

Workers power

Socialism, Internationalism, Revolution

British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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ENOUGH IS

ENOUGH



Force Labour to meet our demands: Turn to page 3

Stop the war on drugs

Legalisation is the answer

DECADES OF a government-led "War on Drugs" on both sides of the Atlantic have left drug use more widespread than ever before.

Every weekend in Britain over 500,000 people take Ecstasy. Half of all teenagers admit to having smoked cannabis. The August murder of five-year-old Dillon Hull in Bolton in a heroin-related incident tragically emphasised what millions knew already - that the use of addictive drugs like crack cocaine and heroin is rising sharply in the most deprived areas.

Government policy has failed. Some establishment figures - including clerics, head teachers and police chiefs - want to consider whether minor changes are needed to the state's approach. Other voices are calling for a discussion of decriminalisation of soft drugs like cannabis.

The new government is well placed to carry out a serious investigation and real change. But it will not even allow the matter to be discussed. The new Home Office minister, George Howarth, told a special conference of the Association of Chief Police Officers that, "any debate about legalisation or decriminalisation detracts from the strong message that drugs destroy lives."

Ignorant

The average teenager could smash this ignorant argument to smithereens. It is an insult to democracy to claim that debate itself is dangerous. We are too stupid, you see, to be exposed to the real arguments... it would detract from the "message" we are being fed by the government.

The "message" is a ridiculous over-generalisation. Millions of people, not just illegal drug users, know this from their own experience. Alcohol - a potent addictive drug which is legally obtainable from licensed distributors and whose "pushers" are respected members of society - destroys the lives of hundreds of thousands every year.

There are over 100,000 deaths directly attributable to alcohol addiction every year - excluding thousands more killed in alcohol-related car accidents. The drug causes untold misery, fuelling street and domestic violence, obsessive behaviour and depression.

But not all alcohol use "destroys lives". If it were banned, millions would continue to drink it, most without any long-term ill effects. And the simple facts that the government does not trust us to discuss are that such illegal drugs as cannabis and Ecstasy are less harmful than alcohol.

The hysterical propaganda campaign against Ecstasy has concealed from the public the fact that as yet there is little evidence that the occasional drug is harmful in itself. The tiny number of deaths (less than 100 in the last five years) have been from very rare allergic reactions or from avoidable over-heating and over-consumption of water. The latter, according to the coroner, was the cause Leah Betts' death, but this did not



Anybody seen the Rizlas

stop the media declaring her a victim of a "killer drug".

As for cannabis, there are no recorded deaths from its use. This mild narcotic does not make its users violent. At worst, it can induce paranoia or, in the case of very heavy use, trigger latent psychological problems. Any debate on its legal status could not fail to reveal this. That is why the government wants to avoid discussion of the question.

Certain sections of the police hierarchy are aware that the current drugs

policy is not only not working, but is unworkable. Michael O'Byrne, Chief Constable of Bedfordshire, called for the creation of a vast and very expensive system of special drugs courts, but added that if this were not possible, then it would be better to bring the law into line with reality. Violating George Howarth's injunction on debating decriminalisation, he told the *Guardian*:

"There is still time for the policy of containment to work. If we do not use

it properly, then we may have to deal with drugs in the way our forebears did with alcohol, and move from criminalisation to legalisation and regulation."

This followed calls from Labour MP Paul Flynn for a Royal Commission on the issue, and from the Labour MP for Dillon Hull's constituency, Brian Iddon, for an "open, honest discussion about the drug problem."

Instead of this the government has spoken only of copying another failed piece of US authoritarianism: the appointment of what they call a "Drugs Tsar". Quite what use this will be even the government cannot say. Worse still, they have extended the failing ban on drugs to current legal alternatives, such as khat and other relatively innocuous "herbal highs".

Even the police and aristocracy have shown themselves to be less bigoted than the Labour administration. The Prince of Wales Trust and the Police Foundation have launched an independent inquiry into the drug laws - a Royal Commission in all but name.

There should, however, be no illusions that this body will be of any use. The 13-member committee is stuffed with Chief Constables, academics and lawyers who believe they know how best to protect the lower orders from themselves.

Nevertheless, the convening of such a body will have one benefit: it will ensure that the debate over drug laws

remains live over the coming months.

Most people and especially the youth - who actually know more about this issue than any number of official experts - must now make their voices heard in this debate. There is a vast constituency in every major city who could be rallied to the case for a radical change in drugs policy if only the argument were clearly put. That radical change is complete legalisation under a state monopoly, and the provision of accurate information and appropriate facilities for users.

Legalisation would break the hold of vicious criminal gangs over supply at a stroke. The ludicrous criminalisation of millions of cannabis users would be ended, as would the excuse that it provides for the police to stop and search young people - especially black youth - at will.

Fruitless

In place of a fruitless campaign to prevent young people taking Ecstasy, efforts could be focused on educating users in the best ways to avoid dehydration and illness (none of which are difficult to follow). Controls could be maintained on the strength and adulteration of drugs: this simple change would enormously reduce the casualty rate among intravenous heroin users.

As for the compulsive use of hard drugs such as heroin and crack, freeing dependants from the nether world of illegality, would enable efforts to be focused on care and rehabilitation without the complicating stigma of illegality. The pressure to burgle, rob or deal to fund an expensive habit would cease. Users' groups could be drawn into a campaign of real education: explaining the actual effects of hard drug use to young people rather than spreading lies which can be nailed in any school playground.

Criminalisation and illegality have done nothing to prevent the real desperation that gives rise to hard drug abuse, just as the 15-year prohibition on alcohol in the US never banished alcoholism, but did boost the fortunes of the Mafia. There is only one way to uproot hard drug abuse: to lead an onslaught on the poverty, unemployment, bad housing, and hopeless conditions that face millions of young people across the world today.

Labour must:

- Scrap Drugs Tsar proposals
- Legalise drugs under a state monopoly
- Require free drinking water and testing of pills for contents, dosage and purity at clubs
- Provide accurate information on the effects of drugs
- Provide for the safe administration of hard drugs to dependants, build needle exchanges and clinics
- Tax the rich to build homes, schools, facilities and provide jobs in the most deprived areas.

MI6, MI5 and the Drugs War

The labour movement and internationalists everywhere should oppose Robin Cook's plans for MI6 and MI5 to be given new roles in fighting against international drug production and distribution.

Britain has an appalling record in the global drugs trade. It fought two wars against China for the "right" to sell opium to the Chinese people. Its fellow imperialist power, the US, has, under the cover of a global war against drugs, claimed the right to invade Panama, to bankrupt desperately poor peasants in coca-producing areas in South America and to pursue a dirty war against guerrilla insurgents in Colombia.

Britain, like America, cannot be

trusted to act as some sort of impartial policeman of the world's drug barons.

Beneath the cloak of a reactionary and futile "war on drugs" the security services will have another licence for interfering in other countries' affairs to undermine any threat to the power and profits of multinational companies.

If MI5 kept files on Peter Mandelson and Edward Heath, can they be expected to limit their interference in other countries to the question of drugs?

Far from giving these shadowy and undemocratic services more power, Labour should abolish them altogether.

Diana car crash: end of the line?

THE OUTPOURING of "national grief" over the death of Princess Diana was not simply stirred up by the media. Many ordinary people identified with Diana because she rebelled, bucked the system, and espoused progressive causes - from HIV to Land mines.

Her depression, bulimia, suicide attempts and ultimately divorce provided a glitzy microcosm of the plight of millions of less wealthy women. And in her last public statement she became the first member of the royal family to openly call the Tories "useless".

Despite all this, socialists will not be joining in the wave of national mourning. Diana was, and remained until her death, a key member of the class that rules us, fools us, lives off the wealth that we produce and flaunts its life of idleness in the faces of those who cannot feed or clothe their children. Her patronage of good causes was part of her publicity machine and her caring image was consciously developed as a propaganda weapon in her feud with Charles and the Windsor dynasty.

The mass mourning that has followed Diana's death is a product of the fact that,

with the decline of religion, the people of the late 20th century increasingly rely on the living soap-opera of the glamorous jet set to provide the deities on which their own hopes, fears and fantasies are projected. Diana along with Dodi, Gianni Versace and the whole glittering crew she was part of could not exist unless millions of ordinary people were systematically robbed by the system.

Of course the fact that many of this crew were not welcome in the stuffed shirt society of Royalty and the Tories - Dodi's dad, remember, pulled the plug on Tories Jonathan Aitken and Ian Hamil-

ton - should make for interesting viewing as the establishment squirms and revelation after revelation pours out.

The hypocrisy of Britain's ruling elite - whose members barred Mohamed al-Fayed, Dodi's father, from being given British citizenship and described Diana as a loose cannon after her public statement on land mines - will be on full display as they wipe manufactured tears from their eyes.

We say: mourn the hundreds of workers killed each year in workplace accidents; the trade union activists killed and tortured by death squads in Indonesia

and Colombia; the shattered lives of working class people killed and maimed by driving to work in unsafe cars and stressful conditions every day.

At the same time we should reject any attempt to use the alleged involvement of press photographers in the accident to bring in new laws to censor the press.

As Diana the fairy tale princess is replaced by wicked stepmother Camilla Parker Bowles, the palace pantomime may start to lose its popularity. Socialists will do everything in their power to ensure that the monarchy, its unelected power and wealth, is scrapped forever. ■

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EDITORIAL

WORKERS POWER 214 SEPTEMBER 1997

Time for the unions to fight

FIVE MONTHS into the Labour government, five hundred Liverpool dockers remain sacked for the "crime" of refusing to cross a picket line. New Labour has chosen not to use the government's "golden share" in the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company to reinstate the TGWU members. The 53 Asian women, sacked from their jobs at Hillingdon Hospital by private contractor Pall Mall after taking legal strike action in October 1995, are still locked out despite Labour's election pledge to rebuild the NHS. Hundreds of trade unionists from other long-running disputes are still without their jobs.

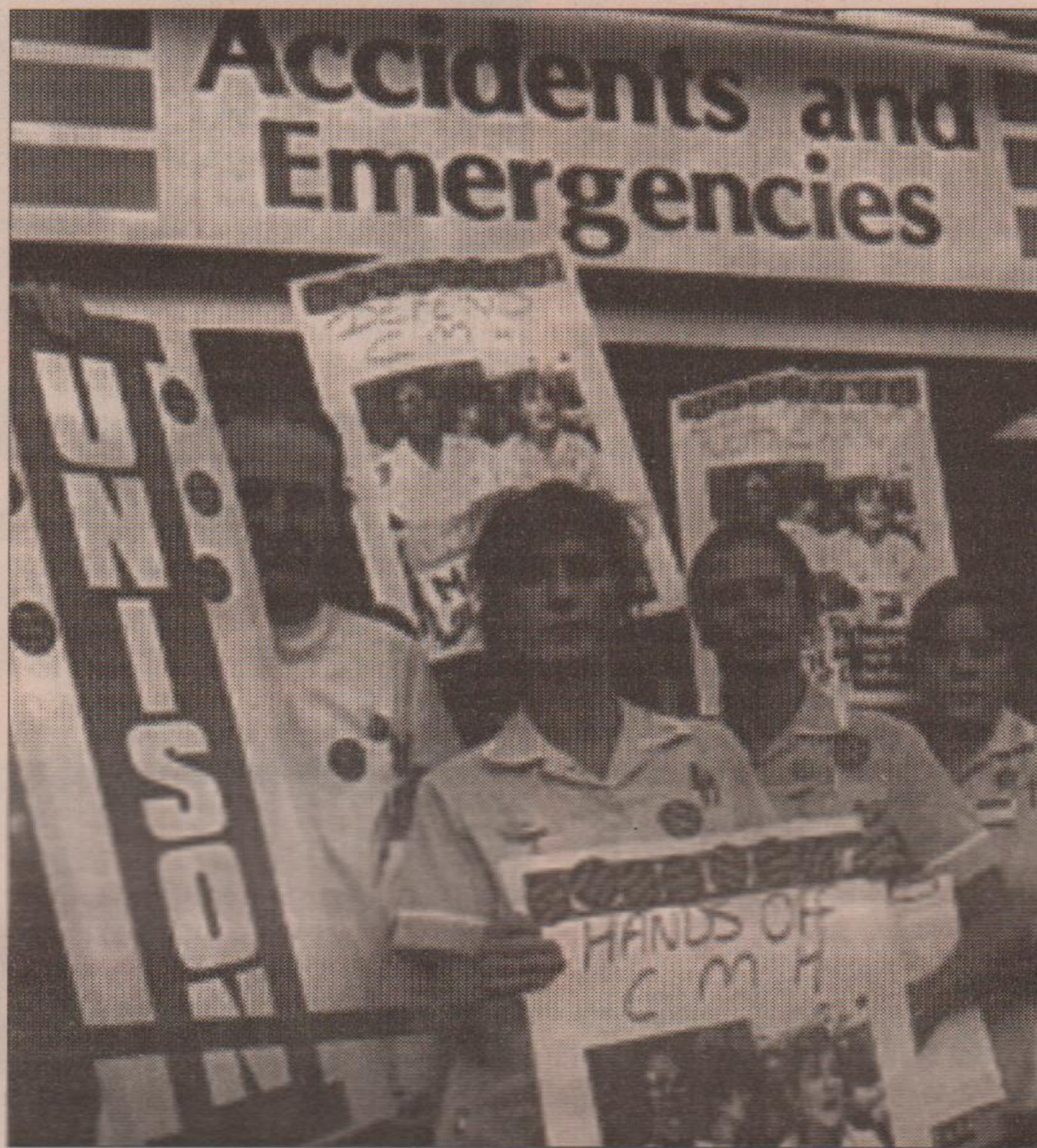
Legislation, promised in Labour's manifesto, to compel employers to grant union recognition wherever 50% of a workforce supports it did not feature in the Queen's Speech in mid-May. A Green Paper on rights at work, due to appear in the autumn, has been postponed again. Blair has personally urged the TUC and the main bosses' grouping, the Confederation of British Industry, to clinch a private deal on negotiation rights as a means of letting the government off the hook.

While Blair and his government have continued to treat the unions with disdain, events over the summer showed that they can still cause him acute embarrassment. There can be little doubt that Blair had intended to name British Airways chief executive Bob Ayling in his first honours list. What stopped Blair from awarding a knighthood or peerage to his dinner party guest was Ayling's high-profile failure to gain public support for his plan to crush the TGWU in the long-running cabin crews dispute.

The Prime Minister may boast of his determination to retain "the most restrictive labour laws in the western world", but lurking behind such rhetoric is a fear of the potential power of the organised working class to wreak havoc with his plans to rule in the interests of Britain's big bosses.

The government is looking at the option of giving shares in the Post Office to the Royal Mail workforce in the hope of buying industrial peace. The joint working parties - established last autumn by Royal Mail management and the CWU bureaucracy as a means of ending the national strikes against the bosses' restructuring plans - have clearly failed. Labour ministers are anxious at the prospect of renewed industrial action in the Post Office before Christmas.

