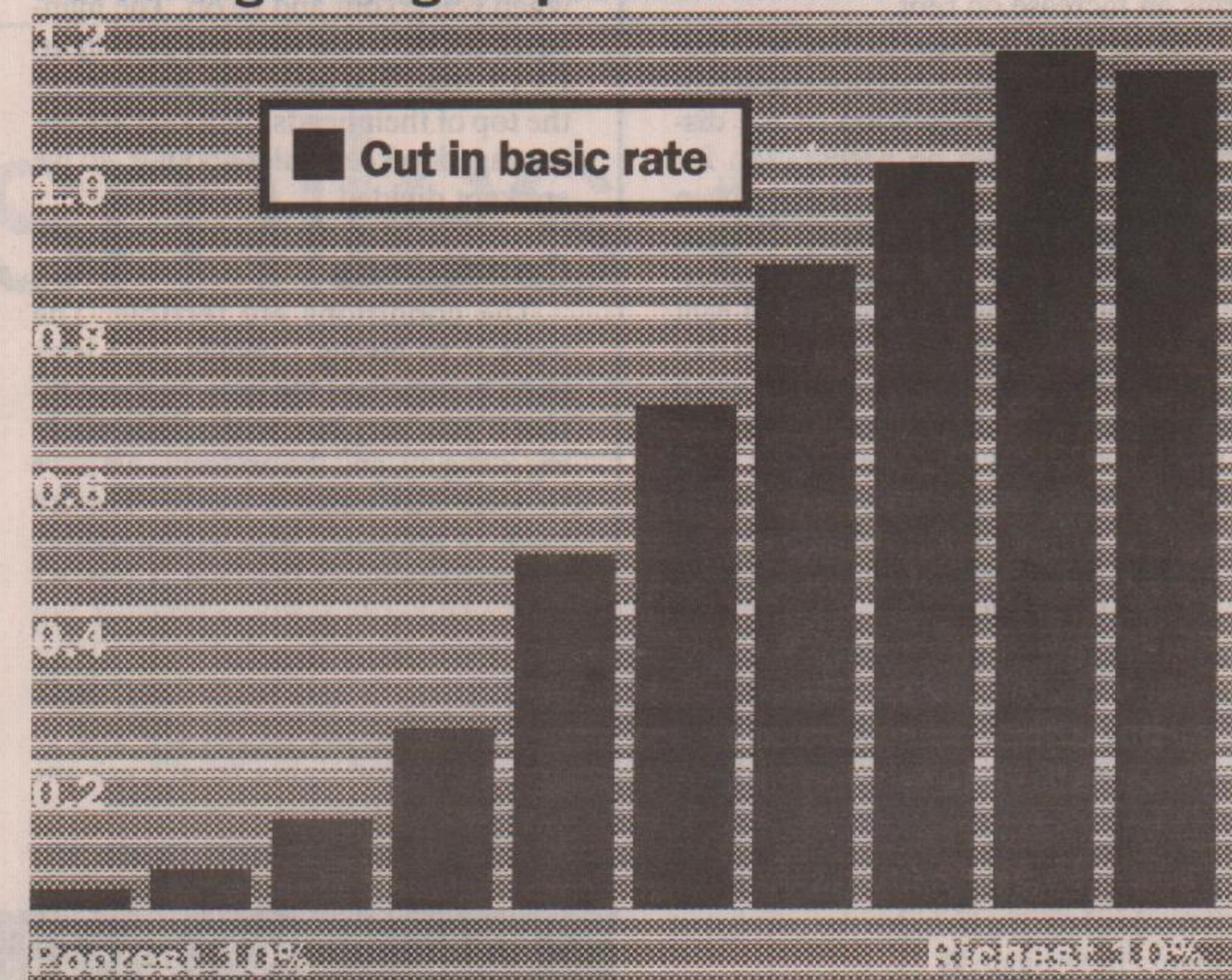
These were primarily due to job losses going alongside 4% growth. Now growth is around 2.5% and unemployment decreasing, unit labour costs are rising faster than EU rivals once more. Yet again, the failure to invest in lasting productivity gains is haunting British capitalism.

Believe it or not, with 2.3 million still

announce substantial tax cuts: not primarily to stimulate the faltering economy but to stimulate the Tory poll ratings. These will be paid for by a combination of a spending freeze in the welfare and education services, deep attacks on Civil Service workers and by borrowing more money. The amount of borrowing and the amount of cutting all depends on how weak the Tories think the working class resistance will be.

But whatever happens in the short term,

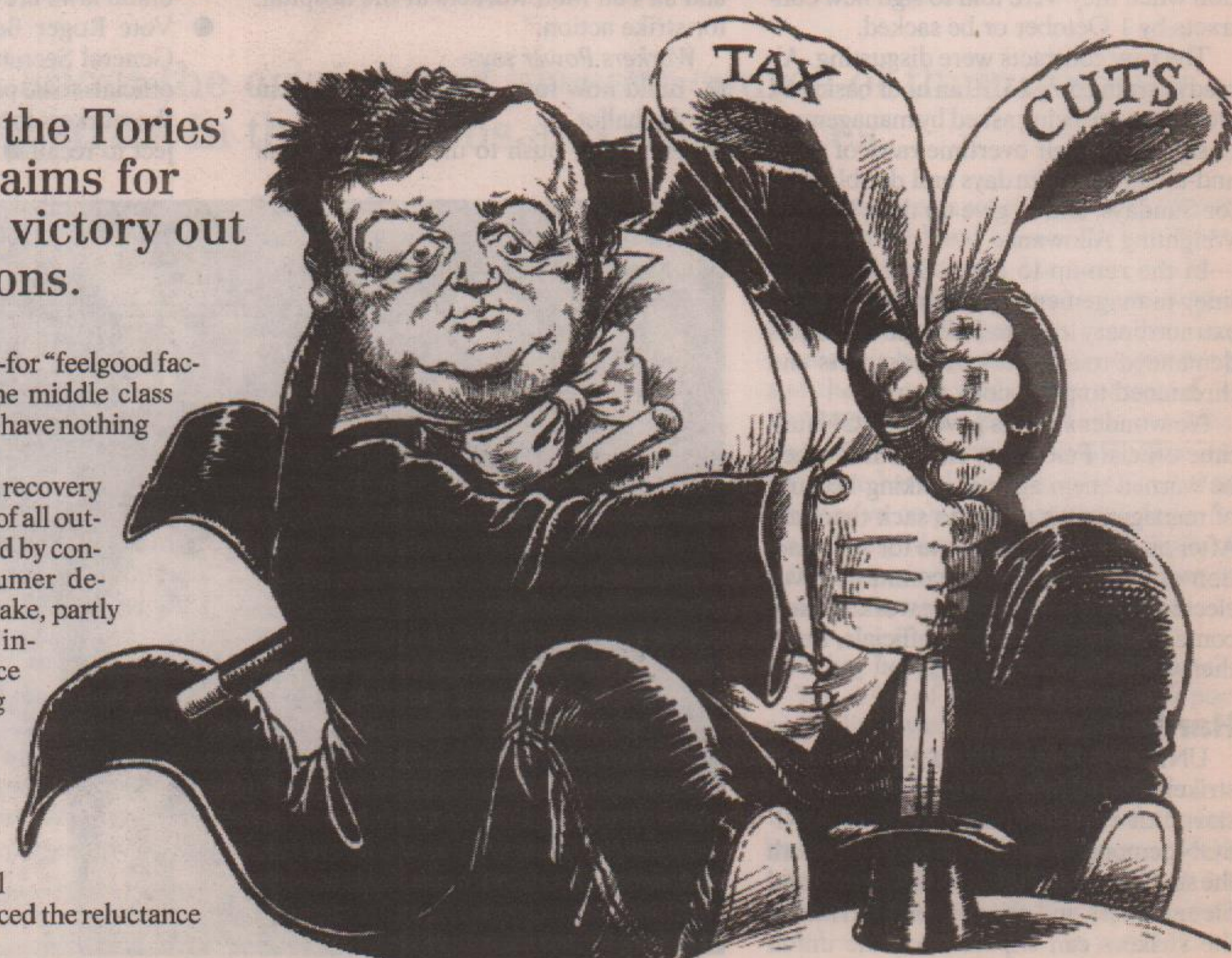
Percentage change in post-tax income



Who gains from income tax cuts?

When the Tories cut tax it is income tax they like to cut. This graph shows why. When a penny is taken off the basic rate of tax the poorest sections of the population gain little: 0.02%. But the richest 20% see their post-tax income rising by over 1% for every penny cut.

By introducing VAT, the indirect tax on spending that hits rich and poor equally, has been massively extended under the Tories. The share of taxes raised by VAT has doubled from 10% to 20% since 1975.



Can Clarke conjure up enough of a feel-good factor to save the Tories?

on the dole, and up to 4 million actually jobless, we are entering what economists call a "tight labour market". There is a rise in vacancies and a shortage of workers with the right skills in the right place at the right time!

Even on the most optimistic Tory forecasts, tax cuts will only lead to a 2% increase in consumer spending before an election. Whether the consumer will feel grateful for having to spend it on private pension schemes, private medical insurance, and family members that used to get state benefits, is doubtful.

What is likely is that Clarke will an-

Clarke's budget dilemma tells us a lot about the strategic problems of the British economy and the Tory project for it.

The Tories think like this: we have the power to manipulate interest rates, the money supply and the level of public debt and spending. We will use this power to keep inflation low and public spending low as a proportion of GDP. This will provide the best conditions to be externally competitive.

Except in the highly political world of arms production we will not support British firms against foreign competition. We will not borrow to finance investment. We will provide a "deregulated" labour market—cheap labour with no rights at work—and thereby minimise the financial costs of employing workers. We will distribute just enough money to the middle class and the upper stratum of the working class to ensure its loyalty at the election.

Now, with Britain, at most, eighteen months away from an election, they are finding it difficult to do just that.

Centre

Managing a low-wage, low productivity economy that aspires to be a leading financial centre has demanded such broad attacks—not just on the working class but also the middle classes—that fashioning a winning electoral minority from this social base is now more difficult than ever.

This has always been the key to the Tories' electoral success: being able to win despite over half the electorate hating them.

Now, in order to secure the long term interests of British capitalism they have had to erode average earnings and raise taxes. They have increased job insecurity, lengthened the working week and slashed benefits—all to boost productivity and force people to accept low paid, part-time jobs.

The "labour aristocracy"—skilled, better paid workers with job security—has shrunk as skilled labour becomes marginal to the fortunes of British capitalism. The lower middle class feels repulsion at the sight of the education and welfare system being reduced to that needed to service an economy that does not need or value the professions, public services or high skilled technicians.

The Tories have serviced the bosses so well that they have greatly eroded their ability to secure even the minority of votes that they need to get re-elected.

That is good news for everybody who hates the Tories. But unless we fight them now, then as long as they remain in office we will still have to endure the attacks that their economic strategy demands. ■



Panther

Panther is a tense and effective dramatisation of the story of the Black Panther movement in the USA during the 1960s. It celebrates their achievements and their heroism without falling into uncritical adulation. Above all, it shows why the racist US state could not tolerate their growth.

Using a drama-documentary format, the film traces the origins of the Panthers in Oakland, California through the eyes of a Vietnam veteran. By focusing on the experience of one black working class community we understand why the Panthers rejected the non-violence of the Civil Rights movement. "Turning the other cheek" left the community open to the constant attacks of a brutal, racist and heavily armed police department.

It is no surprise that the film sent shock waves through the US right wing estab-

lishment. The most powerful image in the film is the first appearance of an armed, highly disciplined Panther squad which successfully resists a routine police beating.

The film traces the development and growth of the Panthers and is full of sharp debates about strategy. While these debates are inevitably oversimplified on screen, the film does give a flavour of how seriously the Panthers, and those around them, discussed the causes of black oppression and the tactics needed to fight it.

But certain weaknesses of the film limit the lessons the audience can learn. Some of the characterisations are two dimensional—although Marcus Chong's Huey Newton gives us a real understanding of Newton's intellectual stature and charisma.

The film's concentration on FBI subver-

Lesley Day reviews
Panther
Directed by Mario Van Peebles
On general release this month

sion is also a limitation. While there is no doubt that the FBI infiltrated the Panthers and later played the "drug card" against the black communities, the state needed no bogus pretext to crackdown on the movement.

The Panthers' programme and strategy meant that, however disciplined and well-trained, they could not be a match for the armed might of the state.

A mass movement of working class people needed to be built up as a political force to smash big business and its political backers to their foundations. Without

such a mass movement, and a revolutionary party leading it, the armed self defence tactics of the Panthers, no matter how legitimate, could not be transformed into an effective armed challenge to the racist state.

To the extent that the Panthers developed a mass base of support, their activities did not go beyond education and reform. This was neither enough to defend themselves nor provide a way forward for the black working class out of its oppression and super-exploitation.

Furthermore, however progressive the initial impulse behind this phase of self-organisation, the Panthers' concept of an exclusively black party held the seeds of an all-class alliance within the community which could have put the middle class in charge.

Their concept of party organisation, too,

owed more to a Stalinist concept of leadership than to that of a revolutionary working class movement. As they degenerated this Stalinist influence led to violence within the movement and the bureaucratic suppression of debate.

Despite the limits of the film, and whatever the weaknesses of its heroes, *Panther* helps reveal some of the potential of the revolutionary phase of the movement.

Where the Nation of Islam leadership now advocates a separate black capitalism the Panthers condemned the whole capitalist system as an enemy of the oppressed.

Where Farrakhan won't let women march on Washington the Panthers encouraged women to play a full part in their movement, including its armed actions.

See the film, debate its lessons; above all get active in the fight for black liberation and socialism. ■

Bolivian section walks out without a fight

IN LATE September the Bolivian section of the LRCI (Poder Obrero Bolivia) together with one member in Peru and one member of the British section signed a document renouncing the decisions of the LRCI's Third Congress (1994) and refusing to recognise the discipline of its leading bodies. The document, purporting to be signed by "all the Latin American members of the LRCI", contains 15 names, only nine of whom are in fact members of the League.