Elsewhere, CWU members in the private sector have staged a one-day strike and launched a work-to-rule against BT over its increasing use of



casual labour. The RMT looks set for another confrontation with London Underground bosses, while balloting some 6,000 guards in the privatised rail companies for strikes in the autumn.

Firefighters in Greater Manchester have been voting on strikes to resist the threat by the local fire authority to axe 24 full-time and 12 part-time jobs. In London, Unison-organised ambulance crews have refused standby duties in protest at the threat to close up to 50% of the capital's ambulance stations.

Total membership of TUC-affiliated unions now stands at 6.8 million. Thirty of the 74 affiliates answering a recent TUC survey actually saw membership growth last year.

Against this background, the trade unions have an opportunity to extract major concessions from the Labour government. As usual, the union bureaucrats are systematically refusing to take advantage of the improved battle terrain. The TGWU's Bill Morris, rather than pressing ahead with further industrial action at British Airways that could have thrown back the BA bosses offensive, led the union into fruitless negotiations, while submitting an "alternative" £42 million cuts plan.

Instead of the TUC General Council issuing a "warm welcome" at word of Blair's decision to address their annu-

al congress, it should be drawing up a battle plan on how to make Labour deliver to the workers who elected it.

The union tops have gratefully played along with the farce of the Low Pay Commission. The inclusion of three union bureaucrats on this body will not alter the outcome of its deliberations one jot. The call must go out for the immediate introduction of a £6 an hour minimum wage. Those employers pleading bankruptcy should be compelled to open their books and face nationalisation without compensation and under workers' control if they either can't or won't cough up.

There should be no more delay on legislation for compulsory union recognition at work and the unions should force Labour to revert to honouring John Smith's 1993 pledge that employment rights at work should start from day one on the job.

The TUC has called for the reinstatement of workers sacked for simply going on strike. It must force Labour to reinstate the Liverpool dockers, the Hillingdon women, the Critchley, Magnet, Project Aerospace and so many other workers who have fallen foul of the class law which has bolstered the bosses' position against organised labour over the last 18 years.

The Prime Minister has stated time and again that he has no intention of

modifying, never mind scrapping, the Tories' arsenal of anti-union legislation. But in order to achieve any of our demands we must be prepared to defy those laws, make them inoperable and force Labour to repeal them. Unions in Britain should draw both inspiration and lessons from the recent Teamsters' victory in the US (see p.10).

The leadership of the unions are not pushing in this direction. They are class traitors, prepared to sit back and see workers sacked rather than fight back against Blair. We need a new leadership in the unions, part of a new leadership in the whole working class - a leadership that fights for working class interests at the expense of the bosses, a revolutionary leadership.

Such a leadership in the unions would be working flat out for two objectives at the moment. First, to use any major dispute as the springboard for widespread action to force Blair to meet our immediate demands, to beat back the continuing attacks of the bosses and to tackle the ever growing crisis in the welfare state. This means mobilising solidarity with those in struggle and building links between those struggles so that they do not remain isolated.

Second, we need to fight to transform the unions into effective organisations of struggle, under the control of the members. This means fighting to get rid of the treacherous bureaucrats and establishing the regular election and the permanent accountability through recall of all officials, none of whom must receive a salary in excess of the average wage of the workers they represent.

It means opening the unions up to the millions of unorganised workers through recruitment campaigns and activating the participation of the members through base level democracy - regular mass and section meetings to take decisions, branch meetings to be held in work time, shop stewards elected for every section.

Forging the unity of militants at the base of each union and across all the unions into a militant campaign for these goals is a vital task. Vital not just for the good of democracy in the unions, important as that is, but in order to create the sort of movement that is prepared to take the fight to the bosses and the Labour government and wage that fight in a way that can win.

The chance to do this exists now. ■

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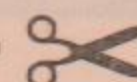
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STUDENTS: Labour shuts the working class out of education

Blair makes students pay

Labour is set to make students foot the bill for the crisis of funding in higher education.

Steve Connors reports

EDUCATION WAS to be the cornerstone of Blair's plans for "revitalising" Britain. But as Education and Employment Secretary David Blunkett announced Labour's plans for higher education on 23 July, it was obvious that Labour's election promises to increase access to education were hollow. Instead, the new government is going to resolve the funding crisis by imposing ever greater burdens on working class students and their families.

The government has refused to break the spending and taxation limits adopted by the last Tory Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, and accepted his draconian curbs on the growth of public spending.

Investment firm Goldman Sachs and the Institute for Fiscal Studies think-tank have estimated that the government needs to raise an extra £24 billion above Clarke's revenue projections just to match the average increase in public spending seen under the Tories between 1979 and 1997.

The number of students in further and higher education jumped to over 4 million in the early 1990s as many young workers and unemployed looked to education as a way out of poverty and boredom. The Tories spurred the growth in student numbers by granting the former polytechnics university status and reducing admission requirements. But as student numbers grew, real spending on education was savaged.

The level of real spending per student in higher education has fallen by more than 40% since 1976. Clarke's last budget, which slashed education spending by 4.5%, followed a prolonged pattern of cuts. Mounting student poverty associated with the introduction of student loans, together with growing class sizes in antiquated facilities, were the symptoms of the deep crisis left by the former Tory government.

For many years academics and politicians blamed the poor performance of British capitalism on the elitism of its educational system. The insistent cry was that British universities needed a radical shake-up and that a much higher proportion of young people should have formal qualifications.

The Tories sought to expand higher education on the cheap, but even they had recognised that fundamental change was required to avoid a complete breakdown. Enter the Dearing Commission, chaired by Sir Ron Dearing, a former boss at the Royal Mail. This body formally presented its nine-volume report, Higher Education in the Learning Society, in July – more than two years after its launch by the Tories. Labour has now backed it to the hilt.

Dearing marks the most fundamental review of higher education since the Robbins Report of 1963. Then, Robbins projected that by 1980 the total number of students would be 560,000. In order to fund this, Robbins argued that state spending on higher education would have to double to

1.6% of GNP.

Today the number of students in higher education stands at well over a million – twice the figure envisaged by Robbins – yet spending on higher education falls well below the 1.6% suggested in 1963. Dearing acknowledges the crisis in higher education. The report accepts the claims of poor standards, overcrowding, ageing facilities, low staff morale and poor pay. It suggests that over the next 20 years an extra £1.9 billion will be needed to fund any further expansion.

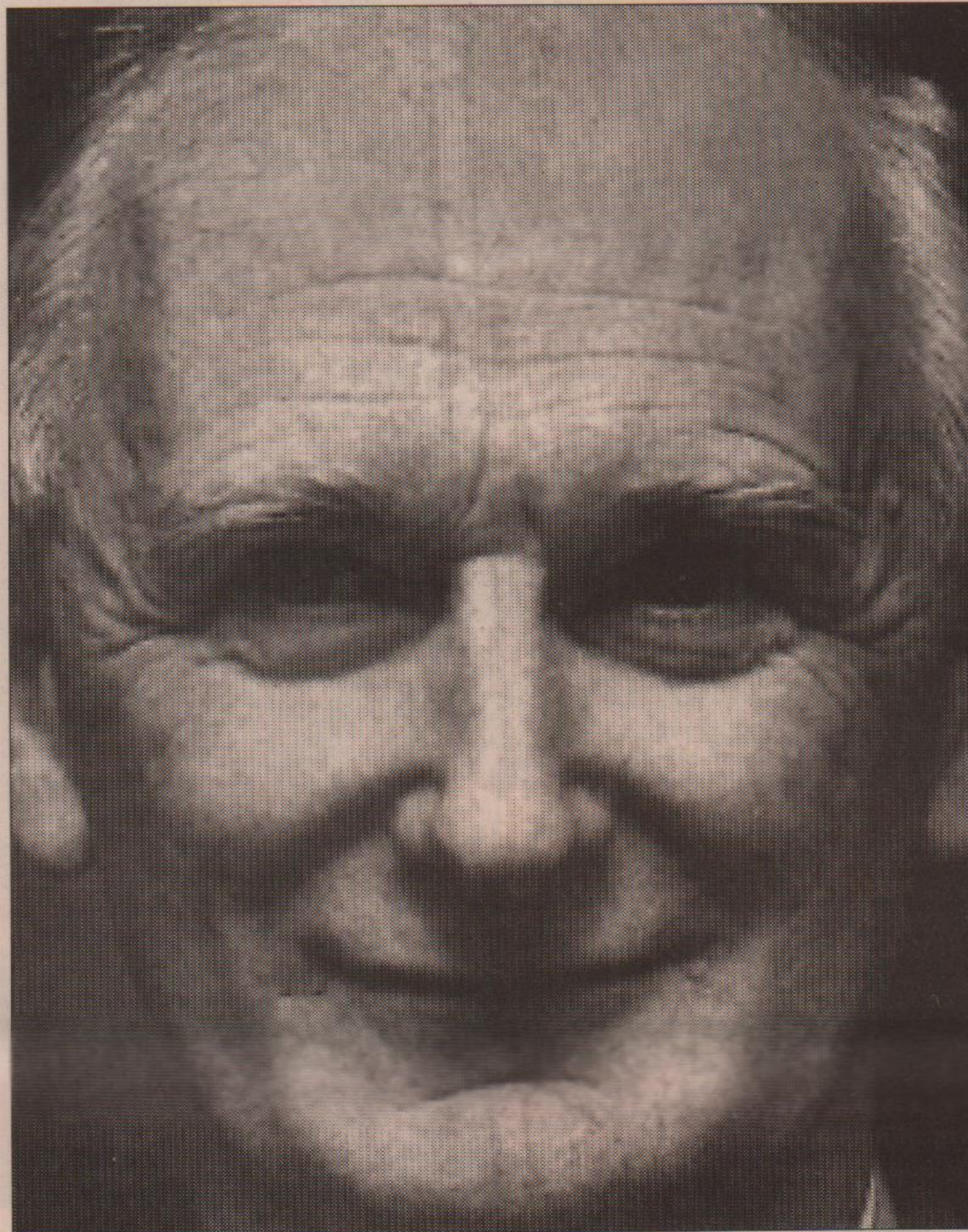
But its proposals to fund this increase are designed to make students foot the bill. Geoffrey Holland, the Chair of the Dearing Commission's funding sub-committee, initially proposed an approach based on the Australian Higher Education Contribution Scheme – a form of graduate tax which imposes huge debts on students.

Under massive pressure from New Labour this was dropped in favour of across-the-board tuition fees for every student entering higher education. Dearing openly admitted that an annual £1000 tuition fee was likely to deter many students from going to university. Dearing also recommended that universities could make massive savings and cut costs by diverting students away from the more expensive three year and four year degree courses and offering a wider range of two-year diplomas.

Blunkett has moved the argument around education funding still further to the right. He responded to Dearing's suggestions for raising £1.9 billion with a scheme that not only proposed tuition fees, but also abolished an already means-tested grant and introduced universal student loans.

In a sorry attempt to cushion the blow Blunkett proposed that those students from an unspecified "poor" background would be spared all or part of the tuition fee. In addition all students would be offered a loan up to the value of the current loan and grant.

Under these proposals the loan will be paid back through the so-called "graduate tax", once the student has left higher education and begun work. Labour's utter confusion and subsequent vacillation over the precise details made it clear that it was driven by the need to cut costs: educa-



Sir Ron Dearing

tional and administrative considerations did not come into it.

The crisis in education funding needs to be addressed urgently. The present system cannot remedy the growing problem of skills shortages in basic sectors of the economy.

Recent reports by two employers' groups in the construction and engineering industries have outlined problems recruiting suitable candidates for apprenticeships and existing vacancies.

With manifest problems in every sector of education, New Labour's decision to accept Clarke's previous cuts in public spending will ensure continued crisis. Their "reprioritisation" of spending, implementation of social welfare cuts to fund education, and their intention to make the victims of Tory policy pay for education will not address the question of working class access to all sectors of education.

The cost of tax cuts for the rich and

massive unemployment has been a doubling of the national debt. Repayment of this debt now forms the fourth largest area of government expenditure, and behind Labour's education policy is Gordon Brown's insistence on removing a large proportion of education spending from the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement.

The attacks on higher education funding, the introduction of tuition fees and the "graduate tax" are all further proof that New Labour in government has accepted the Thatcherite agenda on public spending and tax policy, and that it places capitalist profits well above the needs and aspirations of youth and working class people.

Unless we mount a mass campaign of resistance, students will be forced to continue to pay for tax breaks for the rich, and universities will continue to be massively underfunded. Fees will come in and grants will go out. To stop this the fightback must start now. ■

Further education lottery

The situation in the further education sector is no better than in the universities. The Kennedy Report, authored by leading QC Helena Kennedy, also published this summer, paints a bleak picture for FE colleges.

As attacks on benefits for young people have increased, the number of students in FE has dramatically risen, while the now privatised colleges have been forced to make cuts to meet the strict budget controls imposed by the last government. College managers

have attacked the pay and conditions of college workers, cut courses and sacked lecturers, while awarding themselves whopping great pay rises.

The "Welfare to Work" scheme will place an additional strain on this sector. Unemployed workers will be forced to choose between low-paid voluntary work, employer-supervised training schemes, or returning to study. Employers will substitute subsidised low-paid jobs for current jobs again forcing more people into the further education sector.

The Kennedy Report, though it ignores the implications of current government policies, clearly calls for increased funding and argues against tuition fees for full-time students up to A-level.

But rather than address the issue of underfunding through an injection of new money from central government, Kennedy wants local colleges to fight for the re-allocation of urban regeneration funds, and the government to allow colleges to apply for national lottery awards! ■

Don't rely on NUS leaders

Students can't rely on the leaders of the National Union of Students to run an effective campaign against Labour's attacks. NUS leader Douglas Trainer has been forced to speak out, but he does not support the principle of free education. He opposes any idea of taking direct action like occupations, which could force Blair to back down. In fact, he has been a firm supporter of Blair within the NUS.

NUS leaders know that if they toe the line they will be rewarded with a position in parliament. There are several former NUS leaders in parliament today, including Labour MPs Lorna Fitzsimmons, Stephen Twigg and even Home Secretary Jack Straw himself.

Douglas Trainer hopes to follow in their footsteps. Worse still, he has nothing to worry about, because he is not accountable to students themselves, and earns far more than the average income of those he represents.

- NUS leaders should earn the average income of students and should be subject to recall and replacement
- All local student union officials should be elected at mass meetings and regularly replaced if they are not up to scratch
- All action should be controlled by delegate based action committees of students and college workers so that NUS officials can't sell them out. ■

Labour United?

Blair and Blunkett's betrayal of free education has been slammed from within Labour's ranks.

Former Chancellor of the Exchequer Ted Short attacked the plan as a betrayal of working class youth, who he said would be unable to go to university.

Even former Deputy Leader of the party Roy Hattersley, who was on the far right of the party in the early 1980s, has denounced Blair and Blunkett's move. One poll estimated that nearly 100 Labour MPs are against the move, although many of them are likely to knuckle under when Blair exerts pressure on them.