The LRCI leadership was not aware that such a decision was being prepared nor was it officially given a copy of the document until 13 October. The LRCI only learned of the decision at a public meeting on 5 October in London at which Jose Villa (a member of the British section) returned after a three month holiday to publicly denounce the LRCI position on the Bosnian war, accusing the LRCI of "supporting imperialism" in the recent conflict between Bosnian Serbs and Nato.

Jose Villa was immediately expelled for this breach of democratic centralism. On receiving confirmation of the position of POB, they were immediately suspended as a section with a recommendation to the next International Executive Committee that they be expelled.

The split statement justifies their action on the grounds that they were prevented from forming a tendency inside the LRCI to oppose the agreed line of the LRCI on the Bosnian war. This is a lie.

Inside the LRCI there has been a full discussion and debate on these issues. Villa has, on more than one occasion, been invited to form a tendency to fight for his views in an organised fashion. He always declined, keenly aware of his lack of support outside Bolivia.

On the eve of the last IEC in July, long before the Nato bombings this year, POB issued a tendency platform signed by its leadership, primarily over Bosnia. The IEC agreed to recognise the tendency only after the LRCI's resolution on this subject, adopted in July, had been translated into Spanish and discussed by POB.

We made it clear that rights under democratic centralism go with the fulfilment of duties. Members could only judge at first hand the position they were protesting against if the documents were in a language they could read. With the last August NATO bombings, Jose Villa demanded the LRCI support the genocidal Bosnian Serbs in the name of "anti-imperialism". The public indiscipline of the signatories has now prevented a democratic discussion of the issues in an organised way inside the LRCI.

The defection of Latin America members of the LRCI naturally has political roots. In the first instance it stems from the politics of Jose Villa who founded the Peruvian and Bolivian groups that joined the LRCI and (mis)trained the comrades in his image. These politics were inherited from degenerate Trotskyism in its Lora-ist

(Bolivian POR) form: a vulgar and demagogic "anti-imperialism" allied to Stalinophilia.

The idea that the existence of the USSR as a degenerate workers' state provided a buffer, offsetting the naked imperialist ambition of the USA in Latin America, proved no basis for negotiating the rapids of the post-1989 world.

In addition, the "Latin American com-

LRCI

rades of the LRCI" resisted the desire of the rest of the LRCI sections to move from fraternal relations to international democratic centralism. Decisions taken by democratically elected international leadership bodies frequently met with resistance which sprang from the comrades' own training in degenerate, national-centred "Trotskyism".

After the collapse of Stalinism in 1989 Villa, and most of his old comrades in Latin America, retreated into Stalinophile-nostalgia and a sterile sectarianism when it came to tactics. In particular, Villa increasingly blamed the oppressed nations and ethnic groups of the former Stalinist states and the semi-colonies, from the Baltic states to Rwanda and Bosnia, for collapse of Stalinist and anti-imperialist regimes—stigmatising them all as pawns of imperi-

alism.

Reacting with horror and aversion to the democratic illusions of the masses in the former USSR and Eastern Europe, they came to see democratic rights and demands themselves as dangerously undermining the workers' states. The best thing was to ignore them or denounce them. And if this meant turning one's back on the working class, it was a price worth paying. The decaying remnants of the Stalinist bureaucracy, on the other hand, were Villa's constantly hoped for defenders of the degenerate workers' states.

The comrades have been unable to come to terms with the post-1990 years of defeats which the working class suffered. They have refused to develop the democratic and transitional slogans needed to help the working class fight back. Instead they saw these necessary re-elaborations as "revisionism", as yielding to the pressure of democratic "public opinion".

The LRCI has now suffered three splits over the last year; within the Austrian and New Zealand sections, and now with the Bolivian section. All represent petit bourgeois elements that are unable to adapt to the new world situation, elements which feel that, due to the collapse of Stalinism, "socialism" itself has suffered a terrible defeat. All have yielded to the pressure of the defeatist gloom which has hung over the sectarian and centrist left over the past few years. The Austrian and NZ opposition groups enjoyed unimpeded faction

rights; the POB were offered but repeatedly declined them from 1992 onwards.

What has happened to those who have left?

For one group (Austria) the answer was a retreat into pure theoretical contemplation, for another (New Zealand) a retreat from the programme and international democratic centralism, and for Villa and co a shrill attack on the victims of genocide, backing their oppressors as "anti-imperialists". The great majority of the LRCI remains loyal to our programme. More, we have gained new sections (Sweden, Australia), and existing ones are growing.

Clearly, the departure of our only section in Latin America represents a blow to the LRCI. But we remain fully committed to building on that continent; indeed, we shall redouble our efforts.

Without the hampering effects of a representative who all too often misrepresented our programme and method, without a section which was, unfortunately, in the last period an embarrassment, we shall concentrate all our efforts on pursuing programmatic discussions, already initiated with leftward moving organisations in several countries of the continent. ■

Documents on the issues raised by the split will be published in *Trotskyist Bulletin* no 7 in November.

WITH THE Tories set to claw back millions from the very poorest through cuts in housing benefit and benefits for single parents, Shadow Chancellor Gordon Brown's commitment to taking "up to £3bn" from the profits of the hated privatised utility companies has already met with an enthusiastic response.

Brown has even earmarked the money for jobs. Yet there is much more money than this washing around in the coffers of the major corporations.

Top executives, not just in the utility companies but also in the banks and insurance companies, continue to earn astronomical sums to almost universal disgust. The notorious Cedric Brown of British Gas is in fact only the 48th highest paid executive, getting a mere £492,502 last year. Peter Sedgwick of the merchant bank Schroders notched up £1.43 million. Peter Wood of Direct Line insurance paid himself a modest £17.4 million in 1994.

And these figures are only the salaries. The 10 water companies of England and Wales have seen their profits rise by 215% over the last 5 years. On profits of £7.8bn they have paid only £107m in corporation tax. Moguls who commute by helicopter from offshore tax havens already cost the treasury an estimated £3 billion a year.

These figures could prove to millions of workers that Brown's Windfall Tax is far too timid. A lot more could be done.

More money is needed to really eradicate unemployment. John Edmonds of the GMB estimates the cost of getting one million off the dole at only £8bn. Why stop there? What about the other millions of unemployed, many of whom are not registered in the official figures?

Socialists must demand a swingeing tax on wealth and profits. Workers must insist that a wealth tax and steeply progressive income tax be earmarked to restore and expand the NHS, education and transport systems, to fund public works schemes to build and renovate millions of homes, and to raise benefits to a level that can abolish the blight of poverty altogether.

In power Labour should open the accounts of major companies for inspection by trade unionists and consumers. Any firm declaring bankruptcy, all the banks and finance houses and all the utilities, without exception, should be renationalised.

Blair declared in September that: "The only thing I have hesitated in doing is committing sums in advance to start renationalising what the Tories have privatised."

This idea that renationalisation would be "too expensive" can only be countered by rejecting the payment of any compensation to the parasitic private owners. They have plundered these industries for their own gain. Far from draining state funds, nationalisation under workers' control would provide working people with direct access to the wealth of the future.

In the meantime, companies targeted for the Windfall Tax have already threatened to pass on the loss through price rises. Workers should be demanding a price freeze to ensure that the "windfall" is paid for by the rich, not the poor.

Minimum Wage

The Tories will try to claim that a national minimum wage will lead to higher unemployment *per se*. Despite this nonsense, there is no doubt that the minimum wage is and remains a popular policy. Yet Blair and Harriet Harman's proposal for a tripartite commission under Labour to set the figure, which will include employers, has already unsettled many trade unionists, especially those in low paid sectors.

Leaks show that Blair and Harman would prefer a figure of £3.30 an hour (the lowest possible estimate of half median male earnings) or something even lower. Whereas over 2.5m earn less than £3.50 an hour, there are nearly 5m who earn under £4.15, and even this remains a poverty wage.

Workers simply cannot trust Blair on this issue. We should step up the fight to get those unions which have formally adopted the £4.15 figure to force it on Labour as a definite election pledge while continuing to push for the labour movement to set as its goal a minimum wage based on the real average male wage of £8 an hour.

Education

Blair's speech included the promise to restrict class sizes to 30—but only for the youngest children in primary school. He has pledged £110 million for this, recovered by abolishing the £110m assisted places scheme for private schools. This will be highly popular with teachers and parents. Surveys show 90% of parents think 31 should be the maximum size, yet there are over one million children in classes bigger than this. The main teaching union the NUT has a policy of supporting 30 as the maximum class size.

As Blair's "New Labour" prepares for power:

No more empty promises...

by Richard Brenner

Force Labour to meet our needs!

What is more, one in three parents rightly believe that class sizes should be no more than 20. Overwhelmingly research shows that children benefit from smaller class sizes, especially in the first few years at school. The money is there to provide this precondition for a quality education system

and the call must go out from parents and teachers across the country for the funds to make it a reality. Labour should commit itself to secondary school classes of no more than 30 and primary school classes of no more than 25, with reception classes limited to 20.

Labour's decision to keep grant-maintained schools—at the core of Tory plans for a two-tier education system—remains deeply unpopular among teachers and working class parents. Blair's proposed abolition of funded scholarships does not affect the most privileged layers who will

continue to benefit from private education. In the teaching unions the alarm must be sounded now over Blair's ominous threat to sack teachers who are supposedly "not up to the job", and against Blunkett's scandalous threat to close whole schools if they are "failing".

What's left?



SOME ON the left insist that the numbers voting against the leadership on education, and the de-selection of Liz Davies show that party members are merely keeping their heads down and that there remains a strong left wing in the constituencies.

This is little more than self-delusion masking shattered perspectives. That Roy Hattersley should emerge as the voice of the left—in a debate in which to be a "left-winger" one need only support comprehensive education is not a sign of the left's strength but of its unprecedented weakness.

Blair will now follow up the de-selection of Liz Davies for supporting *Briefing* with the further marginalisation of the left across the country. Thus the militant London Area

of the National Union of Students has been de-recognised by the Blairite NUS leadership for opposing Blair's plans for an extended student loan scheme. Even the editor of the *New Statesman* has been targeted for being insufficiently pro-Blair.

The fact is that the left is now reaping the consequences of failing to stand up to the right wing. When Malcolm Christie, the right wing treasurer of Leeds North East constituency spoke out against the de-selection of Liz Davies at the end of September, he asked:

"How do they propose to stop us from selecting Liz again? Suspend the local party? Well so be it."

But there is no intention in Leeds or from the supporters of *Labour Left Briefing* to

mount any real defiance of the undemocratic attacks of the right wing and their imposition of candidates. The Labour left has been blocked, isolated and defeated.

Arthur Scargill's much-publicised threat to leave Labour is a step he is unlikely to take on his own, and nobody else in the PLP or union bureaucracy supports his suggestion. Benn, Skinner, *Briefing* and co. have lined up to distance themselves from Scargill's remarks.

Blair responded to Scargill's threat by saying essentially that he could do what he liked because nobody in the party listens to him any more. The only thing that Blair is concerned about is to prevent hard lefts getting into parliament, and he should have little trouble securing it.

Labour Conference

Brighton stitch-up

BLAIR HAS spent his first year as leader abandoning or altering past policy to the extent that the majority of New Labour's policies are almost indistinguishable from One-Nation Toryism. This has been acknowledged by Alan Howarth MP, the first Tory ever to cross the floor and join Labour in opposition. This former member of the Thatcherite "No Turning Back" group, who voted for the Poll Tax and for VAT on fuel without complaint, has been sufficiently satisfied by Blair's counter-revolution to regard New Labour as a more reliable instrument for British capitalism than the post-Thatcher Tories.

Nevertheless this summer saw an important shift of emphasis on Blair's part. Prior to the 1995 conference, Blair had informed anyone attached to "Old Labour" (i.e. traditional Labourism, support for welfarism and Keynesian inflationary policies) that they needed "therapy".

A series of programmatic changes had struck at the core values of existing Labourite reformism: abandoning Clause 4 and its commitment to common ownership, ditching the party's commitment to non-selective comprehensive education, reducing the voting strength of the unions in the party, questioning the principle of universal benefits.

A string of symbolic acts and announcements all aimed to convince "Middle England" that Labour really has changed for good: Blair's visit to reactionary media tycoon Rupert Murdoch; his infamous expression of admiration for Margaret Thatcher; Jack Straw's disgraceful tirade against beggars; Blair's personal choice of an opted out school for his son.

Two factors forced Blair into a slight change of tack by the time of the Brighton conference.

The first was the need, given the proximity of the election, for Labour to begin to rebut the charge that it had no positive legislative agenda of its own. The

Liberal Democrats had even tried to pose as a more radical alternative to Blair at their conference, and an outbreak of grumbling from within the constituencies over the summer began to give Walworth Road good reason to expect at least some embarrassment at the conference.

The second—and decisive—factor was the trade union bureaucracy.

Blair needed their support to get, in his own words, a "good conference". He had to appear to be giving them something in return.

The figure of £4.15 an hour for the national minimum wage had the potential to rally serious support, and despite the weakness of its initial sponsors in the FBU, had

"Smug bastard. I don't like him much, smiling all the time. But what's the alternative? More of the same? Come off it."

Young worker, Labour Party Conference

still found its way onto the conference agenda. The RMT was pressing for a commitment to re-nationalise rail companies sold off by the Tories. There was widespread opposition in the constituencies to Blair's acceptance of grant-maintained schools, his plans to maintain Trident and the de-selection of *Labour Briefing* supporter Liz Davies in Leeds North East.

True to form the party machine did a deal. At a special meeting on the Saturday prior to the Brighton conference, representatives from the major unions, including the GMB, Unison, TGWU and the RMT, met with Blair's fixers to hammer out a compromise.

The union bureaucrats secured commitments from Blair: abolition of restrictions on the check-off method of direct payment of union dues, a guaranteed legal right to

union recognition where a majority support it, restoration of union rights at GCHQ, abolition of Compulsory Competitive Tendering in local government. There was even the vaguest of commitments to a publicly-owned rail system. To this was added a promise not to lower the unions' share of the conference vote below 50% at least until the millennium.

In return the union leaders backed Blair on every disputed motion at conference. Despite the fact that 60% of the delegates were teachers or school governors, the motion reaffirming policy for the abolition of grant-maintained status was beaten by 76% to 24%.

The ditching of Liz Davies was backed overwhelmingly. Trident got the support of over 55%, reversing party policy. The minimum wage motion was remitted to the Blair-dominated NEC.

The outcome was that Blair's speech at the Brighton conference did outline actual policy commitments. Some of these, like Brown's proposed Windfall Tax on the profits of the privatised utilities, are progressive as far as they go and modestly redistributive. Others are reactionary or fraudulent.

Nevertheless, the mood of many was summed up in one young worker's response when asked what he thought of Blair after Brighton:

"Smug bastard. I don't like him much, smiling all the time. But what's the alternative? More of the same? Come off it."

The best way to deepen the mistrust in Blair, and to strengthen the progressive anti-Tory mood evident in the widespread support for a Blair government, is to respond to Labour's legislative programme by building active support inside the labour movement now for a series of demands that will force a Labour government to act in the interests of the millions of workers it claims to represent.

This is also the best way to marshal the forces for a fight with Blair when, in office, he launches his inevitable attack on the working class. ■

Constitutional reform

Blair is committed to abolishing hereditary peerages, but not the unelected House of Lords itself. There is no democratic justification for the existence of this semi-feudal check on the actions of the elected chamber. Labour must abolish it outright, together with the monarchy which also possesses enormous potential powers of control over the state machine.

On proportional representation, Blair is keeping his options open with talk of a referendum.

Some top Blairites, such as Jack Straw, and much of the old left, are firmly against this.

Clearly there will be a major debate on constitutional reform under Blair, even if Labour are able to govern alone, but certainly in the event of a Lib-Lab coalition. The present first-past-the-post system is totally undemocratic, allowing manipulation by the unelected boundaries commission and not reflecting the votes cast. Minority parties are systematically discriminated against.

The entire labour movement should fight to commit Blair to the introduction of proportional representation on a party list system.

Union rights

Blair has promised a right to union recognition (if the majority of workers in a workplace vote for it).

This, if introduced, would be an important boost to workers' confidence when undertaking the unionisation of workplaces. Yet Blair has also maintained the Tory ban on the closed shop by declaring that joining will remain a "matter of free choice".

The anti-union laws themselves, including the draconian provisions of the 1993 Act, will remain in place. No-one should doubt that Blair will use them if necessary against the unions when in office.

These laws will continue to be a burning issue in every significant dispute, local, selective and one-day actions included. In preparation for a Blair government, trade unionists need to keep up a constant agitation for the abolition of all of the laws, and, crucially, to defy them in practice, strengthening solidarity action and aiming to make them unworkable before Blair gets into Number 10. ■

Rail

In his conference speech Blair did not commit himself to renationalising the rail companies, despite Knapp's evident delight. Blair warned off potential investors, but only guaranteed that there will be "a publicly owned and accountable railway system under Labour". Anyone inclined to interpret this as a commitment to full renationalisation should ponder the fate of Michael Meacher, who was immediately attacked by Blair on 4 October for telling the BBC that Labour would take Railtrack and 25 train-operating companies back into public ownership.

Blair would be happy to see the privatisation programme collapse and thus to unsettle potential buyers, but he has no intention of renationalising the industry in full.

State ownership and workers' control of the network is not an optional extra but is an absolute precondition for the establishment of the integrated transport system which Blair promised in his conference speech. A transport system run according to the dictates of profit by competing private companies cannot be truly integrated.

Benefits

There are ominous signs that Labour is prepared to follow the Tories in their determination to ditch universal benefits. The only concrete proposal in that direction at present is Blair's proposal to reform univer-

sal child benefit by taxing it for high earners. But the principle of universal benefits has been abandoned in the process, setting a very worrying precedent for the next Labour government to take still further.

Significantly Blair has also warned Murdoch's *Today* newspaper that Britain under Labour will get a "benefit system actively encouraging people to work", which means the continuation of poverty level, means tested benefits driving people into low paid jobs.

The call must go out for work or full pay: benefits must be fixed at the level of the minimum wage for those who the system has failed and who cannot find work.

As for young workers, there is every possibility that the money earmarked for jobs from the windfall tax will go into Tory-style fake training schemes. Brown has even suggested that the money could be offered to employers in "cash incentives" to take on unemployed youth.

This is why Labour has refused to come out against Gillian Shephard's mooting of a new slave labour scheme for 14 year-olds, getting them to work for free for employers instead of attending classes.

The only guarantee Blair has given is to provide stricter laws against under-age working. Young workers and trade unions must fight for equal pay for young workers, the restoration of full benefits for 17 and 18 year-olds, and for state-funded apprenticeship schemes under trade union control.

strike at capital to do so, and an insistence that trade union action now, whether on the docks, the tube, Fords, the NHS or local government, should not be held back to make life easier for Blair.

It is out of workers' struggles over the coming 18 months—economic struggles over the workplace and political struggles over the legislative programme of the next Labour government—that militants can rally the strongest possible movement to resist Blair's future attacks. At the same time we can lay the basis for a new revolutionary socialist party, committed to the overthrow of the madness of the market and to introduce a socialist plan of production based on the needs of the overwhelming majority. ■

The A-Z of Marxism

is for Fascism

THE TERM "fascist" was first adopted by Mussolini, whose movement swept to power in 1922, crushing Italy's trade unions and powerful workers' parties. During the 1920s and 1930s, fascist movements sprung up throughout Europe, including the British Union of Fascists

founded by Oswald Mosley. There have been other fascist movements in Europe since World War Two, even though they have sometimes been forced to hide their true nature faced with conditions of relative stability and even repression.

As the semi-colonial working class has flexed its muscles, we have seen the emergence of semi-colonial forms of fascism—including clerical fascism—again drawing on different ideologies than the European-style nationalism which formed the core of fascism in the 1930s.

But what all these movements have in common is not just violent racism or nationalism. They are and were mass, populist movements, designed to be the "shock troops" of the most reactionary sections of the ruling class against the organised workers' movement, mobilising their forces through a kind of fake "socialism". Though they have often drawn members from the most disorganised layer of the workers, including criminals, their main base is the urban middle class.

Of course, there had been strike breakers before the twentieth century, and organised racists too. But the onset of a new imperialist epoch—of nationalist rivalry, recurrent economic crisis and war—demanded the creation of a new weapon of last resort for the capitalist class.

The capitalists' preferred weapons against the working class were the police, the judges, the army and the secret service. But they were also aware that the new mass workers' movements might not be easily defeated by state repression alone.

In fascism they created a mass movement to destroy all elements of independent working class democracy within capitalism. Under fascism even democracy for the ruling class is severely curtailed or abolished in the service of defending their economic interests.

The crisis years of the 1920s and 30s posed the working class, in several key countries, with the possibility of revolution. Mis-leadership ensured that vital opportunities were lost. Fascism swept to power. Fascism was the price the working class paid for failing to take power itself.

Fascism aims not just to repress workers or co-opt their leaders into running the system of exploitation. Fascists aim to smash to atoms the organised workers' movement. For that you need masses of people. You need mass demonstrations of reactionary sections of the working class and middle class to surround the HQs of workers' parties and trade unions, as happened in Germany on the eve of fascist victory.

You need police agents in every block of flats, every school or factory. You need these agents organised and rewarded by a mass party structure. To gain power you need tightly knit terror squads which can walk into

meetings of hundreds of defenceless workers, beat up their leaders, kidnap and torture activists.

Today fascism is growing in Europe. But right wing nationalism is also growing, and it is by far the most immediate danger. In Europe far-right conservatives pander to right wing na-

tionalism with the excuse that they are "undermining the fascists" by doing so.

Meanwhile, the fascists bide their time. Because of the strength of parliamentary democracy after the Second World War, and because in countries like Britain and France nationalism was counterposed to fascism in the last war, the modern fascists have to hide their

true aims. They deceitfully accommodate themselves to democratic sentiments of the masses they wish to attract.

Some, like Jean-Marie Le Pen in France have built "fascist front" parties, which publicly distance themselves from street violence during a preparatory period, but maintain links with more overt fascist paramilitaries. Others, like the British National Party see their main opportunity as the assembling of a hardened "cadre" of street-fighters, using elections as opportunities for recruiting thugs and terrorising local communities.

In all its forms there is only one answer to fascism. Mass working class action, at the earliest opportunity, to physically and morally smash the fascist organisations.

Some object that fascists have to be defeated in argument and extended democratic rights in order to expose them. This is wrong. Fascists use democratic openings merely to advertise themselves; but their aim is to destroy democratic rights. The "battle of ideas" is wasted on them and their supporters who are drawn not to fascism's intellectual rigour but to its muscular message on the streets.

That is why we have to organise both mass demonstrations and workers' defence squads, tooled up with whatever is necessary, to deny the fascists control of streets and working class areas. We have to build a workers' united front to stop fascism wherever it rears its head. While we shed no tears if fascists are repressed by the police and courts, it cannot be part of our strategy to rely on or call for that repression. The state and the fascists are different parts of the same defence mechanism of the capitalist system.

Above all else revolutionary socialists have to address the political crisis that drives desperate people into the hands of the fascists. The failure of the Labour Party to provide concrete answers to the problems of housing, education and jobs in the East End of London allowed the fascists to grow. To undermine the fascists socialists need to provide alternative answers, not simply quote the crimes of Hitler and Mussolini.

Labour—old and new—has no answers to the capitalist crisis. It is rooted in the capitalist system. Only revolutionary socialism can provide radical answers to the crisis, by targeting the real enemy that stands behind the fascist boot-boys: the bosses and their capitalist system. ■



Roberta Fleming

Criminalising poverty

MY FACE has become well known in the local magistrates court this year. My crime? Too poor to pay the Poll Tax and the Council Tax.

As a poor person—which is why I'd been summonsed in the first place—I had no money to employ a solicitor. When I got to court I found that I had no legal representation. I knew that I might face a jail sentence, so I asked for the duty solicitor.

I was told that they attended court only in the mornings. All Poll Tax/Council Tax recovery cases are heard in the afternoon! And Legal Aid would be available to me *only* for a bail application and judicial review *after* sentencing.

When I first stood in the dock, I was faced with a bewildering variety of persons, all possessing that indefinable air of authority. No one explained who was who or what their function was. So I couldn't be sure who was ostensibly neutral—magistrates, the clerk of the court—and who was the legal representative of the local authority.

After the hearing I was sent a letter confirming the decision of the court and the requirement for me to pay £10 monthly to the Council in repayment of my Council Tax debt. I don't have any income of my own, and I'm not eligible for Income Support, but still I was told that if I failed to pay the £10 a month I would get a 90-day jail sentence!

The Tories have used these taxes to criminalise poverty itself. Everyone, regardless of income, must pay. The penalty for default can be, and often is, imprisonment. There are tens of thousands of working people in my position or worse. By punishing the poor in this way the Tories push many—especially youth—into a life of more active crime.

In this way the Tories create the very monster they love to hate at their conferences. Whatever differences there are in the Tory Party over Europe and the economy, they could be buried for a moment as Michael Howard united the reactionary mob at Blackpool against the "criminal elements" in society. He pledged tougher sentences, more prisons and harsher custodial regimes.

His targets are large sectors of working class youth, in inner cities and increasingly elsewhere, who find it hard to get work and impossible to get benefit. Some of these youth have had to turn to alternative ways of getting an income—the informal economy and crime.

The level of benefits, and the inability to find work with any decent pay, means unemployed workers are unable to meet their own basic needs in terms of housing, food, clothing and fuel. Obviously something has to go.

When you decide that this something is the Council Tax, the local state sets its "recovery" procedures in motion and you receive intimidating letters demanding lump sum payments, followed by visits from the bailiffs. If bailiffs fail to gain entry and seize the debtor's goods, you then get a summons to appear before local magistrates at a stated date and time. If you fail to turn up you get summary arrest and imprisonment.

The *New Statesman* published evidence of many people on Income Support, Invalidity Benefit, and old age pensioners having to pay or face imprisonment. Lacking all means to pay, jail is indeed what thousands of Britain's poorest have faced. No person is exempt—even those suffering physical or mental disability. If you are sent down, do your time and hope, on release, to sue magistrates for unlawful imprisonment, you will find yourself out of luck. The law has been changed to rule out compensation claims.

A recent ruling by the bureaucrats of the European Commission seemed to hold out some hope for those wrongfully jailed by British magistrates. A defendant refused Income Support and subsequently imprisoned for 'culpable neglect' of his responsibility for Poll Tax was vindicated by the European Convention on Human Rights. However, even this limited ruling of a bourgeois court in Strasbourg was conveniently ignored by the British judicial system.

What does the state hope to achieve by sending poor people to prison? Even recently sacked prison boss Derek Lewis argued that prison was "expensive and does not necessarily rehabilitate".

The cost of maintaining a prisoner in jail is £550 per week and rising; the UK prison population currently stands at a record 52,222. If Howard's plans come off he could double the number of inmates at a cost of £1.5 billion a year according to Lewis.

It seems obvious to me, and presumably to millions of unemployed and low paid people, that the money would be better spent trying to alleviate poverty rather than on locking up the poor. But the Tories can't even contemplate that.

They want to continue terrorising and dividing the working class, using the spectre of poverty through unemployment to make workers hang onto jobs. They think this will help keep workers from organising and striking because of the possibility of being sacked and ending up even worse off.

The labour movement has got a very poor record on fighting against poverty and unemployment. Its about time we turned the anger of the unemployed and low paid—who hate the system which offers them little but poverty and prison—into a movement to kick out the Tories and their rotten system. ■



Interview

"Bosnia needs solidarity"

Michael Gatter of *ArbeiterInnenstandpunkt* (Workers' Standpoint, Austrian section of the LRCI) interviewed Thomas, a member of an International Work Brigade working in the Bosnian city of Tuzla.

Where did the idea of a Work Brigade come from?

Over the past year Workers' Aid for Bosnia (WAFB) has organised convoys with food and medicine for Tuzla. The initial idea was to reconstruct the University Library in Tuzla which had been seriously damaged in the war. Most of the Brigade members came from Spain where, above all in Catalonia, there has been a strong Bosnia solidarity movement. For example, a few weeks ago 30,000 demonstrated in Barcelona for a multi-ethnic Bosnia. This has a lot to do with the Catalans' understanding of the national question. It is clear to many that Bosnia needs aid.

So what have you been doing?