Pressure should be brought to bear on every local Constituency Labour Party and every university Labour Club to pass motions denouncing the abolition of the grant and the imposition of tuition fees. ■

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HACKNEY: Kids and teachers under fire

An inspector calls



Hackney parents join protests against the OFSTED invasion

Blair is sending school inspectors to blitz schools in Hackney, north London. **Kate Foster**, a member of Hackney NUT, names and shames the real culprits: New Labour and its right wing education gurus

A NEW TERM for teachers and pupils in the London Borough of Hackney starts with the prospect of an invasion by inspectors.

Education Secretary David Blunkett has decided to impose a full scale inspection of the education service in Hackney. The reason? "Poor standards". Indeed, there are poor standards in Hackney schools. We do not have enough books and computers; the school buildings need repair and modernisation; we do not have enough teachers in the right subjects; class sizes are too large.

Against these odds children in Hackney still gain more GCSEs than the national average. Surely, then, cause for Blunkett to congratulate hard-pressed teachers and come up with the money to put education right in Hackney? No, the last thing Blunkett and the government are willing to acknowledge is that years of Tory vandalism and cuts require large amounts of money. They would rather, like the Tories before them, divert attention to searching out "incompetent teachers" and shutting "failing schools".

Suddenly, an investigation into problems in the management of the borough's schools by the Local Education Authority (LEA) has also become an inspection of schools and teachers.

From 6 to 20 October inspectors will descend upon 10 primary schools, six secondary schools and one or two special schools. They are supposed to be looking at what the LEA "adds" to achievement in schools. But many teachers are suspicious that the inspections may have other motives, especially given the rotten record on education of Labour's first four months. Labour clearly want to blame anyone and everyone except the bosses - but preferably teachers - for the problems in education.

Teachers are right to be suspicious. Hackney is often painted as one of Labour's rotten boroughs and has been a constant source of embarrassment to the party nationally. There has not

Labour's rotten record

FOR MOST of the last 18 years, education in Hackney has been under the control of Labour. Like other Labour boroughs Hackney chose not to fight the Tories but to implement the cuts in education.

But Labour's record in Hackney is far worse than simple acquiescence. In Hackney it is one of gross incompetence and vindictiveness against any school that fought back.

In 1994 they took on the well-organised and militant Hackney Downs School. Despite opposition from parents, pupils and teachers and - despite reports saying that standards were improving - the LEA decided to close the school down. Hackney Downs was a boys' school. Farcically, the LEA is currently try-

ing to force oversubscribed girls' schools in the area to go mixed and has even considered reopening Hackney Downs - because it doesn't have enough places for boys in other schools!

Then, there was the case of Jane Brown, a primary head teacher who was targeted by the tabloid press because she happens to be a lesbian. Hackney LEA wanted to sack her because she had turned down seats at a performance of Romeo and Juliet. They were again defeated by strong parental and union campaign.

Teachers, parents and students know that there are real problems in the way education has been run in Hackney. But we don't trust Blair and Blunkett to sort it out. ■

been a proper head of the Education Department for more than two years. The latest Town Hall reorganisation has seen Education merged with Leisure! On the Council, the Labour Party has split into two, with a self-styled New Labour group acting in coalition with Tories and Liberal Democrats around a whole range of issues.

Opposition to the inspection is, however, being organised. At a lively, well-attended union meeting at the end of term, NUT members voted to oppose the inspection by boycotting the entire process. Typically, the anger felt by rank and file teachers has not been built-upon by the local union leadership.

From the NUT leadership's point of view a boycott would mean unofficial and, therefore, illegal action. So local officials have attempted to negotiate assurances from the inspection team that individual schools and teachers will not be victimised. Faced with possible action, the inspectors have agreed but such assurances are worthless. Once inside the schools, they will

be free to act as they like.

It is now up to rank and file teachers alongside parents and school students in Hackney to build action against the inspectors, wherever possible convincing members to boycott the inspection, and preparing action to defend anyone victimised in the wake of the inspections. We must use this action to highlight what is really wrong with education in Hackney and elsewhere following years of Tory cuts and restructuring.

A campaign has been set up by parents, teachers and activists in Hackney to co-ordinate this opposition. They plan to hold local demonstrations and a public meeting in the weeks leading up to the inspection. If inspectors come into the schools, teachers and pupils should immediately stop work and demand that the inspectors meet their representatives and the parents. Let them hear from the workers and students what is wrong with education in Hackney and make them put it in their reports. And let's demand that Blunkett tackles the real causes of "poor standards". ■

FIGHT FOR THE EDUCATION OUR CHILDREN NEED!

SCHOOLS SHOULD be open to inspection. But not cynically-inspired inspections by privatised bureaucrats. Instead schools should be accountable to the local community, to parents, teachers and the pupils themselves. After years of hearing about the rights of middle class parents, it is time to start fighting for the rights of working class children.

THE RIGHT TO FREE EDUCATION

No parent should have to pay for any aspect of education. Education should be free and available to all. We should stop subsidising private schools through the tax system and bring them immediately under state control. When the bosses and fat cat managers have to send their kids to local schools we will soon see them find the money to improve educational standards.

THE RIGHT TO COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION

Every child has the right to be educated alongside others, to the best of their ability. We must end the apartheid system in education where the rich, or those deemed to be clever are given all the advantages, whilst those declared less able or disruptive are excluded and segregated. There should be no selection and no streaming. The experience of the last decades in education show that, given sufficient resources, comprehensive schools and mixed ability classes can work. They are systematically attacked for ideological not educational reasons.

THE RIGHT TO BE TAUGHT IN CLASSES OF LESS THAN 30

Volumes of education research show that pupils benefit when they are taught in smaller classes. There should be no more than 25 pupils in a class. Smaller classes are needed in primary schools and for practical lessons.

THE RIGHT TO BE TAUGHT IN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

It is estimated that £3 billion is needed just for essential repairs on school buildings. The truth is that under the Tories our schools have literally been falling down. Children have a right to learn in a safe environment, without risking their health and safety.

THE RIGHT TO RESOURCES AND TEACHERS

Consistent underfunding has led to a shortage of teachers and a lack of the most basic essentials such as books and paper in schools. Children have a right to specialist teachers, in academic subjects and in language and special needs support. Children have the right to access to new technology to enable them to learn.

THE RIGHT TO NEEDS-BASED FUNDING

Teachers, books and computers cost money. This money can and must be found - now! Our children have the right to the best education society can provide. The government could find the money if it was prepared to tax the rich. But we shouldn't trust the government to tell us how much to spend on education. School and LEA budgets should be assessed and discussed by committees of parents, teachers, pupils and the local community. Government should then be forced to fund education fully.

THE RIGHT TO CONTROL EDUCATION

Under the Tories education has been used as an ideological tool. Whilst they talked about increasing choice, they excluded through selection and increased divisions through opt-outs. Forcing through endless cuts, they stripped local authorities of control over the funding of education. Through their National Curriculum they sought to control even what could and could not be taught in classrooms. Yet it is those involved in education, teachers and pupils, and those concerned about education - parents and the local community - who know most about education. It is these people who should control education.

THE RIGHT TO A SECULAR EDUCATION

The Tories imposed a compulsory "act of Christian worship" through their 1988 Education Act. This law is a gross insult, especially in a borough with Hackney's ethnic and religious diversity. The answer, however, is not to set up Muslim and Jewish schools alongside Catholic and Anglican ones. We must demand an end to religious teaching and official acts of worship in state schools, while safeguarding facilities for private religious observance and religious dietary needs in school canteens. We should fight to remove religious instruction from the national curriculum

SCRAP OFSTED!

The blatantly political role played by OFSTED's Chris Woodhead has made him the most hated figure in education. He has headed OFSTED since its creation in 1992. Even Her Majesty's Inspectorate (the HMI) was too independent for the Tories. They wanted a privatised, overtly political system of inspection for use against the mainly Labour-controlled education authorities. They also wanted a tool to attack what they saw as liberal or progressive teaching methods and above all the comprehensive education system.

Woodhead soon made his "alternative" views clear. OFSTED was charged with inspecting all schools in Britain during 1993 to 1997. Yet before they had even got started Woodhead declared that there were 15,000 failing teachers. He announced, to the astonishment of all teachers and researchers, that class sizes made no difference to achievement. In 1995 he ruled that whole-class teaching was the best and group work ineffectual. But even OFSTED let the Tories down. Woodhead has found his teams of ill-trained inspectors unwilling to condemn individual teachers. In 1996 he changed the rules so that teachers could be identified as failing just on the evidence of two observations lasting some 20 minutes. This is the system that Blunkett wants to "improve", by making it easier to dismiss teachers declared to have "failed". ★

LABOUR CONFERENCE: Constituency voice is stifled

Blair declares war on the party

LABOUR HAD a bad summer. It lost the Uxbridge by-election. A Scottish Labour MP committed suicide amid allegations of factionalism and homophobia. Labour got itself into a mess over Sir David Simon's BP shares. And while Blair was on holiday, the summer months saw a power struggle between Deputy Prime Minister Prescott and the Minister Without Portfolio, Peter Mandelson.

These events are instructive about the evolving character of the Labour government.

All past Labour governments ruled for the bosses and attacked the working class. Blair's government is a continuation of that tradition, but with one important difference. Previous Labour governments sought to get away with their attacks on the working class by incorporating the labour movement, especially the trade union bureaucracy. Blair is doing the opposite: the labour movement is being placed at an ever greater distance from the government.

The David Simon affair is revealing. The man was not even a Labour Party member at the time of the election; but now he is an unelected minister, number two at the Department of Trade and Industry. Labour told him he could hold this position at the same time as £2 million worth of shares in his former company BP, despite the obvious potential clash of interests. The Tories cried, "Scandal!"

The real scandal is not that Simon hung on to his shares, but that he was given a high profile job in the Labour government. BP is up to its armpits in the blood of Colombian trade unionists, peasants and environmental activists (see page 7). And Simon presided over thousands of sackings in BP as well as the erosion of trade union organisation throughout the company. His reward is a prominent post in a government elected by millions of workers.

This is not a one-off case of bad judgement by Tony Blair. It is part of a

Labour's leaders are determined to ram through major changes in the party's structure at the forthcoming annual conference. **Mark Harrison** explains what the changes show about the new government's plans for the working class and why they mark the end of any meaningful democracy in the party.

deliberate plan to embed New Labour deeply into the mainstream of capitalism and the capitalist class. Even old Labour right wingers, like Roy Hattersley, have recognised this, spoken out against it and faced vitriolic denunciations from Blair's gang.

This explains why the new batch of "working" Labour peers includes a clutch of Britain's top millionaire business people. The government's task forces are being led by Tories like David Mellor or investment bankers like Adrian Montague of Dresdner, Kleinwort Benson - appointed on a salary of £160,000 a year to push through the "Public Private Partnership" schemes in the public sector.

On top of these appointments from outside parliament (using the totally undemocratic peerage system where necessary) Blair has admitted Paddy Ashdown and other top Liberal Democrats to the Cabinet Committee on proportional representation and constitutional reform.

The unions have not been invited to a single meeting with the new Prime Minister; the Cabinet spurned an invitation to the TUC's summer party. Not a single trade union leader has been appointed to a government body, task force or committee: the low pay commission is the exception but it is nominally independent and the minimum wage is to be set at a level effectively determined by big business.

The promise to grant the unions the right to recognition when 50% of

the workforce vote for it is now being delayed and diluted. Blair's message to the trade unions can be summed up in two words, the polite version of which would be: get lost. To reinforce this message the unions' left allies in the party, Diane Abbot and Jeremy Corbyn, have been purged from key select committees on the Treasury and on Social Security respectively.

The Uxbridge by-election revealed that Blair is opening another battle front, this time against the rights of party members. The candidate who came close to defeating the sitting Tory at the general election was David Williams: a former aide to Cardinal Basil Hume, the head of Britain's Roman Catholic church. He was deemed unsuitable by Blair and was removed from the short-list by the national leadership. A Blairite candidate was imposed, against the will of virtually the entire local party, with Blair announcing:

"What matters is we have somebody who is thoroughly New Labour and is a supporter of mine."

David Williams was not a left winger. But with Blair planning to give the national leadership the right to veto all candidates - taking away the right of the local party to have its say - this was clearly a dry run. The result was a by election strike by local party workers and an improved performance by the victorious Tories.

This defeat was less important to Blair than the blow struck against party democracy and for his autocratic rule.



Mandelson manoeuvres to marginalise the left while the unions play for time

And it is a blow being followed through by the biggest battering party democracy has received since the witch-hunts of the 1980s - the Partnership into Power (PiP) proposals.

These are not mere organisational changes. They are dictated by New Labour's plans to attack the working class. Already we are seeing the fruits of Labour's commitment to Tory spending targets:

- a crisis looming in the NHS that will dwarf its last big cash crisis in 1987;
- the planned abolition of free education;
- a welfare-to-work system that will be a weapon against the unemployed not a benefit to them;

■ attacks on the unions by firms like British Airways to encourage "competitiveness" and with Labour firmly on the side of the bosses in such conflicts;

■ new rounds of privatisation under the guise of the Private Finance Initiative.

The list of Labour's plans for attacking the working class is growing day by day. And Blair wants to deprive the party of any means of opposing, obstructing or even speaking out against these plans.

That is the true meaning of the PiP that Blair, Mandelson and co are currently trying to sell to the members. Labour Party conference must throw it back in their faces. ■

Defeat 'Partnership into Power'!

AFTER DITCHING Clause Four many believed that Blair's next move would be to attack the trade union link with the party, removing the most direct form of working class pressure on the party and the government. While Blair retains his hostility to this link and will try to sever it in the future, it is not the first target.

Instead he has promised the unions a continuing place on the National Executive Committee in return for their support in attacking the constituency membership base and the left of the party. That is the essence of PiP. Both Unison and the TGWU bureaucracies have taken the bait and declared support for PiP. Others, like the CWU and, surprisingly, the AEEU, have rejected it.

The action plan for party structures proposed by the NEC - with only Dennis Skinner voting against - includes:

- Removing the right of CLPs and unions to submit resolutions to the annual conference.
- Setting up a smaller National Policy Forum to formulate policy on the basis of two-year rolling consultation procedures. Conference would then vote for or against policies proposed by the forum.
- Handing over most of the work of the Policy Forum and the NEC itself in formulating policy to Joint Policy Commissions, appointed by Blair.
- Transforming conference into a media specta-

cle rather than a policy-making forum.

□ Abolishing the women's section of the NEC and expanding the NEC to cover the parliamentary party, the European MPs and local government.

□ Taking away the right of the constituencies to nominate and vote MPs onto the NEC.

□ Reducing the constituency party section on the NEC from seven members to six.

□ Handing much of the power of the NEC to special sub-committees.

These measures have provoked alarm and anger in the ranks of the party. A record number of resolutions to the coming conference (107) have been submitted on PiP - 90% of them critical or calling for a delay in voting on these proposals. A campaign involving a wide range of activists from different sections of the party has been launched. *Tribune* went so far as to claim that if the proposals were carried through, then the party would cease to be the Labour Party:

"We are now in the middle of a process which may end in the break-up and re-alignment of the historic political parties, and this re-alignment comes from the top down and is non-inclusive." (*Tribune* 1 August)

Such alarm is justified, even if the left reformists who are feeling it are a little late in waking up to the reality of the Blairite counter-revolution. Blair is

out to destroy the structures of the party through which the labour movement - the members of the party and of the affiliated unions - can make its voice heard and its demands felt: the NEC and the conference.

These are the traditional centres of opposition to the leadership when it is in government and when it attacks the working class. They were the means by which the labour movement registered its opposition to Denis Healey's IMF inspired cuts in 1976. Blair is determined not to let this happen again. So power will be shifted to policy commissions and sub-committees over which he has control.

Take away the right of the local parties and unions to submit resolutions to conference; take away the NEC's role as a policy making body - and they cease to be such potential vehicles for opposition.

The CLP section of the NEC - through which left wing MPs like Dennis Skinner and Diane Abbot were elected - will only be open to constituency members, not MPs.

But Blairite MPs like Mandelson will be able to stand with support from a parliamentary party made up for the most part by Blair loyalists, many of whom will, in the future at least, owe their seats directly to the vetting procedures of the leadership.

The membership of the party will become the

stuff of Blair's dreams - passive worshippers of New Labour and its leader, voting yes or no in his occasional plebiscites, with no say in formulating policy, doing a little bit of leg work for the party once every five years. Activists and the left will be driven out of the party.

Then, with a neutered party, Blair will be in a strong position to launch his plan to cut the union link sometime in the future - by means of a referendum.

Ironically, Blair is looking to win on these proposals courtesy of the block vote of the unions, testimony to the treachery and short-sightedness of the bureaucrats at their head. But the scale of opposition in the party means that a Blair victory, pushed through quickly during "the honeymoon" as one of the architects of the proposals cynically put it, is not a foregone conclusion.

A fight within the union delegations currently supporting the proposals (Unison, the TGWU and the GMB) and the translation of the opposition evident at constituency level into votes at conference, combined with a strong showing for the Campaign Group slate in the elections for the NEC, could yet deliver a first real setback for Blair.

That is what every activist should be working towards in the run up to conference if it is not to be the last real conference the party ever stages. ■

International day of action marks

Two years of dockers' strike

SEPTEMBER SEES the second anniversary of the Liverpool dockers' strike. Despite the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) leadership's efforts to sell out the dispute, the workers themselves remain determined to carry on the fight for decent pay and conditions.

After two years of bitter and exhausting struggle, the Liverpool dockers, their families and supporters need to look at the balance sheet of the dispute so far. Otherwise, this lengthy dispute can lapse into being just another "worthy cause". It is vital to identify which tactics have taken the fight forward, which have failed and what needs to be done to win.

Solidarity work has always been crucial to the Liverpool dockers. At a national level, support groups have sprung up in many cities to ensure the workers are not starved into a settlement. The dockers' involvement in these groups has been essential in raising cash and taking the dispute into local unions and workplaces.

By far the most impressive solidarity has come from the dockers' international efforts to isolate Liverpool and prevent cargo in and out of the port docking elsewhere. Through a combination of international conferences and direct action at ports across the globe, the Liverpool lock-out has won international recognition and support.

On 8 September ports scattered around the globe in Australia, Canada, Japan and elsewhere will take industrial action in support of the Liverpool workers. South African dockworkers have stated that they will no longer handle goods headed for Liverpool, or the port of Sheerness, also run by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company (MDHC). If the TGWU had been forced to give official backing, the International Transport Federation bureaucrats would have no excuse for not call-

ing more extensive and effective action.

While international support has been the key element in building support and sustaining the dispute, if the fight is to go on to victory, there is a pressing need for the co-ordination of solidarity work in Britain. Unfortunately, the low attendance at the Liverpool solidarity conference on 26 July revealed a weakness in the fight for full re-instatement.

The TGWU biennial conference earlier in the summer illustrated the problems facing the dockers. Conference twice rejected the leadership's handling of the dispute and its attempts to impose a postal ballot. At the same time, however, delegates also threw out motions calling for the strike to be made official and for the TGWU to organise solidarity strike action from other TGWU members in the port.

Official support and with it solidarity action from other TGWU members remains crucial, however, since it can hit the MDHC at home. Of course, this means breaking the anti-union laws, which is why Bill Morris is so opposed. But the Liverpool dockers can go on to record a famous victory by uniting workers around the world and breaking the draconian British anti-union laws. They must use September to renew the fight for official backing and solidarity strike action in Britain. ■

**SECOND ANNIVERSARY DEMONSTRATION
IN SUPPORT OF THE LIVERPOOL DOCKERS
SATURDAY
27 SEPTEMBER
ASSEMBLE 11.00am,
MYRTLE PARADE
LIVERPOOL**



Dockers have mobilised solidarity across the labour movement

Oil giant turns on Greenpeace

Turn up the heat on BP

FORMER BP Chairman Lord David Simon's appointment as Minister for Competitiveness has been attacked from all quarters this summer. The Tories have pointed to his £2 million of shares held offshore, Greenpeace has highlighted BP's environmental policy in the North Sea and the left has exposed his record as an unscrupulous, union-bashing boss.

But the appalling human rights record of British Petroleum (BP) in Colombia since it started up operations in the Casanare region in 1991 probably stands out as the most damning of Simon's crimes. BP stands accused of collaborating with paramilitaries and death squads in Colombia.

A report from Richard Howitt (Labour MEP) last September, detailing the allegations, has been followed up this year by BBC Assignment and World in Action programmes which confirmed the allegations that BP has paid millions of dollars to the Colombian Army and has even made extra payments to the notorious 16th Brigade, a unit set up specifically to "guard installations".

In reality, this brigade's brief has been

to take the intelligence provided by BP and others on community activists in Casanare and harass and intimidate them. Two activists were killed in 1995. Many others have been kidnapped or raped.

In the face of these mounting charges, the Labour government has chosen to remain tight-lipped. Despite Robin Cook's talk of an "ethical" foreign policy, the Cabinet has stood by Lord Simon – the very man who was in charge of BP when it set up its Colombian operations and struck its deal with the Colombian military.

While Labour prefers to keep quiet about BP's track record, the oil giant has no qualms about hitting out with all its resources at its critics.

On 18 August, BP obtained a court order in London, which froze the assets of Greenpeace, the environmental group which

occupied the multinational's Stena Dee oil rig in the North Atlantic. By demanding £1.4 million in compensation BP hoped to bankrupt and silence one of the most prominent critics of its global record of environmental degradation.

But BP will not silence the opposition to either its record of environmental destruction or human rights abuses. Already, Green parties in over 70 countries have initiated an international boycott of BP products, especially its petrol stations, in support of Greenpeace in Britain.

This month will also see the arrival in Britain of Freddy Pulecio, European representative of the Colombian oilworkers' union USO, to undertake a campaign on behalf of the Coalition Against BP in Colombia. His tour will take in a number of trade union branches and

public meetings where Freddy will detail the collaboration of BP and other oil companies with the military, ensuring massive profits at the expense of trade union and other human rights for those who work at its installations or live in the surrounding areas.

At 2 p.m. on Sunday 28 September at Brighton, Freddy will lead a Coalition protest lobby outside the Labour Party Conference to demand that Blair, Cook and Short:

- mount a full public enquiry into the allegations against BP;
- force BP to grant full trade union rights to all employees working at its installations;
- stop BP's payments to the Colombian military;
- force BP to compensate the Colombian people for the damage to their communities;
- sack Lord Simon from the government.

For details of transport to the lobby and to contact Freddy Pulecio, if you would like him to speak to your organisation, please phone: 0171 357 0388. ■

PTC/CPSA

Stop the merger

DISILLUSION IN New Labour comes rather quickly when the government is your boss. Civil servants in both the main unions, the PTC and the CPSA, have found Labour's new ministers adopting not only the Tories' crippling budget limits but also many of their most hated policies. Even the restoration of trade union rights at GCHQ has been exposed as a sham, with a no strike clause written in.

Privatisation, Labour minister David Clarke says in the PTC's Journal, will be used as appropriate rather than dogmatically. Workers in the Benefits Agency Medical Service and Hackney and Islington JobCentres have swiftly found out what "appropriate" means in practice!

Social Security ministers, Harriet Harman and "Mad Frankie" Field, have recently praised their predecessor, Peter Lilley, and pressed ahead with his "Change Programme" which will cost up to 25,000 job losses.

In Wales, plans to shut 53 BA offices remain. The proposal to process all claims in remote (privatised) plants continues apace. This could lead to all London claimants' records being held in the Isle of Wight, making it impossible to challenge wrong payments.

Labour must know that civil servants will fight back against these attacks. PTC leader Clive Brooke's first job is, therefore, to make the civil service unions, the CPSA and PTC, safe for the employers. Both unions are holding Special Delegate Conferences (SDCs) on 13 September. On the agenda is one motion: to campaign for a "yes" vote in a ballot to merge the two unions on the basis of a new rule book; no amendments, no other motions. In short, merge on our terms or nothing.

The rulebook will make the new union one of the most undemocratic in British history.

- Conferences every two years, with the agenda dictated by the General Secretary and President.
- The right of the NEC to overturn conference decisions through membership plebiscites.
- Barry Reamsbottom, current CPSA top, to remain General Secretary for up to eight years.
- Postal ballots, which – on current form – will be accompanied by one-sided, dishonest propaganda, on all important issues. Goodbye to the membership meeting!

All changes to the new rules agreed by CPSA and PTC conferences in May have been ignored.

The new union will be controlled from top to bottom by unelected officials and an NEC which will be largely unaccountable. If agreed by the membership ballot which will follow directly after the SDCs, civil servants will find their new union unwilling or unable to support them in coming struggles against the Labour government. Democracy is not an optional extra for a fighting union: it is its lifeblood.

Many good trade unionists, however, still believe that a merged union – even an undemocratic one – is better than the status quo. They are wrong. The new union would bring clerical workers from the CPSA into the same union, as their managers in the PTC. A look at last year's two big strikes in the Employment Service and the BA shows why this is dangerous. In both disputes, PTC managers voted against action. Some crossed picket lines and even victimised militants.

In the PTC, where managers and workers share membership, it is common for the employers to spy on meetings, report on who the "ringleaders" are, and even to disrupt meetings with the bosses' propaganda and threats. That's why civil service activists should fight for the biggest possible "no" vote against the undemocratic rule book and the merger, no matter what the SDCs decide, while seeking to build fighting unity in the workplace against the attacks New Labour continues to unleash. ■

Marxists, referendums and devolution

Scotland: yes to a no to Blair's white

As the devolution referendum bandwagons swing into gear we analyse the class issues at stake in the ballots in Scotland and Wales

THE OUTCOME of the Scottish referendum on devolution appears to be a foregone conclusion. Every sampling of public opinion since the Labour government unveiled its devolution proposals in July has indicated a decisive majority in favour of a Scottish Parliament.

Among those under 35, nearly 80% have said they will vote "yes". More than 50% of all voters say they will vote yes to a parliament exercising tax-raising powers. The White Paper *Scotland's Parliament* outstripped the sales of even the most popular fiction at major bookshops in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

The pro-unionist opposition to Labour's proposals is feeble. The public face of the anti-devolution "Think Twice" campaign has consisted mainly of clapped-out Tory MPs who lost their seats in the 1 May purge. The nominal leader of the "no" campaign, barrister Donald Findlay, is left to lament the passing of "God Save the Queen" as the anthem of the nation's rugby team.

Right wing Labour MP Tam Dalyell has joined in with the Tories declaring that an Edinburgh parliament will be just a stepping stone on an inexorable path to full independence. He would rather deny the Scottish people their democratic rights than risk his precious United Kingdom.

The bosses have concentrated their fire on the proposed tax raising powers. The employers in Scotland are practical people. They have no objection to a national

parliament providing it has no powers to hit their profits.

The director of Confederation of British Industry (Scotland), Iain McMillan, announced that a parliament in Edinburgh could create a high-tax region, inhospitable to capitalist investors. Bob Reid, former director of Shell and head of the Bank of Scotland, weighed in with a call for a "no" vote on tax raising powers.

In reality they have little to fear if the White Paper passes into law. The parliament will only have the power to vary the level of income tax by 3p in the pound. Taxes on corporations and savings and dividends would lie beyond its legal powers. If the power was exercised in full it would deliver the princely sum of £450 million a year. A 10% increase in National Health spending in Scotland would swallow the lot!

The shackles imposed on the new parliament do not stop there. The White Paper makes clear that the UK parliament will "reserve" a whole series of powers to itself where the writ of a Scottish parliament will not run.

Employment legislation is one such area. Blair has no intention of allowing the Scottish parliament to interfere with the anti-union laws, or take any measures effecting employment rights or equal opportunities.

Likewise all matters involving Social Security and benefits are "reserved" for Westminster to decide on. And of course

UK defence and "national security" remains out of bounds.

The bosses have no intention of letting any regional or national assembly get its hands on the real levers of power in capitalist society or the armed bodies crucial to its defence.

While Workers Power campaigns for a double "yes" vote in the referendum we also fight for a complete rejection of the White Paper and for an assembly with sovereign powers.

The will of the Scottish people for some form of national assembly has been clearly demonstrated since the referendum in 1979. This desire increased dramatically as a result of 18 years of Tory government attacks on jobs, services and the powers of the democratically elected local Labour authorities in Scotland.

Revolutionaries support the right to self-determination in Scotland up to and including separation. At present the Scottish people do not want separation, they want an assembly. It is up to the Scottish people themselves to decide what powers their parliament should have, not Blair in Westminster.

So long as the democratic will of the Scottish people is thwarted, the nationalist big-mouths of the SNP will continue to find a hearing for their argument that the enemy is the union with England rather than the capitalist system itself.

A shackled Scottish parliament which proves powerless, incapable of doing any-



Donald Dewar, Scottish Secretary

thing about the shameful disparity in Scotland between the poverty of the many and the riches of a few, will play into the hands of the nationalists. They will try and convince the workers that an independent Scotland is the answer.

The failure of a Scottish parliament to meet the democratic aspirations of the

nation's people and to provide the resources to repair the damage inflicted by 18 years of Tory rule could well fuel support for nationalism.

For that reason, the real battle begins after the referendum. Many Scottish workers support the creation of an Edinburgh parliament not out of a commit-

Welsh talking shop - No thanks!

THE REFERENDUM in Wales will be held a week after the one in Scotland. Clearly the government hopes a bandwagon effect will convince the Welsh voters.

Labour are right to be worried. Workers in Wales have never been convinced about the merits of devolution. In 1979 the Welsh people overwhelmingly rejected the idea of a Welsh Assembly by a majority of 4 to 1.

What is remarkable is that the people of Wales remain sceptical about Labour's plans despite all the main political parties and trade unions being in the "yes" camp. In opinion polls "don't know" still outnumber those intending to vote yes or no. The outcome of the referendum is by no means certain even though Labour, the Lib Dems, Plaid Cymru are campaigning for Blair's toothless assembly.

The *Western Mail*, Wales' national newspaper, has run a relentless "Yes" campaign. Even Ryan Giggs has been called up to bang the national drum - which is surprising since he can hardly be bothered to play for the national team!