The first brigade, "Land and Freedom", arrived in July, with 20 activists. The second, "No Pasaran", arrived in August with 50 members. As they arrived, the immediate question was the fate of tens of thousands of refugees from Srebrenica. In the first place we had to attend to the refugees, providing technical assistance from laying water pipes through to the provision of food. In addition we organised an exhibition under the title "Bosnia is not alone", in which we documented the international solidarity work that has been carried out for Bosnia. It was extremely encouraging to see how much interest this drew from the population. Apart from that we spoke to officers and soldiers in the army, trade unions, student groups and representatives of political parties. They all reacted very positively, not to say enthusiastically. We agreed a series of concrete support projects.

How do you explain this enthusiastic response?

Very simply. You just have to look at the situation facing these soldiers, workers and youth. The town had already been besieged for years. Time and again they hoped for international support, time and again they were disappointed. In the meantime UNPROFOR (the UN Protection Force), has joined the Serb Chetniks and the speculators as one of the three most hated groups.

This is all too understandable when you think of what happened in Srebrenica. There the UN disarmed Bosnia soldiers and then looked on as Serb troops overran the enclave and massacred thousands. Finally the UN herded the refugees together in camps in Tuzla (which they were not allowed to leave!) instead of distributing them throughout Bosnia. The aim was clear: the town was supposed to be

"flooded" with tens of thousands of refugees in order to undermine the Bosnians' military capability. As a protest against the UN's policy there was a three day blockade of the UNPROFOR headquarters in Tuzla.

To what extent is there a multi-ethnic consciousness in the population?

To be honest, when I arrived in Bosnia I was expecting that many would have developed a distinctly Muslim identity. That would not have been entirely surprising after three years of ethnic cleansing by Croat and Serbian chauvinists. But in fact all the Muslims that we spoke to insisted that they wanted to live together with Serbs and Croats in a multi-ethnic state. We should not forget that now, like before, thousands of Serbs and Croats live in Tuzla. It is important to note that there were a number of Serbs and Croats among the 76 people murdered in the Chetnik grenade attack on a cafe on 25 May.

How would you assess the state of the Bosnian army?

Overall the army is quite closely tied to and supported by the people. Not that it was ever a workers' militia in any sense. But bureaucratic control is plainly much less than in normal armies. You hardly see badges and insignia signifying ranks. The soldiers have to switch constantly between

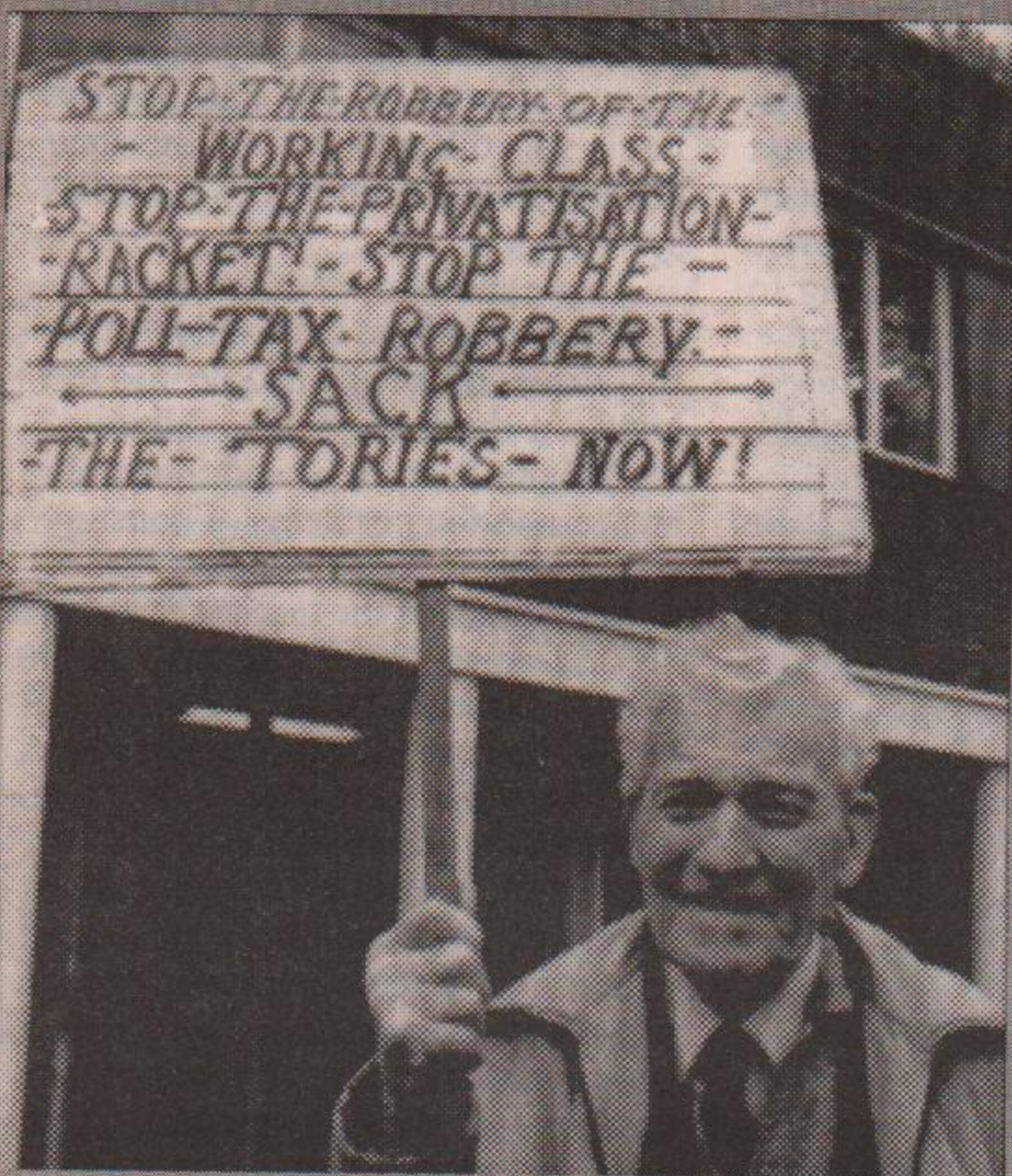
work and the front.

Sixty percent of the students study for one month and then fight for a month at the front. In contrast to the reactionary Chetnik gangs, many women fight in the Bosnian army. Soldiers can engage in politics without the fear of repression. This is also true for the rest of Bosnian society. The power of the government is not so absolute as in Serb or Croat nationalist held territory. So there are a lot of opposition parties and no censorship of the press.

What are the chances of success for the USA's reactionary plan to partition Bosnia?

There is a real danger that the bourgeois Izetbegovic government will vote for this plan. But many Bosnians have said to me that Izetbegovic will never be able to get it through. The population rejects such a partition. There have been splits over this issue in the past. Prime Minister Silajdzic offered his resignation in August over this issue.

In response workers and soldiers collected 27,000 signatures on a petition in just two weeks, in Tuzla alone. Today the most progressive workers and youth are in the army, which has unfortunately led to a weakening of the unions. But this also raises the possibility that armed workers will turn against the regime when it tries to push through the partition plan. ■



The Tories' strategy summed up: rob the poor to feather-bed the rich, and then throw the poor in jail because they can't afford to live in Tory Britain.



Bosnia

The bloody facts of genocide

IN 1992 a systematic attempt was made by the leaders of the newly declared Republika Srpska (RS)—headed by Radovan Karadzic—to create a Serb state in Bosnia. The means was the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of ethnic-Muslims.

This project was not merely a reactionary one. It represented the first attempt in the post-war period in Europe to carry out genocide, i.e. the destruction of an ethnic group or people, partly by physical liquidation, partly by expulsion from their country, partly by destruction of their cultural institutions.

Karadzic made this aim clear as early as October 1991. At a session of the Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) Parliament he uttered the ominous warning that the Muslim community would “disappear from the face of the earth”. He added that he “did not think that they might disappear only physically; rather this is also the beginning of the end of their existence as a nation.”

Karadzic's threats were made good when war finally broke out in BiH at the end of March 1992.

By June the formal withdrawal of the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) from BiH was complete. But in reality over two thirds of it had simply been transformed into the Bosnian Serb Army (BSA). Chief JNA general, Ratko Mladic, became the commanding officer of the BSA.

The BSA regular forces used heavy artillery to bombard the civilian population. Its aim was to terrify the population. The most internationally visible example of this was the siege of Sarajevo. Mladic was heard to order his gunners to “drive them crazy” and “burn it all”.

That this would cause immense suffering to at least thirty thousand Serbs inside the city did not stop him. Indeed the radical Serb chauvinists always showed great contempt for the “apartment block Serbs” because they had forgotten their nationality and lived alongside Muslims and Croats. A similar hatred was expressed for the working class cities and towns of eastern Bosnia where industrialisation had created an ethnically mixed population with a multi-ethnic consciousness.

In addition to the BSA, paramilitary units from Serbia itself flooded into the republic. The paramilitaries were the spearhead of the ethnic cleansing. One of the most notorious of these forces was organised by a close ally of Slobodan Milosevic, Zeljko Raznjatovic, known as Arkan.

At the beginning of the one sided “war” Arkan's bands, the so-called “Tigers”, moved into Bosnia to “liberate” the small, predominantly ethnic-Muslim town of Bijeljina. The Tigers were joined by the self-styled Chetnik fascist formations of

“Ancient hatreds unfrozen by the collapse of communism”, “primeval blood feuds”, “a fight amongst gangsters” . . . these are some of the terms that western politicians have used to describe the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It is a way of covering up the fact that genocide was attempted in 1992 and 1993. As the imperialists try to force through the reactionary carve up of Bosnia, Dave Stockton recounts the horror of the Bosnian genocide.

“Duke” Seselj.

Their first targets were the industrial towns and the villages. Four of these districts, running north to south—Zvornik, Bratunac, Srebrenica, and Visegrad—had large ethnic-Muslim populations. To the north of Zvornik, in the Bijeljina district Serbs formed 59 per cent of the population but there was a large Muslim minority.

The BSA saw this region as a strategic barrier, separating the large Serb populations in northern and south western BiH from one another and cutting both of them off from Serbia proper.

The main objective of the terror in the villages and the smaller towns was to enlarge Serb territory and squeeze the ethnic-Muslims into a few pockets that would collapse because they would be cut off from food, power and other essential supplies.

Misha Glenny in his book *The Fall of Yugoslavia* (1993) relates the testimony of Ekrem Acvdic, a 38-year old factory worker from Bratunac. He tells his story of being herded with 6,000 to 7,000 other ethnic-Muslim men into a sports stadium and robbed of all their money and valuables. He and about 500-600 of the prisoners were then taken to a school where gangs of self-styled “Vukovar Chetniks”, beat them with the butts of their rifles and with iron coshes, axe and hoe handles throughout the night.

Hundreds died as a result. The dead and the unconscious were taken outside, thrown into a skip and burned, some still alive. The bodies were then thrown into the Drina. The survivors, about 399, were finally traded for Serb prisoners of war.

Glenny uses this account as an example but as he points out:

“The evidence of the mass slaughter of defenceless Muslim and to a lesser extent Croat civilians by Chetnik irregulars is overwhelming. . . . A single testimony will suffice to create an image of what these people had to endure. The reader simply has to multiply the experience by tens of thousands.”

This was not only an attack on the ethnically Muslim population but an attack

on the Bosnian working class. The “Muslims” were the most secularised part of population in Bosnia, forming the majority of the urban population and the majority of the urban workers.

The cities of BiH, Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Zenice and Tuzla were multi-ethnic melting pots. Many of their people registered themselves as “Yugoslavs” before 1991. They formed the backbone of the massive peace movement of 1990-92 which protested against all moves to war, whether it be Izetbegovic's declaration of independence or Karadzic's declaration of autonomous zone's and the arming of militias.

In the BiH army, formed in the summer and autumn of 1992, one third of the soldiers were ethnic Serbs. The same was true in the BiH police force.

The next stage of the ethnic cleansing shifted to northern Bosnia. This was a region predominantly populated by Croats and to a lesser degree by ethnic-Muslims. The BSA and the paramilitaries' aim here was to open up and ethnically cleanse an east-west corridor, the so-called Posavina Corridor. In October 1992 the Serbs mounted a decisive offensive, broke the stalemate, and secured a narrow corridor between the eastern and western parts of BiH.

Before the war there were 700,000 ethnic Muslims in this region. Every major population centre during the spring and summer months witnessed the creation of “bureaux for population exchange”—instruments of ethnic cleansing, supposedly carried out “by consent”.

Muslims and Croats terrified and desperate to leave the region were not allowed to leave without first signing documents surrendering all future rights to their property. Hundreds of thousands of people were forced to give up their homes and flee into Croatia.

The long columns of refugees in April and May 1992 were not leaving voluntarily. They had been deliberately driven out in order to create a territorially continuous and ethnically homogeneous Serb state.

A US Senate Foreign Relations Report

published on 18 August 1992 stated that in territory adjacent to Serbia (eastern Bosnia) 35,000, almost all Muslims, had been demonstrably killed by the end of June, the majority of them as part of ethnic cleansing rather than in the artillery bombardments. The report also cites the emergence of the practice of systematic rape. Later figures suggest up to 20,000 women were systematically raped as part of the terrorising process.

News of deportations in cattle cars to several mass detention camps in northern Bosnia began to leak out to the press. There is plenty of evidence that the US and EU intelligence agencies knew all about this. In fact they said nothing until an American journalist, Roy Gutman, made his first report about the camps.

He had been allowed to visit Manjaca—a so-called prisoner of war camp. He was not allowed to see inside the huge sheds in which many hundreds of prisoners were kept but heard stories of the horrific beatings and death which took place there.

Later he visited Omarska camp. Quoting the testimony of a sixty-three-year-old man whom he called only “Meho”, Gutman described how more than one thousand Muslim and Croat prisoners were held in metal cages without sanitation, exercise or adequate food. Meho had been held there for more than a week “in an ore-loader inside a cage roughly 700 square feet with 300 other men”.

Several cages were stacked four high and separated by grates: “There were no toilets and the prisoners had to live in their own filth, which dripped through the grates.”

Another journalist, Ed Vulliamy, wrote that “. . . the evidence suggests that some 6,000 men were in Omarska at any one time, and that several thousand were brutally murdered”.