Meanwhile, the "Just Say No" campaign is staffed by the hated Tories and bankrolled by millionaire and Jersey tax exile, Julian Hodge. But there is still opposition within the Labour Party in Wales despite New Labour's threats of sanctions against anyone stepping out of line. Blaenau Gwent MP,

Llew Smith, is the only one of several Labour dissidents to dare publicly to oppose the Assembly.

Workers Power in Wales has been arguing against a Welsh Assembly. It is clearly a diversion from the real problems facing the working people here. These are the same problems that face workers in England and Scotland.

Unemployment is a scourge in the valleys where the closed coal mines disfigure the landscape and the youth have little hope of a job. Public services have been slashed under the Tories, schools are under-resourced, there are some of the most run-down housing estates in Europe and the average wage is only 84% of the UK average.

The assembly on offer has even fewer powers than those being offered to Scotland. It has no tax raising powers at all and therefore will only be able to shift funds around, to rob Peter to pay Paul. Or as the White Paper, *A Voice For Wales*, puts it:

"The Assembly will need to balance the requirements of the NHS against the need to fund local authority services such as education, social services and maintenance of local roads..."

Much has been made by Labour of the increase in democracy the Assembly entails, how the Tory quangos would be abolished and put under democratic control. The reality is less rosy. Yes, the Assembly will be given some powers to

take over, merge or transfer quangos to local authorities. But its hands will be tied with regard to TECs and NHS trusts. And a new super-quango is being created - the Economic Development Agency for Wales.

If Labour wanted to increase democracy in Wales it could abolish all quangos overnight. It could return the control of local services like colleges, hospitals, the fire service back to the local authorities which could establish democratic control over them involving representatives of the workers, users and the community.

It could restore the powers taken away from local authorities by the Tories, it could abolish capping and allow democratically elected local authorities new powers to raise taxes - a steeply progressive local income tax and a wealth tax, for example. This would address the issue of democracy in Wales far more directly and would allow the resources to be raised from the businesses and the rich to really address the problems in Wales.

Instead new Labour wants to spend £12 to £17 million setting up an assembly and another extra £20 million a year paying the salaries of the elected members and its hangers on. And this for what is largely a talking shop. No wonder there is resentment in Wales at what is seen as yet more jobs being created for the boys in the Welsh Labour Party.

A recent conference "Socialists and the Assembly" brought together various left papers and organisations, like Socialist Outlook, the Socialist Party, the SWP who want to vote yes but do not like Blair's Assembly. All of these centrists think they will benefit by pandering to nationalist sentiments in Wales. Quite the opposite.

They agree that the assembly on offer is nothing more than a toothless talking shop, but argue that once achieved, it can be "strengthened". But why should socialists be in favour of a Welsh Assembly?

Unlike Scotland the only clear expression of Welsh opinion, 1979, voted overwhelmingly against. Why should so-called revolutionaries tail Blair when he is handing a weapon to the nationalists of Plaid? When the Assembly does nothing for the Welsh workers, they will say, there you are, we need independence.

Another argument heard at the conference involved the following schema: Wales will consistently elect a more left wing assembly than Britain as a whole. It will become the "first line of defence against a right wing government at Westminster", it will then be the major site for confrontation, heightening the class struggle in Wales.

But this schema ignores reality. Wales has a strong Labourite tradition, but far from that making the Wales Labour Party more left wing it has produced some of

the most corrupt and fawning Blairite MPs and councils in Britain. Were Welsh councils in the forefront of the fight against rate-capping and the poll tax? No.

Without a fighting working class movement the Assembly will be no different to any other Labour council that has done the Tories' bidding. Its members will turn around and say, "but we're hemmed in by central government budgets... if we go illegal we risk having the Auditor for Wales come in."

What the centrists and reformists really mean is that they want to harness Welsh national sentiment against Westminster. Instead of putting forward a perspective of uniting working class struggles across Britain against a Labour or Tory anti-working class government, they want to play the nationalist card.

The SWP does the same in its own crude and economic way. If the growth of nationalism and the demands for independent parliaments breaks up the British state, they say, this can only be a good thing. It will weaken the British state. And the working class? Take a look at the breakup of Yugoslavia, comrades of the SWP, and you might realise that not every break up of a state has progressive consequences.

The growth of nationalism in the working class has to be fought. We do not do it by denying national or democratic rights but we certainly do not do it by raising the nationalist flag ourselves. ■

n assembly, paper

ment to some abstract concept of nationhood, but because they see it as a means of defending what remains of the welfare state and pursuing their own class demands. The Labour leadership, however, has a very different vision of a Scottish parliament.

The Blair government hopes that the Edinburgh legislature will actually support its drive to slash public expenditure still further.

The White Paper promises the new parliament the powers to cap local authorities' council taxes. It threatens to reduce support from the UK budget if local coun-

cils "exceed targets for public expenditure" and are not checked by the new parliament. Neither do the proposals include any guarantee that local authorities will retain even their existing responsibilities.

In March this year most Labour-controlled authorities in Scotland carried out swingeing cuts packages, provoking widespread resistance. Since the 1 May election Edinburgh City Council has announced a minimum of 35 compulsory redundancies.

A key immediate task facing socialists in Scotland is to build effective opposition to such cuts. A Scottish parliament

that does not go beyond its currently proposed pathetic powers and impose massive wealth and corporation taxes to fund services will not be worth a light.

But this is not a fight that should be waged just by Scottish socialists in isolation. Blair's commitment to Tory spending limits, his refusal to find the money needed for education, health and the unemployed by taxing the rich can only be broken by a united working class struggle throughout Britain.

The task of socialists is to unite these struggles and prevent them being divided along national lines. ■

Scottish Militant Labour:

Cheerleaders for nationalism

WHEN MILITANT Labour became the Socialist Party in England and Wales, its organisation in Scotland became "Scottish Militant Labour" (SML). It now produces its own paper *Scottish Socialist Voice*. These changes are a reflection of the SML's increasing accommodation to Scottish nationalism.

Like Workers Power the SML calls for a double "yes" vote in the referendum. It also points out the weaknesses of the White Paper's proposed Scottish parliament. But the similarity ends there.

SML believes that the struggle around the Scottish parliament will lead to a growth in nationalist sentiment. Instead of adopting the Leninist method of developing a programme and tactics to undermine nationalism they become its cheerleaders.

Leading member Phil Stott recently outlined SML's opportunist method in an article in the *Weekly Worker* where he emphasised the importance of Marxists being able to "judge the mood of the class and to tailor our programmatic demands to tactics required by the situation".

Marxists do not follow this method. We start from the position that a united working class in Britain is an enormous gain in the struggle to overthrow the British capitalist state. Any developments that split the workers along national lines, that lead them to line up with their "own" bourgeoisie against "English oppression" will be a blow to this unity and to the prospects for revolution.

We certainly do not join with the bourgeoisie in denying genuine democratic rights. That is why revolutionaries argue for the right of the Scottish people for self-determination, up to and including

separation; why we fight against any restriction on the powers of a Scottish assembly. That is why Workers Power has argued in favour of a referendum on the question of independence. The Scottish workers should have the right to decide on the question.

But at the same time Marxists are absolutely opposed to splitting away from Britain. In any such referendum, or within the convened Scottish parliament revolutionaries would oppose any moves to separate from Britain. We fight the SNP tooth and nail. We expose the lie the nationalists peddle that somehow the real reason for the Scottish workers' poverty and unemployment is

oppression by England. We fight for the greatest unity of our class, and direct Scottish, English and Welsh workers to the real cause of their misery - British capitalism.

SML takes the opposite approach. It supports the idea that the Scots are an oppressed people and that therefore, in Stott's words:

"The nationalism of the oppressed and the oppressor are different."

This is rubbish in the case of Scotland. Yes, the Scottish small farmers and workers were oppressed by their own ruling class and then jointly by a merged Scottish and English bourgeoisie. But after this, Scotland was an equal partner in the development of the British imperialist state.

Scottish regiments fought alongside the English ones to establish Britain's colonial rule in Ireland, India, Africa and everywhere else. The Scottish flag, the

Saltire, is as drenched in the blood of the oppressed as the Union Jack.

The SML has a schema for the Scottish class struggle that is totally focused around the new parliament. They believe that, having failed to deliver "fundamental change", disillusionment with it will lead to a realisation that "more radical change and more far reaching demands are needed - social economic and in terms of the national question".

They believe that an "almighty movement" will develop that will push towards nationalism and independence. Like classic centrists they want to take on the coloration of the nationalists to lead it, but give it a socialist gloss.

Like all schemas - such as the old Militant schema that the rising class struggle would inevitably lead to a mass Marxist wing of the Labour Party - this is a one-sided, rigid and false understanding of potential developments in Scotland. It is just as likely that a new Labour-dominated Scottish parliament will indeed take the sting out of the democratic question in Scotland.

The parliament might well become the target of struggles by local councils and trade unions to defend services as it attempts to restrict public spending. Or it might end up being seen as just another obstacle to the real needs and struggles to defend working class communities.

Scottish Militant Labour are treading a well-worn path in trying to ride the tiger of nationalism by accommodating to it. But there is a danger.

When Militant tailed black nationalism, setting up the Panther UK organisation in the early 1990s, the majority of members ended up splitting with Militant to set up an independent, really black separatist organisation.

There is a danger that, as SML becomes ever more adapted to Scottish nationalist radicalism, there will be those who want to go the whole hog, to become "consistent nationalists", with a socialist complexion, on the "left" wing of the SNP. ■

X

The A to Z of Marxism

is for

Malcolm X

BY COLIN LLOYD

MALCOLM LITTLE was born in the US mid-west in 1925. By the time of his assassination on 21 February 1965, Malcolm had become an international symbol of black resistance and, along with Martin Luther King, its most eloquent spokesperson.

The USA at Malcolm's birth was a society marked by murderous racism. When Malcolm was four, the family house was firebombed by racists as police stood by. As Malcolm grew up, the opportunities offered to young black men were poverty or crime.

Discarded by the education system, Malcolm drifted between dead-end jobs, ending up as a petty crook: pimping, dealing drugs, running the "numbers racket". In 1945 he was sentenced to 10 years for burglary.

Only 20, his life was stuck in the same grooves as those of millions of victims of racism. But in prison, something changed. In 1948 he joined the Nation of Islam, the black nationalist group led by Elijah Muhammed. Rejecting the surname given to his forefathers by white slave-owners, Malcolm Little became Malcolm X.

He rapidly rose to become second in command of the Nation of Islam by the mid-1950s, just as the push for black civil rights in the US became a mass movement under the leadership of Martin Luther King. King's strategy was dominated by pacifism and a reliance on reforms delivered by a white capitalist government. The Nation of Islam rejected both.

It was nationalist and separatist, teaching that white people were inevitably racist and arguing that, instead of reforming the present system, black people should separate and form their own nation. Although the Nation grew into a mass force in the late 1950s it abstained from the civil rights struggle. Muhammed vetoed any involvement in the civil rights demonstrations, even as King was preparing to mobilise 250,000 in what Malcolm derided as the "Farce on Washington" in 1963.

Caught between the demands of radicalised black people and its own sectarian utopianism, the Nation of Islam was paralysed. Meanwhile, Malcolm had become aware of Elijah Muhammed's moral hypocrisy and personal corruption. Inevitably, Muhammed drove Malcolm out.

Malcolm initially sought to refocus the Nation's programme by activating a fight on American soil for real improvements for black people. That led him directly towards the problem of how 22 million US blacks could relate to the majority white population and to the social classes within it.

There is a famous scene, depicted in Spike Lee's film, where Malcolm tells an earnest white middle class woman that she can do "nothing" to help the black struggle. A meeting with a white Algerian revolutionary forced Malcolm to reconsider:

"He showed me where I was alienating people who were true revolutionaries, dedicated to overthrowing the system of exploitation that exists on this earth by any means necessary. So I had to do a lot of thinking and reappraising of my definition of black nationalism. Can we sum up the solution to the problem

confronting our people as black nationalism? And if you've noticed, I haven't been using the expression for several months." (16 January 1963)

Despite this, Malcolm remained an organisational black separatist. He collaborated with elements of the left who were organised in integrated organisations, but his project remained to build the black-only Organisation of Afro-American Unity. Its statement of aims published between mid-1964 and early 1965 contain the most developed expressions of Malcolm X's politics.

Malcolm made a number of overtly anti-capitalist statements in this period, for example:

"There can be no freedom for our people under capitalism, and further you can't operate a capitalist system unless you are vulturistic; you have to suck someone else's blood to be a capitalist."

But Malcolm's programme was not in itself anti-capitalist. He did not locate the origins of black oppression in the class system. His solutions consisted of a series of reforms with militant self-organised tactics: for example a rent strike to win a housing self-improvement programme, or the establishment of a pool of black technicians to develop Africa while providing jobs for black Americans.

Malcolm, however, rejected a peaceful reformist road to black liberation. His strength, and later popularity with generations of black youth, derived from his belief that black freedom must be won "by any means necessary". Specifically, Malcolm X advocated organised black self-defence against racist attack and - unlike the Nation of Islam then or now - he prepared to carry it out in practice.

He was gunned down by Nation supporters, with FBI collusion before the climax of the black struggle for civil rights in the late 1960s. Since his death everybody has claimed Malcolm as their own: various branches of black nationalism, centrist Trotskyism and even, hypocritically, the Nation of Islam itself.

There is no need to dress up Malcolm X as a Marxist. He was a heroic fighter for black liberation who had started his evolution from nationalism and separatism to socialism but was brutally murdered before its completion.

Malcolm's life and political development illustrates that exploitation and oppression lead to resistance; that struggle changes the ideas of the masses, and sometimes even of their leaders; that inadequate explanations and strategies can give way to revolutionary socialist ones.

It also tells us that black nationalism can remain pure only in theory: in the real world it has to evolve a strategy to deal with the fact that there are black bosses and white workers, black enemies of liberation and white allies for it. Once it confronts that problem, black nationalism has to choose between the reformist strateg and a revolutionary working class answer: the overthrow of the capitalist system that nurtures the roots of racism. ■

★ For more on Malcolm X read *Socialism and Black Liberation* a Workers Power publication price £1 available from the address on page 3.



USA: Teamster strike victory

G.R. McColl describes how striking American workers wiped the floor with their bosses and put the US labour movement...

Back on the road again

"THIS IS not just a Teamster victory – this is a victory for all working people," declared Ron Carey, the president of the 1.4 million-strong International Brotherhood of Teamsters in the early hours of 19 August. Carey had just unveiled the deal that marked the end of a 15-day national strike against the freight transport giant, United Parcel Service (UPS).

The dispute sent a shudder down the vulnerable spine of US capitalism. UPS operations, which handle over 5% of the country's goods and services, ground to a halt. The bosses pleaded with the Clinton administration to intervene against the strike through the provisions of the anti-union Taft-Hartley Act.

The fact that this Act – which can force strikers to return to work for a 90 day "cooling off" period – was not used is testimony that militant workers' action can render the most draconian laws inoperable.