In the detention camps those who were not killed immediately were near starvation. Most of them were not even fighters in the BiH forces. Their emaciated bodies reminded journalists of the victims of the Nazi concentration camps.

The US Senate Foreign Relations Com-

mittee Report revealed that the ethnic-cleansing campaign had succeeded in creating an exclusively Serb-inhabited region, in territory contiguous with Serbia, and which now occupied 70% of the territory of BiH. This had been achieved by means of:

“random and selective killings . . . and organised massacres . . . We believe the death toll associated with forcible removal of the Muslim village population far exceeds the death toll from the bombardment of cities”.

In the camps, organized killings were described as “recreational and sadistic”.

At the end of April 1992, there were 286,000 refugees from Bosnia—the great majority of them ethnic-Muslims, but also Croats. Most of them had fled to Croatia. By the beginning of June 1992 this figure had risen to three-quarters of a million, and by mid-July to 1.1 million. By the end of the 1992, almost two million Bosnians—nearly half the population—had lost their homes. 170,000 people had been detained in the concentration camps during this period.

Despite the discovery of this attempted genocide by liberal journalists in the summer and autumn of 1992 the “world community”, (the imperialist powers who totally control the UN Security Council) did nothing to stop it.

“Unfortunately Bosnia is not an ally of the USA and has no oil,” said a cynical US diplomat.

At every stage the imperialists refused to let the victims defend themselves. In 1991 at the request of Slobodan Milosevic the UN Security Council passed Resolution 713. This created an arms embargo which was then used to deny a recognised state, a member of the UN, the right to self-defence as embodied in the UN Charter article 51.

And the killing continues. In July this year reports estimate that 6,000 Muslims were killed during the Serb offensive in eastern Bosnia. 3,000 men have simply “disappeared”, and 12,000 Muslims and Croats were forced out of their homes.

Multi-ethnic Bosnia has survived despite, not because of, imperialism. Imperialism at the negotiating table has repeatedly tried to kill it in favour of a “Muslim” bantustan, subordinated to Croatia. This is the solution it is still trying to impose today.

That is why revolutionary Marxists could never call for the UN or NATO to intervene. Instead we call for their armed forces to get out. Once the nature of the national oppression and genocide was clear, it was vital for revolutionaries to support the forces of BiH which were resisting genocide and to fight for an end to the arms embargo. ■



What about the Bosnians?

“ALL SIDES commit atrocities, all sides are reactionary and nationalist . . .” This is the refrain we hear from those who refuse to support the Bosnians' right to self-defence.

Atrocities have indeed been committed on all sides. Croatian ethnic cleansing and racism has been amply documented in Bosnia and in the recently reconquered Krajina. Even the Bosnian Muslim forces have taken part in ethnic cleansing.

According to Norman Cigar (*Genocide In Bosnia*):

“By the end of summer 1993 the Bosnian Army had eliminated thirty three Catholic parishes in central Bosnia. In the process Muslim forces also committed atrocities, such as the September 1993 massacre of the Croatian population of the village of Uzdol.”

No socialist should attempt to deny these facts. The point is, however, that ethnic cleansing was never a policy of

the Bosnian side and, given the existing conditions, could not be. Because the Muslims were such a minority and so geographically dispersed, a Bosnian state could only survive if the Muslims were part of a multi-ethnic community.

That is why ethnic cleansing is condemned by the mass of Bosnians and has been effectively punished by the BiH state.

The Serbs however pursued an ethnically pure state. This is why their massacres have been on a qualitatively greater scale, carried out as part of a policy of ethnic cleansing.

Socialists in Bosnia, and in the Bosnian solidarity movement, should fight to expose and bring to justice all perpetrators of ethnic cleansing and atrocities, including those on the progressive side. But we should reject the pathetic excuses of those who refuse to support the legitimate right of self-defence for the Bosnian Muslims and multi-ethnic communities. ■



Chirac's winter of discontent

“I WASN'T elected to be popular!” said French President Jacques Chirac in a rare moment of honesty at the end of October. And it's true.

Six months after comfortably winning the presidential election, Chirac is currently riding low in the opinion polls, with only 15% of the electorate satisfied with his presidency.

And that is only the beginning of his problems.

In what is turning out to be a “hot autumn”,

- workers have taken to the streets in their millions,
- students have been threatening to do the same,

- Prime Minister Alain Juppé has been accused of corruption,

- the franc has taken a battering at the hands of the foreign exchange dealers,
- the army have been brought onto the streets in a vain attempt to curb the wave of bombings by Algerian Islamic fundamentalists

On top of it all, Chirac has had to admit that his election promises were all lies and that instead of healing the “social fracture”, as he promised during his election campaign, he will be doing all he can to deepen it by launching a vicious austerity package. An attempt to “rally the nation” by restarting nuclear testing turned out to be a total flop as over 70% of the population opposed his nuclear folly.

Where did it all go wrong?

Chirac ran an extremely confident and populist campaign for the presidency. He promised the impossible: to cut taxes, increase salaries and safeguard the health service while not attacking the profits of the capitalists.

Once the election was out of the way and Chirac had moved into the Presidential palace, everything changed. The new president took all his far-fetched promises and promptly threw them into the nearest dustbin.

The main task for Chirac and his government is to ensure that France can meet the criteria for a common European currency. This mainly means attacking the budget deficit, which stands at 5% of GDP. And it is the public sector which is first in line for spending cuts, which is why pub-

lic sector workers are so decisive in France.

The first sign of the government's weakness came at the end of August when Madelin, the new Finance Minister, was sacked.

Madelin, an ex-fascist turned neo-liberal Thatcherite, was the only member of an incoherent government who was prepared to pull no punches in attacking the country's five million public sector workers.

The rest of the government was uneasy with idea of dismantling parts of France's strong state system and, more importantly, unhappy about the prospect of provoking the traditionally combative public sector. So they sacked Madelin as soon as the union leaders made it clear that they would fight his proposals.

This rapid retreat was testimony to the nervousness of the government, despite its 400-seat parliamentary majority.

The difficulty the government will have in pushing its programme through was shown on 10 October. Refusing to accept the proposed 1996 wage freeze in the public sector, over five million public sector workers took to the streets under the blazing Indian summer sun in the biggest united strike movement in a decade. In

By Christine Duval

some sectors the proportion of workers on strike was the highest since 1968!

And as the university year began, the traditional problems of funding and lack of space drove tens of thousands of students onto the streets.

Faced with this growing unrest, the government had to move quickly to stifle a potential explosion over an amendment to the budget from a rightwing MP that would have cut students' housing benefit. That would have been the final straw for France's fighting youth, and could have put a rapid end to Juppé's government.

The atmosphere of crisis and incompetence has been reinforced by the fact that there are deep divisions in the bosses' camp.

The government has faced severe criticism from the CPNF, the French bosses' organisation, and the OECD, the international capitalist thinktank, for not going far enough in attacking the “burden” of the state sector which is the most costly in Europe. International big business's lack of confidence in Juppé's government led

to a run on the franc, obliging the Bank of France to raise interest rates in order to strengthen the currency.

From TV journalists to ordinary people in cafés, everyone agrees that France could face a social and political crisis not seen since 1968. The key to that situation will almost certainly be the youth, who have already proved their combativity when they went into battle against the previous government, scoring a number of important victories.

Their willingness to fight comes from the desperation the majority of youth feel about their future. Over half of under 28 year olds are either without work or in precarious low-paid employment.

Most under 25 year olds are in the already overburdened education system for lack of any other alternative with no hope of a job when they finish studying. Hundreds of thousands of them receive no state benefit whatsoever. But unlike their parents of nearly 30 years ago, French youth in the nineties are marked by their desire to “drop in” to society, rather than “drop out”. That means that future social conflicts are likely to be hard and bitter.

There is more at stake than the joyous

rebellion of May '68. This makes the youth a powerful ally of the working class. Their interests have never converged more openly.

For the moment, one of the government's biggest allies is the leadership of the working class. Despite the success of the 10 October general strike and the failure of the government to make any concessions, there are no plans for any further national protests against the pay freeze in the public sector.

For the moment, neither of the two reformist parties—the Socialist Party and the Communist Party (PCF)—have been able to build on the basis of the movement. The PCF has been made to look particularly stupid, having spent the summer pledging to be a “constructive opposition” to the government! Not surprisingly, it has been forced to make an apparent about-turn due to the pressure of the rank and file and the obvious unrest within the working class.

Although the unions and the two reformist parties retain the leadership of the working class for the moment, the increasing weakness of this leadership, especially amongst the youth, is a decisive feature of the current situation.

The links between the workers and their traditional leaders have been severely weakened, especially after 10 years of “socialist” government. They can no longer guarantee to the bosses that they will be able to contain any social explosion.

Given the spontaneous fighting tradition of the French workers and youth, it is certain that the government will be confronted with a real struggle as it tries to impose austerity and deregulation.

The youth will be crucial in this fightback, particularly young workers like those at Alstom GEC who fought and won earlier this year. One of the tasks facing the working class in the months ahead will be to establish their own democratic organisations to run the struggles and challenge the control of the union bureaucracy. It will also need to ensure that any struggle is extended to all sections of the working class, particularly those who are presently unorganised.

Only then will French workers and youth be able to take the current struggle further than that of May 1968—towards a real workers' revolution. ■

Stop the racist backlash!

SINCE THE end of July, France has been rocked by a series of bomb attacks, allegedly carried out by the Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA), an extreme wing of the ultra-reactionary Algerian Islamic fundamentalist movement. In the first, most serious, attack, seven people died in the Paris metro.

The government's response has been to instigate a massive security campaign, Operation Vigipirate. Far from being an attempt to stop the bombings, the main aim of Vigipirate is to reinforce the government's racist profile by peddling the lie that “immigrant equals terrorist”.

- Over 3 million identity controls have

been carried out—mainly on immigrant youth.

- Hundreds of immigrants have been rounded up and sent to detention centres; hundreds more have been deported.

- Draconian new anti-terrorist laws are being drawn up that will define helping an illegal immigrant as an act of terrorism!

At the end of September, the government authorised the cold-blooded murder of Khaled Kelkal, a young Algerian suspected of terrorism. Parachutists shot Kelkal 27 times in front of conveniently-placed TV cameras, just in time for the evening news.

It was later admitted that the TV company had doctored the sound track, deleting the para's cries of “finish him off” as Kelkal lay wounded. A state execution was

nauseatingly portrayed as “self-defence” by the soldiers.

The government's hypocrisy is shown by its support for the Algerian military dictatorship, responsible for tens of thousands of deaths in the terrible civil war that has raged in Algeria since 1990.

The tragedy of the current situation, in Algeria and in France, is that the racism, massive unemployment and poverty that ruin the lives of so many Arab youth will push others to take the impasse of fundamentalism. A major part of the responsibility for this situation lies with the labour movement, which has made no effort to reach out and organise unemployed Arab youth. ■

Farrakhan

The abuse of black anger

ON MONDAY 16 October, Washington DC, witnessed one of the largest mass mobilisations in US history. More than 400,000 people – all men and virtually all black – gathered around the Mall.

This was the venue of the 250,000-strong August 1963 March on Washington which marked the apex of the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King, Jr.

The contrast between the two events could hardly have been more dramatic. The multi-racial, male and female demonstration of 32 years ago raised democratic demands: for the dismantling of the institutions of racial segregation and the extension of voting rights in the southern states. It voiced calls for social and economic reform through such measures as an increased minimum wage and an emergency job creation programme for the inner cities.

Though the 1963 March on Washington explicitly tied King's movement to the Kennedy administration, so helping to deflect the growing militancy of sections of the movement, it also had an undeniably progressive character.

But October's "Million Man March" was led by the deeply reactionary Nation of Islam leader, Louis Farrakhan.

Whilst thousands of the marchers drifted away as Farrakhan spoke for over two hours, thousands more stayed. The day was an unqualified success for the increasingly influential leader of a reactionary and dangerous movement. (The patriarchal, homophobic and anti-Semitic character of the Nation's ideology is well-documented. In particular, see *Workers Power* 191, July 1995.)

Scale

The scale of the 16 October demonstration was not, however, a tribute to the charisma of Farrakhan or the mobilising skills of the Nation of Islam alone. The enormous turnout, almost in spite of the "messenger", is a barometer of a widespread anger, diluted with despair, that has cut across large swathes of the black American population. It is a mood which stretches from the urban killing grounds of Coolio's "Gangsta Paradise" to a suburban middle class that finds a huge gap between the wholesome platitudes of the "Cosby Show" and their insecure reality.

A battery of official statistics and academic reports reveal some of the causes of the anger and despair.

Three decades after the March on Washington, the racial divide in US society not only persists, but has, in some respects, intensified. More than 600,000 black men are currently in jail; a third of black men between the ages of 18 and 29 are caught up in the US system of criminal injustice – either imprisoned, on probation or awaiting trial. More than a thousand black people are on death row. Of these, not even a handful can afford good legal representation, never mind OJ Simpson's "dream team".

Jobless

Jobless rates among blacks are more than twice the levels recorded among whites. The median income of black households in 1993 stood at 57% of that for white families. Two-thirds of black inner city households are headed by single mothers. The African-American infant mortality rate in 1991 was twice that of the white population and, at 17.1 for every 1,000 live births, compared badly with some Third World countries. The average life expectancy for a black male in New York City's Harlem ghetto is only 49 years.

The proportion of blacks entering higher education is in decline, even as politicians from conservative Republicans through to liberal Democrats queue up to denounce the "unfairness" of affirmative action programmes which have drawn some black youth into the colleges.

The racial divide is an essential, but not



by G.R. McColl

decisive part of the contemporary political landscape in the US.

The years since the largely successful civil rights struggles have also seen a growing class polarisation within the African-American population. The very achievements of the civil rights movement aided the rapid expansion of a black professional middle class as well as a small but significant bourgeoisie. By the mid-1990s, 20% of black households account for at least 50% of total black income.

But black professionals have not been immune from the general wave of insecurity that has swept through large sections of the US middle class. Their fears are compounded by the impact of racially-constructed "glass ceilings" on their promotion prospects and the attacks on affirmative action.

The "new" Democrats under Clinton have basically chosen to ignore black voters, especially those who are poor and

Jesse Jackson now seems a marginal figure, stripped of any influence within the Democratic Party. And the far left in the US is still woefully weak and practically irrelevant at a national level.