The agreement reached with UPS bosses realised all of the union's key demands. The company conceded on wages, pensions, subcontracting and – crucially – over the upgrading of some 10,000 badly-paid, part-time jobs to full-time pay and status. The strike not only defended past gains around union control of the pension fund, but forced the company to steer away from its regime of increasing casualisation.

Given the battering that the organised working class has suffered in the USA over the past 20 years, the deal looks like a remarkable win. Media pundits have suggested that the outcome has finally exorcised "the PATCO factor" – a reference to the Reagan administration's smashing of the air traffic controllers' union PATCO in 1981, which saw 11,500 union members permanently sacked and shop stewards led away in leg irons.

The UPS strike began on 4 August; more than 185,000 union members (out of 302,000 UPS employees in the USA) walked out shortly after the expiry of the previous four-year contract. For the first time in living memory, US opinion polls showed majority support for a national strike. This partly reflected accumulating bitterness at the reality of



US workers defy picket busting police to secure victory

stagnating or declining real wages amid a supposed economic boom – as well as mounting concern among workers generally at job insecurity.

But the sympathy with the striking Teamsters also registered the success of a long-running union campaign among UPS members and in the media around the themes of corporate greed and the threat to living standards posed by the increasing exploitation of part-timers. From the outset of negotiations, union officials sent out a clear message. In the words of George Cashman, president of a Teamsters' local:

"We told people, that regardless of what UPS might be saying, if after a time at the bargaining table we don't get what we're looking for, we'll be prepared to pay strike benefits and stay out."

The reforming bureaucrats, who took over the union from the Mafia-linked leadership of the 1960s onwards, orchestrated five months of meetings in car parks, petitioning and a variety of local activities. The aim was to build unity within a workforce that UPS management had sought to divide between full-timers and so-called part-timers who, like striker Rachel Howard, had "logged 60 or 65 hours a week for part-time wages" for eight years!

The strike won more than sympathy from other unionised workers. Within UPS itself, the company's airline pilots made it plain from the second day of the strike that they would respect Teamsters' picket lines. Even the national leadership of the AFL-CIO (the American TUC) announced that it would

make huge loans to the Teamsters to ensure that the union could pay \$10 (£6.5) million a week in strike pay to its UPS members.

In the most dramatic show of solidarity with the fight, hundreds of members of the CWA telecoms union broke through police lines at a UPS depot in New York City to join 40 Teamsters and went on to stop all scab vehicles for hours. Elsewhere on the East Coast, both Massachusetts and Rhode Island strikers fought local cops and halted scab freight. Picket lines near Boston, Oakland, California and several other cities saw mass arrests.

Carey and his executive distanced themselves from such battles, but did pay a number of symbolic visits to picket lines. The clashes at UPS depots were,

after all, only a reminder of the Teamsters' birth as a union steeped in bloody confrontation against cops, scabs and the bosses' hired thugs.

The Teamsters' leaders had recognised that action – albeit tightly controlled – was required to begin to turn the tide of a long-running bosses' offensive which has seriously eroded union membership and, with it, the bureaucracy's own coffers. Their campaign around UPS, for all its serious political limits, has put the recent performance of their counterparts in the British union bureaucracy to shame.

The strike's swift victory also showed that determined all-out, indefinite action is an effective weapon against a supposedly all-powerful employer.

The Teamsters' win at UPS may not yet mark a decisive turning point in the revival of the organised working class in the US but it suggests that is the direction we are heading in.

And with top bosses at UPS, in the wake of their cave-in to union demands, threatening up to 15,000 redundancies to compensate for an estimated \$600 (£385) million in lost revenue and diminished market share, there may yet be further battles within this company sooner rather than later.

The company's chief executive has already announced 4,500 lay-offs as the supposed price of the deal. At present, the bosses' exact intentions are not clear, but their threats need to be met by a determined campaign to build on the Teamsters' victory so that any new attacks are met with the same sort of decisive action that won victory this time around.

Union militants in the Teamsters and elsewhere need to build on the rank and file activism of the strike to defend the recently won gains. The aim of such activists must be more than a short-term victory in a battle with the bosses at UPS, as heartening as such a victory is. It will require a decisive fight for the abolition of the cut-throat system of capitalist production and distribution for private profit which regularly places the livelihoods, health and safety of thousands of workers at UPS and its competitors at risk. ■

As bureaucrats sprint towards capitalism

Two million workers strike in China

A WAVE of strikes and demonstrations has rocked China since the beginning of the year. In July, in the province of Sichuan, the struggle reached a new peak. According to reports monitored in Hong Kong, over 100,000 workers were involved in the protests, which began in late June in response to the closure of three state-owned textile plants in the city of Mianyang.

The workers, who occupied buildings and erected barricades, were finally dispersed by the brutal intervention of the paramilitary "People's Armed Police". Over 100 strikers were seriously injured and key organisers were arrested.

The immediate cause of this explosion was the failure of city officials to turn up to a meeting to explain what measures were to be taken to support workers made redundant by factory closures. But it is the closures themselves that underline what is happening in China.

Strikes and workers' demonstrations are no longer a rarity in China, but until this year the majority were in privately owned or "Foreign Invested" enterprises. In most cases, conflicts arose

over the sweatshop conditions.

This year, however, there has been a major change. In April, the Prime Minister, Li Peng, reported to the Central Committee of the Communist Party that there had been rallies, demonstrations and disturbances as a result of sackings and threatened redundancies in 230 cities in the previous three months. He said that an estimated 2.4 million people were involved, and that there had been hundreds of serious injuries and 42 deaths.

This vast tide of strikes and protests is obviously more than a spontaneous protest at harsh conditions. Redundancies and sackings on this scale show a fundamental change of strategy by the government because, as in Mianyang, the factories being closed are state owned.

As early as 1984 the most radical supporters of market reforms in China were arguing that the state owned industries needed to lose some 20-30% of their employees to become financially viable. However, as long as the centrally-planned state economy accounted for virtually all of the industrial sector it was impossible for these champions of capitalist restoration to get their way.

The last decade has dramatically changed the balance of forces. The market reforms, which began in the countryside but were then extended into light industry, have created an increasingly important class of capitalist entrepreneurs. At the same time, managers within state industry have been encouraged to mimic their capitalist counterparts by a combination of greater enterprise autonomy and lucrative personal bonuses.

Until 1989, the greed and ambitions of these would-be capitalists were kept in check by their fear of the Communist Party's bureaucratic leadership, whose power rested on state ownership of the core of the economy, and their fear of the huge industrial working class whose efforts kept that heart beating.

In Tiananmen Square, in June 1989, the bureaucrats rightly recognised that their grip on China was being challenged, even by the innocuous petitions of the students, because the workers of the capital's industrial plants were beginning to make common cause with the opponents of bureaucratic dictatorship. In the aftermath of the Tiananmen massacre, workers throughout

China rose in spontaneous protest and were suppressed as bloodily as the students of Beijing. In the short term, this strengthened the most conservative wing of the bureaucracy but ultimately their new power was to prove ephemeral.

Having struck out against the working class, the inevitable result of the two years of oppression which followed Tiananmen was to strengthen the social forces of capitalist restoration both within the regime itself and within China as a whole. This in turn further eroded the social base of the bureaucracy which had its origins and expansion in the state sector.

Since then, the principal concern of the Beijing leadership has been to find a way of reconciling its own privileged social position with the dismantling of the state owned economy upon which that position was previously based. Their solution is to transform the core enterprises of the state sector into autonomous, but state owned, capitalist trusts, modelled on the giant industrial conglomerates such as Mitsubishi in Japan.

These new corporations will own all the assets of their industries and the

bureaucrats who manage them will have a legal obligation to, "maximise their assets" in the state's interest. Needless to say they will also be entitled to a serious slice of those assets in recognition of their service to the state.

The other side of this coin is that smaller enterprises and industries that cannot compete internationally are to be taken over, sold off as private enterprises or co-operatives or simply closed down as unviable.

That is the logic that led to the closure of the textile mills of Mianyang.

But the mills of Mianyang didn't simply stop working, they were closed in the face of mass working class opposition. Like millions of others, the workers of Mianyang refused to accept the logic of the market and fought to defend their livelihoods and their families.

In the coming period it will be struggles like theirs which will forge a new working class movement able to unite both the new workers of the private sector and those of the state sector. It is within that movement that a new revolutionary leadership must be created, committed to the overthrow of capitalist and bureaucrat alike. ■

Kenya

Workers and students rock Moi

IN JULY battles raged for a week at Nairobi University. Police, armed with tear gas and plastic bullets, fought pro-democracy students. As the demonstrations grew, the students were joined by young workers, unemployed and even middle class businessmen and women. Towns and cities throughout Kenya were soon witnessing similar scenes.

The world was shocked at the scale of the repression on 7 July when at least seven protesters, including two students, were killed and hundreds injured throughout the country. Television pictures of Kenyan police storming the Cathedral in Nairobi and bludgeoning protesters and priests unmercifully led even the IMF to cancel talks and, along with the World Bank, suspend over £100 million in aid.

At the end of July the opposition umbrella group, the National Convention Assembly (NCA), again called for mass actions throughout Kenya. Demonstrators in the second city of Mombasa shouted for the downfall of "Moibutu", a clear reference to the overthrown Zairian dictator, Mobutu, a friend and ally of Kenyan president, Daniel arap Moi.

On 8 August a successful one-day general strike in support of democracy took place despite the Labour minister Philip Masinge banning the strike. Throughout August demonstrators

again took to the streets to do battle with riot police and government troops. In Mombasa the police headquarters was attacked and weapons taken.

The immediate cause of the political crisis wracking Kenya is the elections due to take place later this year. The ruling Kenya African National Union (Kanu) has just pulled out of constitutional talks with the NCA, which has been demanding constitutional reforms since its campaign started in June.

The reforms demanded by the opposition would strike at the very heart of the monopoly of political power held by Kanu since independence. At the head of Kanu and the Kenyan state sits Daniel arap Moi, 19 years in power and standing again for a fifth term as president.

Like Mobutu, Moi and his followers in Kanu were supported by the West throughout the Cold War. The Western "democracies" turned a blind eye to the endemic corruption and lack of real democracy in Kenya, in return for Moi's support against what were viewed as Stalinist-friendly regimes and movements in the region. For all the West's crocodile tears over the recent heavy-handed repression, the safeguarding of profits and imperialist spheres of influence outweighed any human rights considerations throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

The fall of the Berlin Wall changed all that. The collapse of the Stalinist one-party states in Eastern Europe inspired pro-democracy movements throughout Africa. Corrupt dictatorships no longer had the automatic support of Washington which now wanted free market liberalisation. Kenya held multi-party elections in 1992 but these took place in an atmosphere of state violence and intimidation.

The NCA sees these elections as invalid and is campaigning for an end to the Government's control over the media and the abolition of the rigged electoral laws which make it almost impossible for the opposition to oust Moi at the polls.

The NCA was formed in June this year by a coalition of various opposition parties, journalists and churches. In the violent elections of 1992 the opposition was so split that Moi won a convincing majority. This time around the NCA hopes to be more united in its opposition to Kanu, though political differences have opened up on how to deal with Moi.

While the masses have taken to the streets the leaders of the NCA have been pressing the government for talks over constitutional reforms. Moi replied by saying that there is not enough time to have reforms before this year's elections.

James Orengo, a leading member of the NCA, replied, "without reforms we are not going to have elections". This was taken up by Khalid Balala, leader of the Islamic Party of Kenya who called for the burning of electoral cards. The support of Kenya's Muslims was crucial to Moi's victory in 1992. Paul Muite, an opposition MP, has called for mass action to overthrow Moi.

However, there is a more moderate wing of the opposition such as Richard Leakey, the famous anthropologist and leader of Safina, who has been quoted as saying that he believes that Moi will change and agree to constitutional reforms. In this, Leakey, is no doubt echoing the hopes of the IMF and the World Bank, which want peaceful democratic reform which safeguards imperialist property.

Kenya was an important area of eco-

nomic stability for imperialist exploitation in the 1960s and 1970s, but its per capita GDP has stagnated since the mid-1980s. Kenya is now the seventeenth poorest country in the world. But even this masks the plight of workers and poor peasants, whose incomes have fallen by 3% since 1991.

More recently, Kenya's middle classes have also become alienated from the regime, as 47% of the country's income is enjoyed by just 10% of the population, as corruption and bribery dominate all financial dealings, especially state contracts, and as inflation rapidly approaches 20%, eating up savings and devaluing investments.

The result of this is not only the masses on the streets. Seeing that corruption and inefficiency in the economy, especially in the power sector, is making Kenya inhospitable to multinationals, the imperialists have also been putting pressure on Moi to reform the economy.

At the end of July the IMF suspended a £130 million loan to Kenya because the Government failed to reduce corruption and reform the energy sector. Even in the capital, Nairobi, only the wealthiest areas have reliable electricity supplies.

The opposition has so far looked to the IMF to help it unseat Moi. Yet the very same pressures used by the imperialists upon the Moi regime would be magnified many times if a new government committed itself to carrying out policies to help the poor of Kenya. The IMF and the imperialists are only interested in the most efficient exploitation of Kenya's resources



Kenyan president, Daniel arap Moi

including its workers and peasants.

The urban and rural workers must not rely upon the imperialists, the people who have propped up Moi and his party for decades. They must struggle to break their hold over the Kenyan economy. While the struggle for democracy is an urgent task, the question of who controls the wealth of the country and how a real onslaught can be made on the poverty of the masses must be central to this fight.

The successful general strike of 8 August shows that Kenya's workers are willing to throw their weight behind the struggle to overthrow Moi. But to bring this struggle to a successful conclusion, the working class must beware of its middle class allies in the NCA, who will side with the multinationals and compromise with the Kanu regime rather than see capitalism threatened.

In an alliance with the poor peasants, Kenyan workers need to forge their own leadership and build a revolutionary party that can settle accounts both with Moi and his capitalist system. ■



Kenyan striker on the run from state oppression

The Kenya African National Union

THE KENYA African National Union (Kanu) has been the ruling party since independence from Britain in December 1963. Kenya was one of the African colonies that saw an armed struggle develop against British colonialism. In the 1950s an uprising of landless labourers known as the Mau Mau took place.

This uprising occurred in the Highland areas of Kenya among the Kikuyu people (the largest ethnic group in Kenya accounting for 21% of the population). The land in the Highlands was more suitable for the Europeans in terms of climate and soil and so the Kikuyu bore the brunt of the European colonisation. Peasants were forced off the large plantations by the British, land they either originally owned or had won the right to cultivate prior to the World War II.

The authorities responded to Mau Mau attacks on the British with savage repression, fortifying villages to prevent guerrillas from using them and using arbitrary powers of detention,

including the outlawing of the so-called Mau Mau oath. By the end of the 1950s, the Mau Mau uprising had been put down.

Kanu was formed mainly from the Kikuyu group and claimed allegiance to the inheritance of the Mau Mau. Its leader Jomo Kenyatta had been imprisoned by the British during the rebellion. Kanu also drew support from the Loas (another ethnic group forming about 13% of Kenya's 25 million people). However, from an early period Kanu made its peace with Western imperialists.

Jomo Kenyatta, became the first post-independence leader, and slavish follower of Queen and Commonwealth. Under him Kenya became a favoured area of Western investment. A Kenyan capitalist class grew alongside the already existing Asian bourgeoisie. With the succession of Daniel arap Moi to the presidency in 1977, it was business as usual.

Under Moi the Kanu regime became increasingly corrupt and its base of support in Kenyan society began to narrow.

Moi resorted to ever more repression. For example, the celebrated writer, Ngugi N'a Thiong'i, was detained in the 1970s in a case which gained international recognition. Many thousands of less famous people were imprisoned without trial.

Resting on these powers of arbitrary arrest and detention, Kanu rewarded its followers with privileges and positions of power from which they pocketed millions, taking kickbacks from the multinationals and looting international loans and the state treasury. At every level of society being a member of Kanu allows access to money and riches unobtainable through normal channels of capitalist enterprise.

It is a party that has become dysfunctional to capitalist accumulation in Kenya and to the imperialists' desire to continue to take super profits out of the country. It is this that explains Washington and London's sudden concern for democratic reform in the country. ■



Moi's police in action

BOSNIA: Bosnian Serb faction fight

Nato troops out!

BRITISH AND US troops of the supposedly neutral Stabilisation Force (S-For) in Bosnia have intervened at gunpoint in the feud between rival factions in the Bosnian Serb leadership.

At the end of August, the 35,000-strong force was mobilised for the first time in the British and US sectors in a co-ordinated campaign to back up Biljana Plavsic, the nominal President of the Serb Republic, against her rivals around former leader Radovan Karadzic.

The initial objective of the mobilisation was to secure TV transmitters and to occupy police stations in the key towns of Banja Luka – the main city in the western half of the territory – and Brcko, which dominates the 10 mile wide corridor between east and west.

These positions are considered vital to Plavsic's attempt to consolidate her power base in advance of elections on 12 October. The elections themselves will play a pivotal role in Nato's strategy to dislodge Karadzic from his base in Pale in the East. The desired victory for Plavsic will be presented as further legitimisation of Nato support for the "constitutional government" in its efforts to establish a reliable ally before the end of the present mandate next June.

Plavsic, who established a reputation as one of the most ferocious supporters of "ethnic cleansing" during the war against the Bosnian Muslims, was initially chosen by Karadzic to be the

figurehead of his government in Pale after he himself was forced to step down as president. However, recognising the new balance of forces established by the Dayton agreements, Plavsic broke ranks and agreed to govern on the terms set down by Nato.

The principal obstacle to this plan was the continued support of the key state institutions – the Pale parliament, the military high command and the police force – for Karadzic. Nato policy until now has been aimed at containing their military forces, while trying to sow division within their ranks.

The latest moves suggest that they have had some success. When Serb Army chief of staff, Pero Colic, attempted a coup against Plavsic in mid-August he failed. A week later, army commanders, said to represent some two-thirds of the regional units, agreed to support Plavsic at a conference held in Banja Luka. Colic is now likely to be sacked by Plavsic and his troops will be confined to barracks by S-For units.

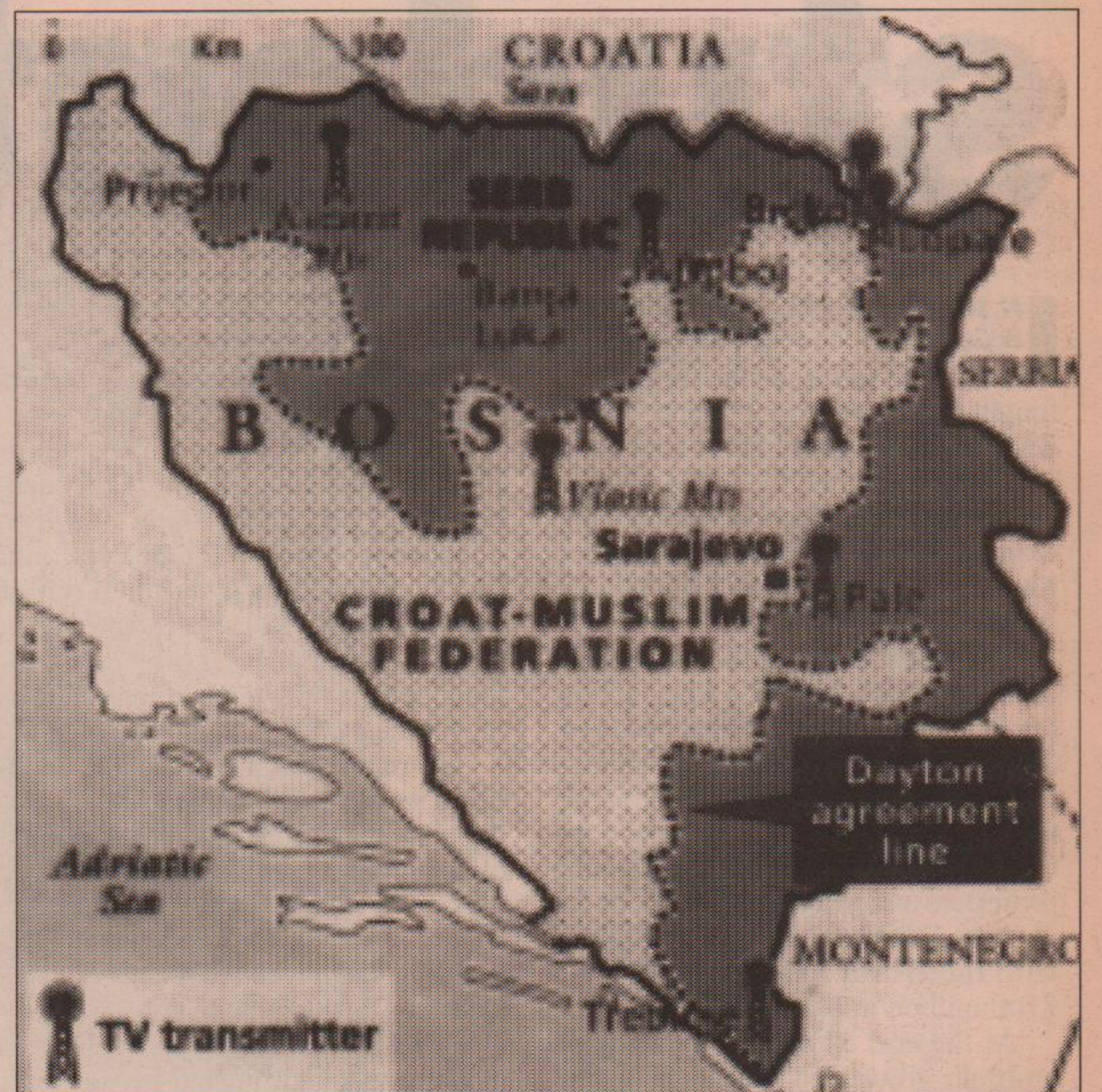
At the same time, the parliament in Pale has, at least theoretically, been dissolved by Plavsic but has continued to meet. At the end of August it formally stripped Plavsic of her power over the armed forces and opposed the holding of the October elections. Thus, the stage was set for the Nato forces to assist Plavsic's election campaign by commandeering the TV transmitters and handing over control of the police force, at least in the eastern half of the country.

In the aftermath of the elections, and whatever military actions may accompany them, Nato's aim will be to complete the isolation of the Karadzic faction, perhaps crowning the campaign by arresting Karadzic himself as a war criminal. The more clearly Plavsic has to rely on Nato support, the more surely they will rely on her in the future.

The workers and peasants of all parts of Bosnia should take no sides in the power struggle between Plavsic and Karadzic. Both the Bosnian Serb factions are equally guilty of genocide against the Muslims. And it was the imperialist powers who make up Nato who first fanned the flames of national and communal hatreds in their bid to break up the Yugoslav federation.

Success for either side, Plavsic or Karadzic, could be a prelude to further territorial divisions between East and West and this would surely tempt factions within the fragile Muslim-Croat federation to extend their own power.

At the same time, however, it is vital that the workers and peasants oppose the imperialist intervention in the country by the Nato forces. They have no progressive role to play. Imperialism is the enemy of the workers and peasants of Bosnia. The present S-For intervention should be met with a mass campaign demanding their total withdrawal, an anti-imperialist movement that could begin to re-unite Bosnian workers and peasants against their nationalist and pro-imperialist leaders and the imperi-



alist troops who back them.

A progressive solution to the turmoil in the whole region can only result from the overthrow of all the existing governments and their state institutions. The Dayton Accords which partitioned

Bosnia, split the Bosnian working class and rewarded the ethnic cleansers with political power should be scrapped. The key to the demolition of the reactionary imperialist peace is the removal of S-For and all foreign troops. ■

Ethical foreign policy

Cook's tour of hypocrisy

IN JUNE, Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, announced in a great fanfare of publicity, that he was introducing a foreign policy based on ethics to replace the sordid deals of the Tory era. Less than two months later the reality behind the rhetoric is clear to see.

Even before his visit to the Far East, Cook had admitted that he was not going to stop the sale of 16 Hawk jet fighters and 50 Alvis armoured cars to Indonesia, one of the most overtly repressive regimes in the world.

Echoing the former US President Reagan's policy of "constructive engagement" with right-wing dictatorships around the globe, Cook announced that a policy of "positive partnership" would guide relations with countries where there were "difficulties with human rights".

Arriving in Jakarta, Cook meekly accepted that he could not meet a leading trade unionist because, coinciden-

tally, he was due to appear in court that day. Instead he went straight into talks with President Suharto, whose military annexation of East Timor was condemned as illegal even by the UN.

Indonesia's £438 million arms contracts with British companies last year were to supply the equipment for the suppression of the Timorese.

What is Cook going to do about this? He is going to fund the provision of office equipment for human rights activists, provide 12 student places on university courses on "democratic processes" in Britain and send senior British police officers to Indonesia to lecture Suharto's thugs on how to control demonstrations effectively!

On the other side of the world, 4,000 people left destitute and homeless on Montserrat by the eruption of the volcano were treated to a classic display of colonial arrogance and insensitivity by Labour's supposed "friend of

the Third World" and Minister for International Development, Clare Short.

Despite subsequent stories of inter-departmental rivalries in Whitehall, it is clear that a policy was adopted of giving the islanders a "take it or leave it" ultimatum that would evacuate the island and thus cut Britain's costs once and for all.

The policy was supposed to be based on new scientific advice that a "cataclysmic eruption" was imminent. But this was denied almost immediately by the scientists responsible for monitoring the volcano. When islanders saw through the policy and demanded payment of what had been promised - funds to rebuild on the north of the island or else sufficient money to make a start somewhere else - Short denounced them as "irresponsible".

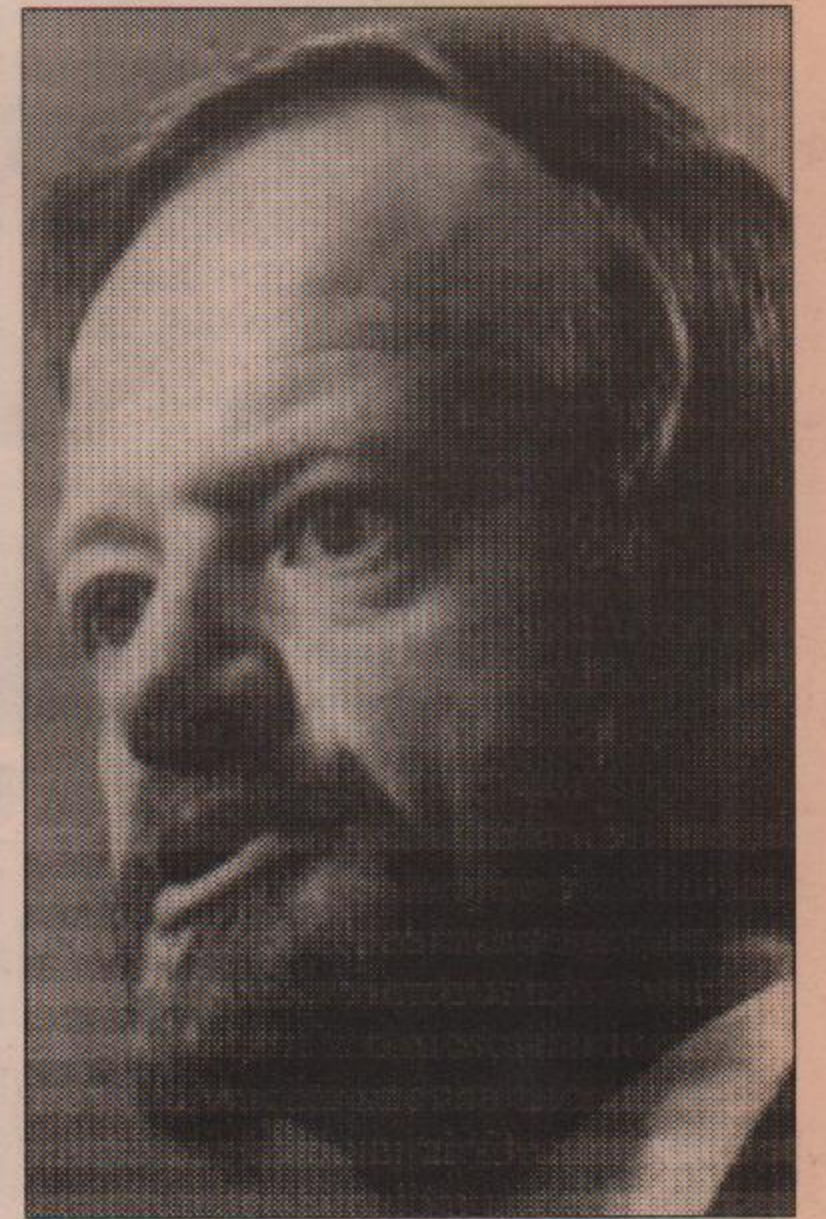
When Montserrat's new Chief Minister, David Brandt justifiably drew a comparison between the uncondition-

al and open-ended commitment of funds and resources to the Falkland Islands and the tight-fisted policy towards his stricken island he was accused of "playing political games".

Britain's foreign policy under Labour, as under all previous governments, is aimed at defending and maximising the economic advantages that Britain's capitalists conquered under the Empire.

Those interests can no longer be defended simply by sending gunboats across the seas. Instead, British imperialism now operates through a system of "semi-colonies" – that is to say states that are politically independent but, nonetheless, subordinated economically and financially to the imperialist world system.

That is why - despite the decline of empire - when it comes to foreign policy, Labour or Tory, the sun never sets on British hypocrisy. ■



Foreign Secretary Robin Cook

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IRELAND: Ceasefire gets Sinn Fein into talks

Republicans abandon goal of united Ireland

BY THE
IRISH WORKERS GROUP

THE ANNOUNCEMENT of a new IRA ceasefire from 20 July was timed to meet the deadline set by the Blair government for admission to the all party talks due to begin on 15 September. Minister for Northern Ireland, Mo Mowlam, confirmed that Sinn Fein will be invited to take part in the talks.

The main concessions made by Britain were to remove the precondition of decommissioning weapons before talks could begin and to agree that the talks would take place within an agreed period of time. Neither of these have cost Blair very much.