So an enormous vacuum exists for much of the black population across the generation gap and the class divide, but most acutely for inner-city youth at the sharp end of police brutality and all but frozen out of "legitimate" economic activity. Against this background has come the spectacular rise of Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam, culminating in the 16 October demonstration.

Farrakhan first issued the call for the Million Man March in December 1994, before the OJ Simpson trial had even begun. He declared that the event would serve as "a holy day of atonement" on the part of black men. Whilst women would remain at home, men would converge on Washington—not in protest at the policies

The years since the largely successful civil rights struggles have also seen a growing class polarisation within the African-American population. The very achievements of the civil rights movement aided the rapid expansion of a black professional middle class as well as a small but significant bourgeoisie.

working class.

The Democrats' traditional "New Deal coalition" of which the African-American vote was a key component, has now decisively fractured. The Rainbow Coalition under the leadership of Jesse Jackson, into which many American leftists poured their hope and energy between 1984 and 1988, is little more than a memory. It failed to break the mould of electoral politics dominated by two unashamedly pro-capitalist parties.

Black elected officials, whose ranks swelled even during the Reaganite 80s, have proved unwilling and unable to deliver meaningful reforms to the constituencies that elected them. All of them have eventually embraced fiscal austerity programmes that hit the black poor hardest.

The reality of a globally weakened US capitalism and a domestic ruling class even less inclined to make concessions has all but eliminated the space for ruling class liberal integrationism.

The survivors of the original civil rights leadership in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) are now reduced to political impotence, practically ignored by the hip-hop generation of the inner cities.

of the Newt Gingrich-controlled Congress or the Clinton administration, but as a symbol of commitment to spiritual change.

Instead of harnessing the power of collective protest, they could in Farrakhan's words, atone for "the abuse and misuse of our women and girls".

In short, there was no hint of the march advancing any oppositional politics, not to mention progressive demands. It would be a day of self-blame for the victims of the racist system.

But a political strategy *does* inform Farrakhan's every move.

Beneath his stridently anti-white rhetoric, Farrakhan seeks to accommodate, profitably, to white-dominated capitalism. Among his business ventures, the most notable in recent years has been the Nation of Islam Security Agency, a private security firm staffed by Fruit of Islam bodyguards, who enforce "law and order" among largely black residents of government-subsidised housing estates in a number of US cities.

Though often labelled a black nationalist, Farrakhan has readily conceded in interviews that a black nation is not a viable objective in the context of the USA. (*The Guardian*, 14 October 1995).

There are clearly important differences between Farrakhan and earlier conserva-

tive black leaders in the US, but there is also a continuity between him and not only the earlier Nation of Islam under Elijah Muhammad, but also such figures as Marcus Garvey and the 19th century black capitalist Booker T. Washington.

Historically, such leaderships have tended to come to the fore during periods of defeat and retreat for the black struggle. In the current reactionary climate, Farrakhan has come to see himself as a political power-broker, and the response of black establishment politicians to the Million Man March may yet prove him right.

The 16 October mobilisation was clearly the property of the Nation of Islam, but its success owed much to the support it received from mainstream black activists and politicians. Virtually the whole of the Congressional Black Caucus (composed entirely of Democrats) attended the event. So did Jesse Jackson, after initially distancing himself from it. Prominent intellectuals such as the writer Maya Angelou and the Harvard lecturer Cornel West also participated.

Farrakhan's principal lieutenant in building for the event came from outside the ranks of the Nation in the person of Ben Chavis, briefly executive director of the NAACP, who was sacked from the post after allegedly misappropriating the organisation's funds to defend himself against a sexual harassment suit.

The ideological disorientation of African-American politicians is mirrored in the response of black local union leaders in some public sector branches. They have spent their careers depending on a Democratic Party that has now ditched them.

Fortunately, the evidence to date suggests that the Nation of Islam is not proving to be a compelling pole of attraction to the vast majority of those who attended on the day.

Revival

There can be no grounds for complacency, however. Despite some isolated signs of revival, the US unions are much weakened industrially, and now represent only 11% of the private sector workforce. Politically, they are in an even worse state. Whilst recognising the need for specific forms of organisation among African-Americans and others facing racial oppression in the US, revolutionaries must continue to wage a relentless battle against separatist strategies in general, and Farrakhan's virulent brand of poison in particular.

Of course, a purely negative response is hardly likely to inspire much enthusiasm among inner city black youth, still living in segregated housing and cut off from any experience of organised labour. A start must be made around accountable, community defence – not simply gang-based action – against police brutality and harassment, drawing on the positive and negative lessons of the Black Panthers.

Agitation in defence of the remains of the welfare system needs to be translated into action, and extended into a generalised fight for the creation of a truly national health and benefits system, providing free health care at the point of need.

There should be a special emphasis on the provision of freely available abortion and contraception as well as on vastly improved ante-natal services in the inner cities.

Fight

Crucially, there must be a fight for a massive infusion of state funds into ghetto areas to provide jobs at union rates of pay, rebuilding decrepit housing and the crumbling urban infrastructure.

Around the fight for a unified and coherent programme of such transitional demands, US socialists can renew the struggle for a truly integrated revolutionary workers' party in which African-Americans, women and men, would necessarily play a leading role. ■

A World to Win

Central America

AS PART of the neo-liberal adjustment programmes devised by the IMF, all Central American governments are liberalising trade, selling off state assets to foreign multi-nationals, raising taxes and making it easier to hire and fire workers.

From May through to August there was a wave of strikes in Panama, Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Nicaragua against one or another of these "reforms". In Panama fifty trade unions united in a general strike against anti-labour legislation, cuts in severance pay and wage cuts. Further strikes occurred in August; workers were shot dead in the protests. In Costa Rica the government was forced to withdraw similar proposals under pressure from striking workers.

Coming on top of a month long strike in Brazil by oil workers and Mexican union protests against 750,000 job losses in this year's recession, there are many signs that workers in the region are recovering some of their confidence after many years of being battered by "structural adjustment" plans. Union leaders are no longer able to defuse anger before determined strike action occurs.

Argentina

ON 2 October a demonstration of more than 500 unemployed workers, demanding the payment of benefit they had been promised by the government, took place in Neuquén in the south of Argentina. It was part of the widespread resistance to the federal government which is starving the regions of funds.

The demonstration was violently repressed by the police and the local government has initiated a witch-hunt against the far left.

Horacio Panario, a leading member of the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS), was arrested and is being held in prison. Warrants have been issued for the arrest of Alcides Christiansen, Hector Etchebaster, Ruth Zurbriggen and Jorge Toledo, all of them members of the MAS and of ATEN, the state employees union. Others in Partido Obrero (PO) and Movimiento Socialista de los Trabajadores (MST) are under similar threat.

This attack comes a month after the attempt to sack 15 leading shipyard workers in Buenos Aires (see p15), including José Montes, a national leader of Partido de los Trabajadores por el Socialismo (PTS), "Indio" Corzo (MST) and Raimundo (PO). In Usuahia in the far south Oscar Martínez and other leaders of the metal workers' union (UOM) are being prosecuted after resistance to the closure of a TV factory.

A campaign has started to demand: the release of Horacio Panario and other left leaders in prison; drop all the charges against members of MAS, MST and PO and all working class fighters; stop the witch-hunt against the left.

Protest letters or faxes should be sent to the Argentine Embassy, Hans Place London SW1X 0LB.

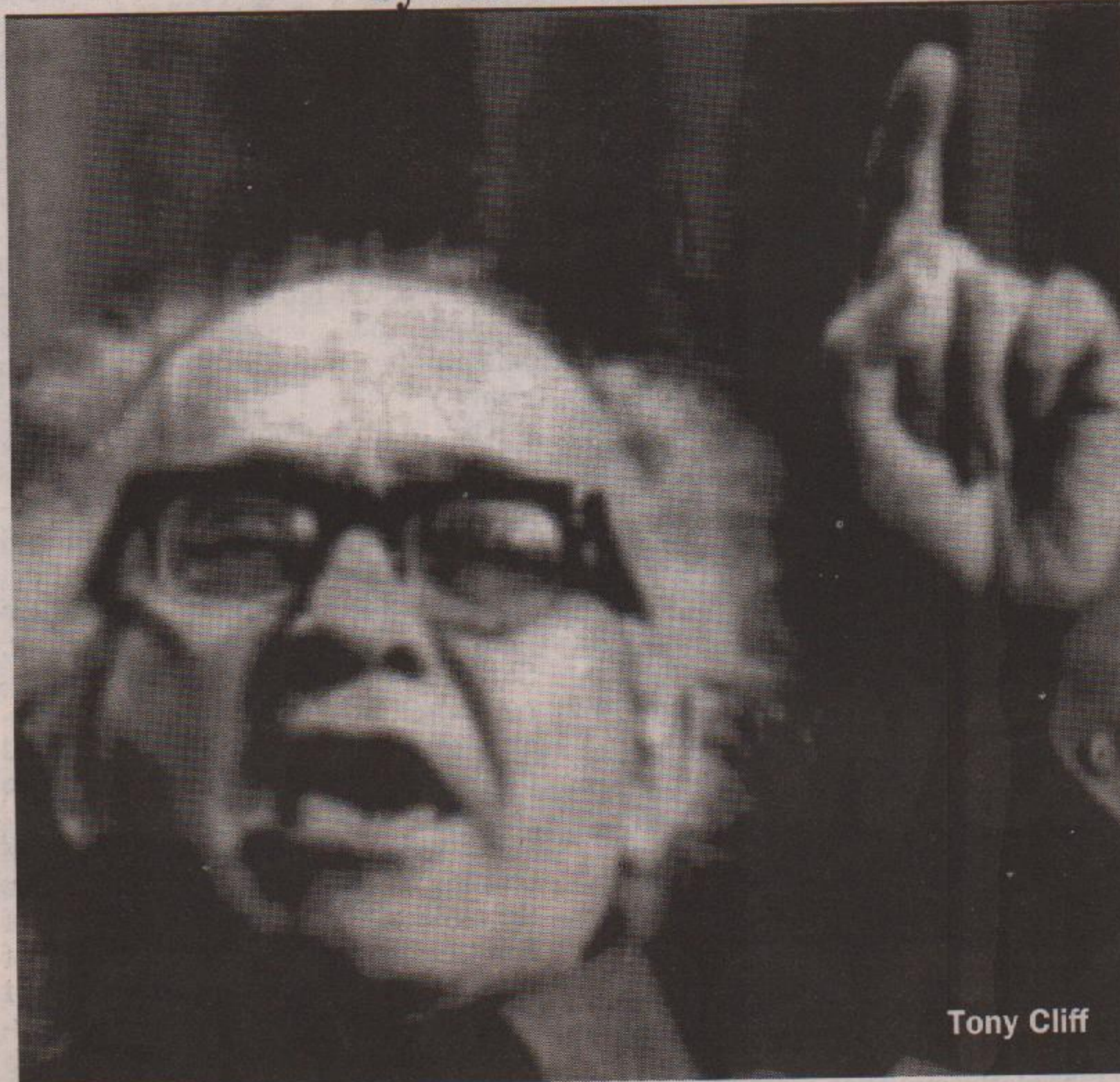
Turkey

On 21 September Turkish police and special military units, stormed the Buca detention centre, near Izmir in western Turkey. They were sent in to smash an occupation being organised by prisoners against conditions in the centre. The attack, reportedly involving the use of poison gas as well as guns and explosives, left eight political prisoners dead and a further 65 seriously wounded. A demonstration by civil rights activists and relatives of the prisoners was later brutally attacked by police and 70 people were arrested. ■

SWP oppositions

Politics is the key

by Mark Harrison



Tony Cliff

THE INFORMATION super highway is clogged with a traffic jam of documents on the "crisis" of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

Disgruntled ex-members in Britain (the International Socialist Group—ISG), Germany, Australia and South Africa have formed a rival network to the SWP's own international tendency. Whole branches of the organisation in Britain have recently resigned in disgust at its internal regime.

And *Workers' Liberty* magazine runs a monthly forum in which former SWP (and International Socialist—IS) full timers, now penitent about their own sins, vent their anger against the injustices eventually meted out against them by the regime of SWP leader, Tony Cliff.

Despite all of this the SWP, as it gathers for its annual conference this month, is not undergoing a "crisis". It is not about to explode or lose its place as the most significant organisation of the far left in Britain. Its leadership is not facing the threat of a serious rebellion by angry members.

The defections from the SWP over the last year or so, including that of the ISG, are relatively small in scale. They are examples of a pattern that has existed since the late 1970s: the SWP recruits people during a particular tactical turn; the leadership decides the tactical turn has outlived its usefulness; a new turn is decreed; those who don't like it are isolated and thrown out out.

Disaffected

Alongside this pattern there is the constant throughout of disaffected individual members. The SWP's criteria for membership is minimal: hating the Tories, believing in "socialism from below" and selling a few copies of *Socialist Worker*.

The result is that recruits come and go at a remarkable rate. Many of those recruited leave in despair, having found that in reality, not only do you have to hate the Tories—you also have to love Tony Cliff and all his work. If you don't, you are not welcome.

This raises a very important question for all those serious about building a revolutionary party. How is it that such a bureaucratic organisation can maintain its dominance of the far left in Britain? Why is it the only organisation on the far left to have experienced real growth over the last few years?

The most common answer supplied by the ISG and other dissidents is that the SWP, at root, has the right politics and does orient properly to workers' struggles. This means that they alone have benefited from the collapse of Stalinism.

The problem—which for critics such as the ISG is the decisive one—is that the undemocratic character of the SWP chokes the potential for these politics to gain the mass hearing they deserve. The SWP can grow, but it cannot make the leap from a few thousands to a mass party because of the fetter of its bureaucratic leadership.

Conclude

This leads the ISG to conclude that, "the militarised political culture of the SWP stands in direct opposition to its proclaimed commitment to working class self-emancipation".

For the victims of the Cliff regime this outlook—good politics, bad regime—is understandable. After all, they joined the SWP because of its politics and yet found themselves unable to elect their own branch committees and district committees. If they raised any criticism of the current line, even though it may have been within the framework of the SWP's general politics, then they were taken aside by a full timer, subjected to a tirade of abuse and the threat of expulsion.

Indeed the full timers, puffed up with pride at having been appointed to this lofty position in the workers' movement by Cliff's all-knowing Central Committee, operate like Stalin's commissars—running

the organisation like a school bully runs a playground.

Such a regime—which obstructs the development of members into thinking, independent revolutionary militants and which excludes them from any decision making—is despicable. The critics are right to point to this. But they are wrong to dislocate this regime from the organisation's politics. And they are doubly wrong to identify this regime with Leninism and genuine democratic centralism.

The "IS tradition" venerated by the critics, is a rotten one. Its bureaucratic practices go back a lot longer than the current critics think. The imposition of a bureaucratic regime began in the early 1970s and was consolidated between 1974-77. Up

Oppositionist members were slandered. The composition of committees and conference delegations was rigged.

In 1975 this reign of terror did produce a crisis with big splits and hundreds of expulsions and resignations. The result of this crisis was to produce two distinct organisations—the Workers League (formerly the IS Opposition) and Workers Power. Our direct experience of the regime forced us to confront its politics (see column, right). The Workers' League, on the other hand, claimed that the regime's "tradition" was sacrosanct. One leader of the Workers' League commented on this recently:

"At heart, the IS Opposition never fully or consistently worked out the longer term

But as the IS grew rapidly between 1970 and 1975 it became both more working class and more bureaucratic. Why? Quite simply, it profited from a serious orientation towards anti-Tory workers' struggle and at the same time got disoriented by the election of a Labour government in 1974.

until then the IS was loosely organised as a small propaganda group, shot through with Luxemburgist prejudices and imbued by the libertarianism of '68 generation.

But as the IS grew rapidly between 1970 and 1975 it became both more working class and more bureaucratic. Why? Quite simply, it profited from a serious orientation towards anti-Tory workers' struggle and at the same time got disoriented by the election of a Labour government in 1974.

Cliff opportunistically adapted to the new members' reformist prejudices in the face of a renewed IRA campaign on mainland Britain and was also unable to cope with illusions of many of the SWP's own members in the incoming Wilson government. Many of these workers were unhappy with the IS hailing of leftist army leaders during the Portuguese revolution.

The result of this political disorientation was a growing opposition inside the IS and a bureaucratic clampdown to deal with it. Formal democratic centralism was introduced, but real democratic centralism was subverted. Sizeable groups of oppositionists, like Workers Power (then the Left Faction in IS) and the IS Opposition, were hounded and expelled twenty years ago. Dissident documents were kept out of IBs.

strategic implications of our own politics." (John Palmer, in *Workers' Liberty*, September 1995)

We can add, with some authority (the author of this article was at that time a National Committee member of the Workers' League) that so long as it was united purely by its opposition to the regime, and not by its own politics distinct from those of the Cliff tradition, it could not do this.

That is why the Workers' League collapsed by 1978, completely and totally. That is why all those who simply try to be democratic versions of the SWP today will, despite their best efforts, suffer the same fate.

Workers Power, on the other hand, survived because it developed its own politics. We did not stop at a critique of the regime. Every whining liberal who has ever passed through the SWP can agree with such a critique. But they won't agree on the need for a truly revolutionary party, for a regime that is both democratic and disciplined in the execution of its collective decisions.

The reason they won't agree is politics. And it is by the politics that produce the regime that the SWP must finally be judged.

Those politics—including the theory of

state capitalism—represent a break with revolutionary Marxism, not a development of it.

They are politics that led the Socialist Review Group to refuse to give elementary solidarity to the North Koreans invaded by imperialism in the 1950s; that led *Socialist Worker* to welcome the troops going into Ireland in the 1960s; that led to the undermining of the united front tactic in the unions in the 1970s, destroying the potential of the rank and file movements; that led to the ludicrous excesses of the "downturn" in the 1980s. In the 1990s have led to the criminal neutrality on Bosnia and an excitable catastrophism (for a time) on Britain.

These are, fundamentally, the politics of economism and opportunism.

They represent the SWP's adaptation to the prevailing mood and prejudices of the class rather than a serious attempt to try and help the class overcome its prejudices and drive its struggle forward in a revolutionary direction.

They explain why the SWP can, and has, experienced growth spurts, giving it a big head start on other groups.

If your politics are designed to cut with the dominant reformist or trade union syndicalist ideas rather than transcend them and win workers to revolutionary politics, it is a lot easier to grow. If you dilute your politics you can expand your size.

But such growth will always be spasmodic and has its limits. Real reformism will always grow faster than those centrists who adapt to it. And this means that despite its size the SWP can never become a mass revolutionary party—it will ultimately remain a large sect.

Tailored

Above all, the SWP's politics are makeshift. They are tailored to fit the day to day needs of the leadership around Cliff.

It is for this reason that the SWP leadership have, since its very origins, rejected the idea of defining their organisation by a programme.

A revolutionary programme serves two purposes. It is a guide to action for the class and it is a definition of an organisation's overall politics against which the leadership can be judged. If they depart from the programme, in a democratic centralist organisation, they can be called to account.

Cliff has never been called to account, and has never allowed the SWP to come near having a programme. After all, his "programme" in the USSR was purely bourgeois democratic (see *State Capitalism in Russia*). His "programme" for the rank and file movement was simply to fight harder for higher wages. His "programme" for fighting fascism was to instruct the ANL to avoid physical combat with the fascists.

Of course, none of these positions were ever formulated into a programme, so they are not the official policies of the SWP. That the leadership can adapt and develop them depending on the situation.

Relationship

And therein lies the relationship between democracy and politics.

Without a programme the leadership can do what it likes and claim legitimacy for what it does, since it is "acting in the interests of the SWP". And if the SWP has a growth spurt as a result of a particular leadership turn then who can say the leadership is wrong. And if the leadership is not wrong then how can it be challenged. . . ?

These were the lessons we drew twenty years ago. And it is why we have not only survived, but been able to intervene in the class struggle and grow. It is a lesson that today's SWP dissidents would do well to learn if they want to survive as revolutionary fighters and not simply end up as anti-party Cliffites, isolated activists or disillusioned cynics. ■

20 years on...

TWENTY YEARS ago this month the first issue of *Workers Power* was published. The Left Faction of the International Socialists (IS) had been expelled by Tony Cliff's Central Committee at the end of October 1975. This faction became the Workers Power Group.

Faction members had been suspended and expelled for the "crime" of being members of a faction! The faction was completely open, had a platform and acted within the discipline and constitution of the IS. We were expelled because we opposed the Cliff leadership's political line, not because we broke discipline.

This bureaucratic centralism is a hallmark of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), as the IS renamed themselves in 1977. Factional opposition, which is a basic right under real democratic centralism, has never been tolerated by the SWP.

Our expulsion was part of a wave of purges in the 1970s. Hundreds of members of the IS were kicked out. A regime of unthinking loyalty to Cliff was imposed. Political debate, the lifeblood of democratic centralism, was replaced by the obligation to parrot Cliff's line or face the consequences.

For many of those expelled in the 1970s, the choice was either rethink the politics that had led to such bureaucratic centralism or stumble on with the same politics tied to a more humane and democratic internal regime. All of those who chose the latter course—the IS Opposition and the Faction for Revolutionary Democracy, for example—withered and collapsed.

But many of those who chose the former course rejected not only Leninist organisational principles but Leninist politics. *Socialist Organiser* commenced its trajectory towards becoming an indistinguishable component of left reformism. The Revolutionary Communist Group drifted towards Stalinism. The Revolutionary Communist Party began its voyage away from the working class movement altogether.

Twenty years on *Workers Power* is the only former IS group to have survived as a revolutionary organisation, firmly oriented to the working class and with roots in the labour movement. Moreover, it is the only one to have developed international links and to have played an important role in the building of a genuine international revolutionary tendency.

The key to survival was not simply perseverance, in the face of difficult circumstances. We confronted the political roots of the crisis in IS. We recognised that the key to developing revolutionary politics lay in breaking with Cliff's economism and creatively developing revolutionary Trotskyism. Any other course would lead away from either the working class or from revolutionary politics.

Our survival, growth and development as an international tendency prove the correctness of our political break with the "IS tradition". It was not enough to complain against the regime. It was important to positively develop and re-elaborate Trotskyist politics. ■

The politics of the SWP a Trotskyist critique

AVAILABLE FROM WORKERS POWER PRICE £1

LETTERS

WORKERS POWER 194 NOVEMBER 1995

General strike in Argentina

Dear Comrades,

Following your interview with me, printed in last month's issue of *Workers Power* (193), I am writing to tell you of further developments in the class struggle in Argentina.

On 6 September there was a general strike in Argentina. In Buenos Aires a workers' demonstration was called by the three trade union federations. This action was an expression of the workers' desire for a united fightback against the government's economic austerity plan. In spite of this the trade union bureaucracy used the show of strength in order to negotiate a reduction in social benefits!

At the end of September the management of Astilleros Rio Santiago, a state-owned shipyard, tried to sack 13 shop-floor delegates. In response the shipyard work-

ers launched a strike and won the reinstatement of all the delegates. However, the yard is still facing privatisation by the government.

In Rio Negro—a southern province—workers occupied state buildings. Hospitals and trains were diverted by protesting teachers.

Nearly every day brings new clashes with the police, underlining the acuteness of the situation. The local government owes \$60 million in back wages and \$40 million in pensions.

The local education and health services are falling apart because the administration starves the regions of funds. But because of the union bureaucracy's policy the resistance and demonstrations could not overthrow the local government.

Meanwhile the Menem administration

was defeated by FREPASO, the centre left coalition, in a by-election on 8 October.

The situation is contradictory; on the one hand, workers want to take to the streets to fight back. On the other hand, there is no co-ordination of the resistance.

This is mainly due to the betrayal of the union bureaucrats, who continue to negotiate with the government.

This means that the key task today for Argentine workers is to fight against the "social pact" policies of the bureaucracy. This is the starting point if we are to win the demands of a 6 hour day, a minimum wage, no lay offs, nationalisation under workers' control of all companies which shut and an increase in the education and health budgets.

In comradeship
Mario Gómez (PTS Argentina)

Left unity in Unison

Dear Editor,

I am writing to you as National Secretary of the Campaign for a Fighting Democratic Unison (CFDU) about your article in *Workers Power* 193.

Whilst welcoming your support for the CFDU candidate Roger Bannister I feel I must challenge the misleading and inaccurate report.

Bill Jenkins' report claims that the CFDU Leadership is "sectarian" and does not want one left organisation. This frankly flies in the face of reality. Workers Power members were present at conferences in Sefton and Birmingham this year called by "Fightback" at which the CFDU leaders moved motions calling for one left organisation to be set up. The SWP refused to even discuss it in Sefton and in Birmingham rejected the call for even a dialogue to take place on the issue. As National Secretary I have attempted on a number of occasions, even in print, to involve the SWP in a genuine Broad Left but at every stage this has been rejected.

After all these attempts the CFDU was left with no alternative but to set about establishing a genuine democratic left organisation. The CFDU leadership has shown their commitment to this over the last year or more, evidenced by the fact that we have established groups in eight of the union's regions, are about to set up the first branch-based CFDU's and will be having our 2nd National Conference on December 9th.

Bill Jenkins article goes on to attack the credibility of the CFDU candidate and accuses him of being a bureaucrat. Once again the truth is conveniently forgotten and the word bureaucrat is cheaply banded around without explanation.

Every year Roger Bannister faces election as shop steward, Branch Secretary and NEC member. The fact that he has been in those positions for some time is to his credit and demonstrates the support he has built up.

The CFDU candidate is also accused of not having "a great record as a Unison militant", and that he "does not distinguish himself from the bureaucracy". Not only does he have a record of defending his own members, there are many members throughout the union who have turned to him for support in their dispute. Most recently the Liverpool residential workers where Roger forced the issue and secured £35,000 from the Industrial Action fund. He has also been at the forefront on the NEC against the witch hunt of union activists in Liverpool.

Bill Jenkins also conveniently forgets that it was Roger who successfully moved the call for a one day national strike in defence of the public sector only for the

bureaucracy to water it down to the October national demonstration.

As for "obeying the NEC's unconstitutional ban" on NEC members speaking against NEC policy once again Bill Jenkins is wrong. As Workers Power members present at this years conference well know, despite threats to pull the plug on him Roger still came off the platform to speak in favour of defying the anti trade union laws. The statement also ignores all the years that Roger defied the NEC in coming off the platform in NALGO most notably on non-payment of the poll tax and on the successful call for the union to ignore the anti trade union laws. It should not be forgotten that Roger was expelled from the Labour Party because of his militancy!

The most that can be said for the article is that whilst it lacks any genuine content or accuracy in relation to the CFDU its conclusions are correct. I would urge Workers Power supporters not to be mere commentators on that struggle but throw themselves into the work of the CFDU.

Glenn Kelly,
National Secretary CFDU
(letter cut for reasons of space)

We reply:

All of Glenn Kelly's points about the way in which Bannister was chosen contributed to our decision to back him in the election. But the leadership of CFDU has a history of sectarianism, equal to the SWP's, going back into Nalگو and other public sector Broad Lefts.

In the run up to the selection of Ban-

nister, whilst the SWP acted in a sectarian manner, it was key figures in CFDU who repeatedly claimed they "could not work with Fightback"—the SWP's rank and file front in Unison. At conference the CFDU invited Fightback members to a meeting, allowed them to vote in favour of a left candidate, and then barred them from voting for who it should be! If CFDU had been really committed to unity they would have used that opportunity to build unity and put the SWP on the spot.

Whilst Glen Kelly and the CFDU leadership has made formal appeals to SWP for unity, this has never been backed up with a vigorous effort to actually build unity.

We did not accuse Bannister of being a bureaucrat. We said he had failed to distinguish himself from the bureaucracy whilst a member of the Unison NEC. Bannister did obey the NEC ban at previous conferences, and defended his intention to do so again. In the end he made a half hearted and failed attempt to speak. Bannister, a Militant Labour supporter has never acted like a revolutionary in Unison. In line with Militant's Broad Left strategy he has acted like a left wing member of the bureaucracy.

We urge all Unison activists to attend the CFDU conference and help turn it into a genuine rank and file movement, including a redoubled effort to build unity with SWP supporters. Both Bannister and Bakhsh received nominations from over 40 branches. The real question now is how to overcome sectarianism and build a united, fighting rank and file movement.

Land and Freedom



Dear Comrades,

The coverage in *Workers Power* 193 of the issues raised by the film *Land and Freedom* was very instructive and a welcome supplement to the current issue of *Trotskyist International* which carries a review of the film by myself.

However, I was surprised to see in the edited version of the review the claim that "It has taken an English director, a socialist, to re-open the wounds that many thought had healed. In fact, no one in Spain could have made such a film."

I made no such claim even though I am aware that some of the Spanish actors who worked on Loach's film said as much.

But the actors are obviously unaware that Spanish directors—Victor Erice, for example—have made very powerful anti-fascist films about the Spanish Civil War. Such directors have resisted attempts by the Spanish establishment to sweep the history of the 1930s under the carpet.

In the end it does not matter what the nationality of the director is. Ken Loach and Jim Allen, the scriptwriter, are committed socialists and internationalists and hence their long struggle to bring this cherished project to life. They have done a service, like others in Spain before them, in bringing this true story to the screen.

Fraternally,
Stuart Craig

✓ Agree?
✗ Disagree?
! Got something to say?

Write in to:
Workers Power
BCM 7750
London WC1N 3XX
or e-mail:
paulmorris@easynet.co.uk

MEETINGS THIS MONTH

COVENTRY

Socialism and black Liberation

Launch Meeting for

Workers Power Pamphlet

7.30pm Wednesday 15 November

West Indian Club, Spon St.

Where We Stand



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.



The Trade Unions

must be transformed by 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.



October 1917

The Russian revolution established a workers' state. But Stalin 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 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. Stalinism has consistently betrayed the working class. The Stalinist Communist Parties' 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.



Social oppression

is an integral feature of capitalism systematically oppressing people on the basis of 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.



Imperialism

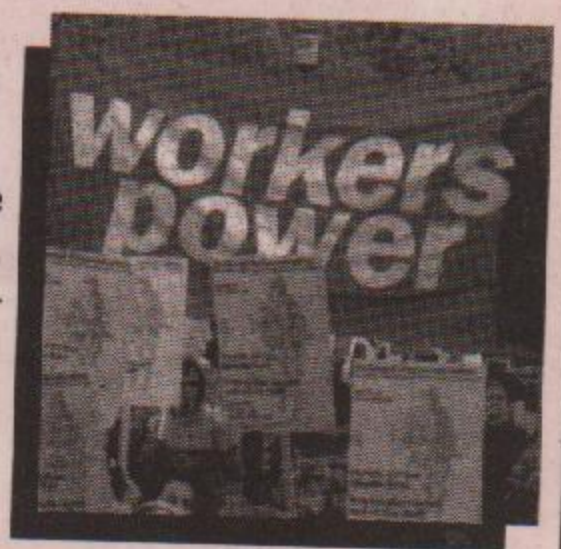
is a world system which oppresses nations and prevents economic development in the vast majority of third world countries. We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland. But against the politics of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois nationalists, we fight for permanent revolution—working class leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle under the banner of socialism 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 a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the revolutionary documents of the first four congresses of the Third and Fourth Internationals. Workers Power is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary International (the Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51.

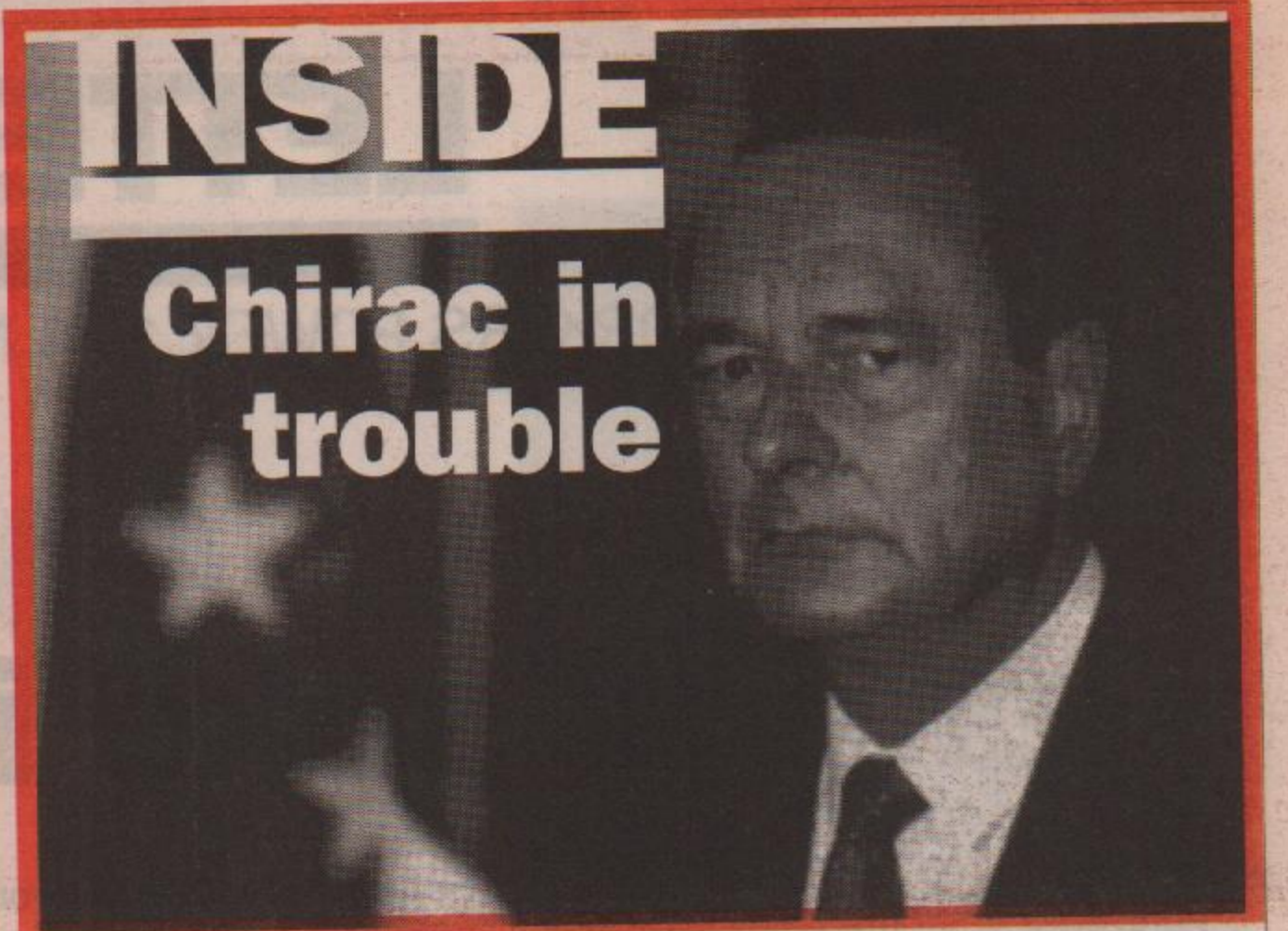
The LRCI is pledged to fight the centrism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International and to refound a Leninist Trotskyist International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. We combine the struggle for a re-elaborated transitional programme with active involvement in the struggles of the working class—fighting for revolutionary leadership. If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!★



WORKERS POWER

INSIDE

Chirac in
trouble



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

No 194 NOVEMBER 1995 ★ Price 50p

Solidarity with Liverpool dockers!

THE WHOLE of the Liverpool labour movement has rallied to their dockers. Over 10,000 marched through Liverpool in late October to back the dockers in their fight to defend their jobs.

Following their refusal to cross a picket line in September, five hundred dockers were locked out. Their response was immediate—an all out strike to close down the whole port.

The bosses are determined to introduce casual labour into the Liverpool docks. That is why they locked out the men. Liverpool is the only port in which union organisation has kept out casualisation since the national dock strike was defeated in 1989. The bosses want to break that organisation and bring in casual labour.

Yet the dockers' own union, the TGWU, is not giving the dispute official backing. The most the TGWU officials have done so far is engineer a deal with Mersey Docks and Harbour Company to end the dispute. The deal was turned down unanimously by a mass meeting of dockers.

Little wonder. The deal confirmed the sackings and merely asked the strikers to apply for 150 jobs with Drake International, offering those not taken on £10,000 in redundancy money. Not only was this an insult to

the strikers, it was a charter for casualisation in the future.

Every worker needs to take up solidarity with this strike now. The dockers are not getting strike pay and not getting official backing. Scabs are being used against them, but the TGWU will not call for the sort of blacking action that could help seal the port altogether. Trade unionists everywhere should pass resolutions supporting the dockers and send them money. They should actively back the demonstrations and pickets and, refuse to handle any goods coming from or bound for Liverpool docks.

In the TGWU there should be a massive campaign to force the leadership to act: official recognition, blacking action in every other port, solidarity strike action and strike pay. These must all be delivered by the union that Liverpool dockers helped build and have now put their jobs on the line defending.

If Drake International uses a single scab in Liverpool the TGWU should call a national docks' strike. At a time

of an "export led" economic recovery such action will soon have the bosses reeling.

It will give the TGWU the chance to win back the ground lost in other ports after the 1989 strike, driving out casualisation and re-organising every port as a union port. Of course, all of this will mean defying the anti-trade union laws. It will also mean winning, and that's why it is right to defy the laws.

In Liverpool the call for a city-wide strike should be taken up and organised. A basis already exists.

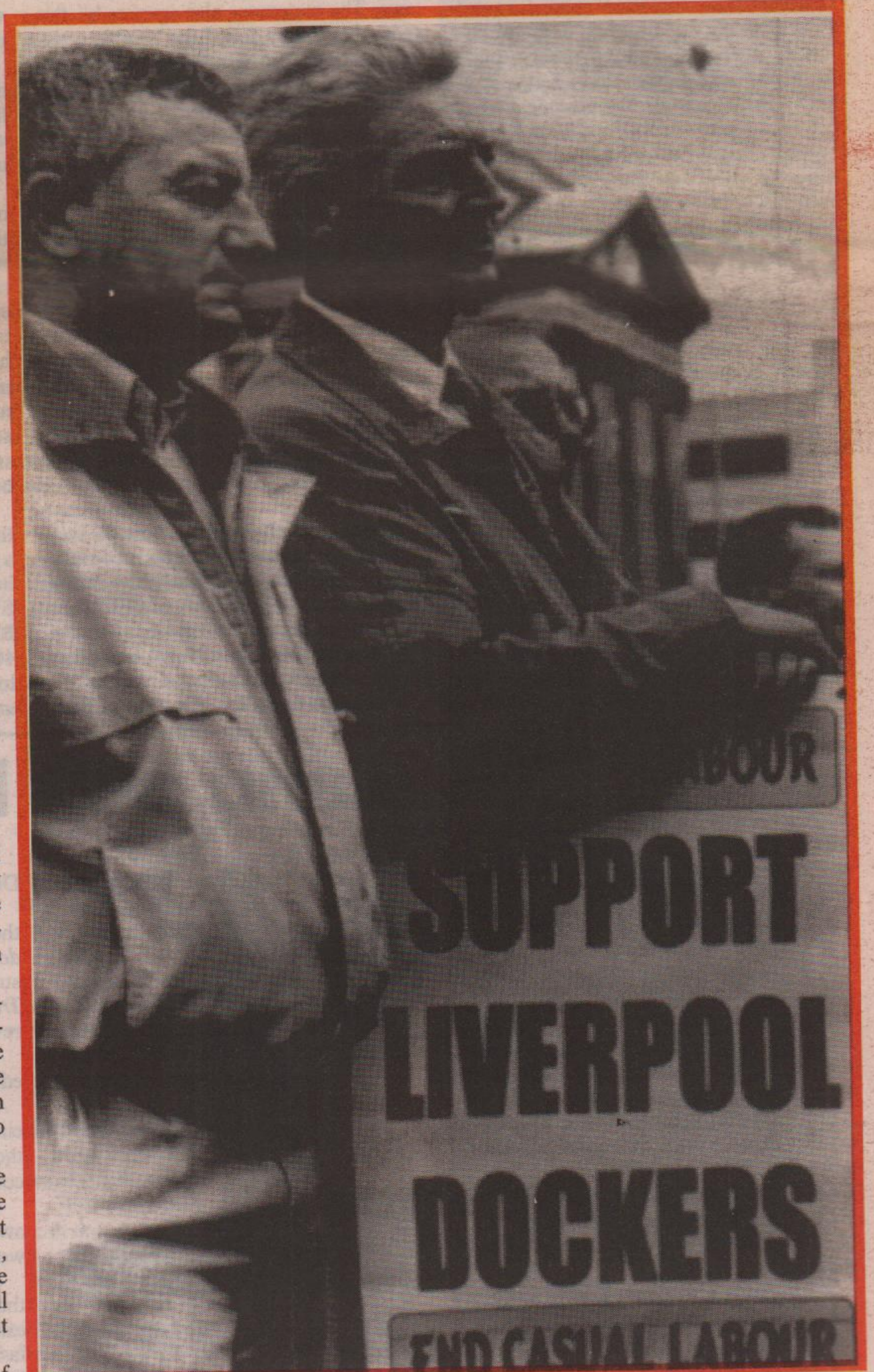
Firefighters were in dispute and have called for a series of one day strikes in November. Care workers are on all out strike. One of the care workers issued the call at the march for a city wide strike.

This is the fighting spirit the workers' movement throughout the country needs to show if it is to stop the attacks on jobs and wages that the bosses and Tories are raining down on us. It is the militant alternative to Blair's New Labour.

If the official movement, via the Trades Council, is too frightened of the trade union laws to act, then a joint strike committee of the dockers, firefighters and care workers should be set up. This could then issue the call for a city wide strike and build for it throughout Merseyside.

Such an action would help each of the disputes win and would send a clear message to bosses everywhere—unions can fight back and can win.

The dockers have shown solidarity to every section of workers that has been in dispute over many years. Now every worker must support the dockers!■



Smash the anti-union laws!

● Dockers speak out - see page 4

URGENT: Send money and messages of support to Edinburgh Park Dockers Club, Townsend Lane, Liverpool. Cheques to Merseyside Docks Shop Stewards Appeal Fund.