Like Major before him his strategic goal is the surrender of the IRA but, unlike Major, he has room for manoeuvre because he is not reliant on Unionist support at Westminster. Nonetheless, he went out of his way to reassure the Unionists of his own opposition to a united Ireland during his visit to Belfast. He declared: "None of us in this hall, even the youngest, is likely to see Northern Ireland as anything but a part of the United Kingdom."

In the South, the new premier, Bertie Ahern of Fianna Fail, announced that a referendum on any proposed settlement coming out of the talks would be held in the Republic, separate from the one in the Six Counties. He added that this referendum could include a proposal to get rid of the Republic's current constitutional claim to the North – a claim never acted on by the ruling class of the South, but an important symbol of the injustice of Britain's partition of the island and a reference point for the nationalists trapped in the Six County statelet.

Betrayal

This is a much more significant concession. Not only does it legitimise the possibility of continued British rule over part of Ireland but, by establishing a separate referendum, it recognises the right of the inbuilt Unionist majority in the North to veto any constitutional changes. The Republic is giving its blessing to this affront to democracy.

By far the biggest concession has been made by Sinn Fein and the Republican movement. Since the August 1994 ceasefire, their aim has been to gain admission to constitutional talks. By accepting the so-called "Mitchell Principles" which included recognition of the need to gain a "democratic majority" within Northern Ireland for any proposed settlement, they had already, in effect, conceded that a united Ireland was not their immediate goal.

Now, this has been made more explicit by Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams. Writing in the *Irish News* on 17 July he said:

"The road ahead will be difficult and dangerous and risky for all of us, but we can succeed. Crucial to that success is a willingness to sit down and engage in good faith in a process of honest dialogue. During these talks Sinn Fein will press for maximal constitutional change, for a re-negotiation of the Union, for the political, economic and democratic transformation of this island."

"Renegotiate the Union..." this says it all. But in case there was any doubt, he went further in an interview in the *Sunday Business Post*, 10 August 1997: "You have to maximise the potential which is within the Framework docu-

ment and we have to go for a very maximum of constitutional and political change." In these positions, reflected faithfully in the speeches of Martin McGuinness, Sinn Fein has explicitly abandoned the revolutionary nationalist goals of a United Ireland and the unconditional removal of British troops.

In this regard both the political concessions of Sinn Fein, and their reflection in the military sphere by the IRA ceasefire, represent a betrayal of the long struggle against British imperialism and for Irish unity. They are not, as Adams claims, steps towards a just peace.

Orange confusion

Given both the change in the parliamentary arithmetic at Westminster and this surrender by the Republican movement, it is hardly surprising that the Unionists are split and confused.

David Trimble is in something of a dilemma. As the head of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), the main historic party of the bourgeoisie, he does not have the same freedom as Paisley, whose Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) has its base mainly among the more fundamentalist petit bourgeois Protestants. For them any dilution of their supremacy over the nationalists poses a threat to their community's very existence.

Whereas Paisley walked out of the talks in August vowing that he will never speak to Sinn Fein and the IRA as a matter of principle, Trimble has stayed with the talks while voting against the joint statement of the British and Irish governments on decommissioning.

For the UUP the interests of big capital in the North are important – and hard line Protestant supremacism is no longer so decisive to the maintenance of these interests. The economic interests of Unionism are now at loggerheads with the extremes of Orangeism and pressure is mounting on Trimble from three sources.

First, the more far-sighted sections of the Unionist bourgeoisie see a chance of peace through a re-negotiated union that will preserve partition and seriously improve the conditions for business in Ulster.

Second, world imperialism sees a historic opportunity to reform the northern state and further diffuse Catholic insurgency. It is determined that this opportunity is grasped. A Clinton government in the US, a Blair government in Britain, and a Fianna Fail government in the South together give very favourable circumstances that may not recur.

Third, the Protestant church leaders are also urging Trimble to go to the talks with all their might.

None of this means that a Protestant backlash is ruled out, but these factors create a new situation in which the main Unionist party, providing it can ensure that its dominance in Northern Ireland is not undermined by a negotiated settlement, will be acting to avert such a backlash rather than unleash it to wreck such a settlement as it has done previously.

Crossing the Rubicon

Sinn Fein presents its inclusion in the all party talks as the result of a successful strategy to remove the obstacles – such as the surrender of arms from the start – that existed under Major. In reality, the peace process is full of contradictions for the whole Republi-



Peace at what price?

can movement. The ceasefire itself was, reportedly, opposed by significant elements within the IRA and remains precarious.

No matter how Adams and McGuinness present it, the fact is that by going into the talks, Sinn Fein will be crossing the Rubicon from revolutionary nationalism to constitutional nationalism and this will become clearer and clearer as time passes.

They will have to sign the Mitchell principles which commit them to exclusively peaceful means of achieving their aims.

They will have to ever more explicitly define their operative aim in the negotiations as re-negotiation of the union – relegating the revolutionary nationalist aims of Irish unity and troops out to nothing more than long term aspirations. This will create big and potentially explosive contradictions between the leaders and their most militant supporters in the nationalist ghettos.

And Trimble will not allow the decommissioning of arms to be put off until the negotiations are over. At some point the British are likely to resurrect the issue in order to force further concessions.

This will face Sinn Fein and the IRA with one of their most difficult problems. No doubt the British and the Unionists will exploit this, arguing that Sinn Fein must "prove its reliability" by facing down its own militants. And Adams and McGuinness will do it because they know that they have to establish their credentials with imperialism and its Unionist agents if they are to be given a role in a "reformed" Northern Ireland.

In the wings are the smaller republican groups – Republican Sinn Fein and the Irish Republican Socialist Party. Both are willing to take up the banner dropped by Sinn Fein and to pursue it by supporting the same elitist guerrillaist methods that have failed Sinn Fein. The likelihood of them winning over significant forces from Sinn Fein is low but they retain the potential to launch "offen-

The IRA's statement

"The Irish Republican Army is committed to ending British rule in Ireland. It is the root cause of division and conflict in our country. We want a permanent peace and therefore we are prepared to enhance the search for a democratic peace settlement through real and inclusive negotiations.

So, having assessed the current polit-

ical situation, the leadership of Ogláigh na hÉireann are announcing a complete cessation of military operations from 12 midday on Sunday 20 July, 1997. We have ordered the unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire of August 1994. All IRA units have been instructed accordingly." (IRA statement announcing the ceasefire, Dublin, 19 July)

sives" which could be used by the British to force Sinn Fein onto the defensive.

Revolutionary way forward

While Sinn Fein abandons its revolutionary nationalist programme, revolutionary Trotskyism in Ireland must use the situation to build a working class, socialist alternative to Republicanism that will not abandon the struggle to unite Ireland.

Thousands of Republicans and their supporters, especially among the youth, will inevitably begin to question the current tactics and strategy of their leaders. We must convince them that these are not temporary aberrations by a bankrupt leadership that needs to be replaced by "firmer" Republicans, but rather the necessary consequences of the whole Republican political programme.

Clinging on to the old principles of Republicanism, no matter how much self-sacrifice and heroism may be involved, cannot resolve the current impasse. Adams, McGuinness and company have not so much betrayed Republicanism as revealed its inherent limits. Another ten or twenty years of the same strategy, but with more determination, will not remove British rule. What Sinn Fein and the IRA lack is not determination but an effective political programme that can mobilise the social forces that can revolutionise Irish society, North and South.

Revolutionaries must fight to win the best militants and youth to the programme of permanent revolution in Ire-

land. In the North, any proposed settlement that is acceptable to Britain and the Unionists is bound to be undemocratic. Opposition to it should be used to create mass mobilisations on the scale of the civil rights movement of the late 1960s or the H-Block campaign of the early 1980s.

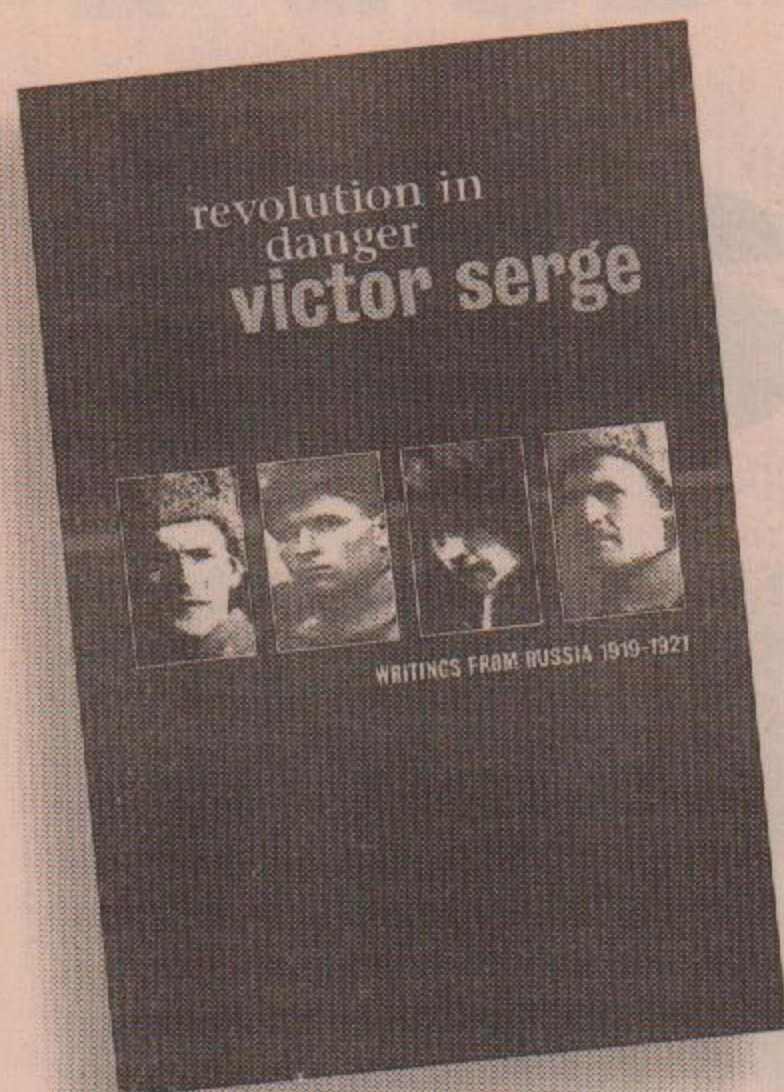
When necessary, we should demand that the guns held by the Republicans be used to defend these mobilisations. The campaign itself must not be an adjunct to their military strategy, but rather the reverse: a mass movement directed against the undemocratic Six County state with any military action and all defensive military units under the control of that movement.

North and South we should fight to bring into these campaigns the other issues facing the working class: unemployment, public sector cuts, the oppressive role of the churches, exploitation by multinational corporations and the failure of the existing working class parties to defend working class interests.

We need a strategy that makes the national question in Ireland first and foremost a class issue and draws on the direct interests of the working class of the whole of Ireland. Only that offers the prospect of a way out of the impasse of Republicanism and, indeed, the blinkered sectarianism of Loyalism. Only such a strategy can bring about a united Ireland, a thirty two county workers' republic, and drive the British out altogether. ■

Victor Serge and the Russian Revolution

Anarchism under fire



Paul Morris reviews
Revolution in Danger: Writings from Russia 1919-1921 by Victor Serge (trans. Ian Birchall), Redwords £5.99

IT IS Russia, 1919 and this is your dilemma: you are an anarchist; you are against all forms of state power; you have travelled across Europe to take part in the Russian revolution. But the revolution is in danger of being overthrown by encircling right wing armies.

The workers' government moves to crush the counter-revolution. Young workers rush to the front, but it is not enough: peasant soldiers have to be conscripted into fighting.

Meanwhile, in Petrograd a reign of terror is unleashed against the allies of the counter-revolution. But you are an anarchist, against all forms of state power...

This dilemma faced a whole generation of anarchist-influenced revolutionaries in the immediate aftermath of the Russian revolution, among them Victor Serge. Born in Belgium in 1890, the son of Russian émigrés, Serge was already a veteran of the class struggle by the time he arrived in Petrograd in February 1919.

He was jailed in France from 1913 to 1917. He took part in a failed insurrection in Barcelona in the year of his release and, escaping to war-torn France, was again arrested and held in a concentration camp for 17 months as a "Bolshevik".

In January 1919 Serge, along with twenty anarcho-syndicalist prisoners, found himself on the way to Russia as part of a prisoner exchange. At the docks, they met some British soldiers who found out that the prisoners were "Bolsheviks". Serge writes:

"I shall never forget the impact this revelation made. We were immediately surrounded by an excited group of men; every face was that of a friend, hands were stretched out to shake ours, we were offered wine and cigarettes and emotional voices declared: 'So are we! So are we! We're part of it too! You'll

see later on!'"

This incident, described in a newly translated collection of Serge's writings from the period, typifies what is best about Serge's writing. He invariably writes history from below; the great events and the decisions of political leaders form the backdrop while the masses - specifically the ebb and flow of their political consciousness - take centre stage.

The volume contains three separate pamphlets. The first describes, in diary form, the siege of Petrograd in the summer of 1919. Serge, along with other anarcho-syndicalists, joined the Bolshevik Party on arrival in Russia. He was just getting used to the disciplined regime of democratic centralism when he was on the receiving end of the party order that "all party members must learn to use a machine gun within 24 hours".

The second article is a more journalistic account of Petrograd during the renewed encirclement of the city in autumn-winter of 1919. Despite the overwhelming military strength of the White Guards, backed by Estonia and the British navy, Serge describes its fundamental weakness:

"Officers... can drive against us, under threat of death, terrified herds of soldiers - prisoners - or launch against us gangs of drunken Cossacks."

"What they cannot achieve at any price is that young men and women, bearers of the little pass covered in brown cloth issued by the Communist Party Committee should voluntarily put on the leather jacket and march into the gunfire singing The Internationale...

They cannot win, they can only kill."

But the White Armies were killing their way to the very suburbs of Petrograd. The Bolsheviks, calmly but ruthlessly, declared war on the Whites' supporters in the city itself, instituting a regime of roadblocks, hostages, executions, house to house searches and a professional secret police.

In the midst of this, the dilemma of the anarchists increased. Serge describes how the Anarchist Federation of Petrograd, having denounced the idea in theory, sided totally with the Bolshevik "dictatorship" in practice. Ironically, military necessity positioned anarchist detachments as the defenders of the offices of the Bolshevik Party paper Pravda.

However, Serge writes, "the anarchist spirit - with its perpetual flights towards Utopia and their usual disastrous consequences in practice - had not lost its influence over its supporters."

He recounts an episode that threw the anarchists' dilemma into sharp relief. The Anarchist Federation was, during the fighting, infiltrated by White agents, who - posing as militia volunteers - planted a bomb in the anarchist HQ. The anarchists, "horrified and heartbroken", had to interrogate and try the suspects, who then confessed.

Opposed in principle to execution themselves, the anarchists decided to hand the infiltrators over to the Bolshevik secret police, who would execute them without hesitation. On the way to the police HQ the anarchist militant charged with escort duty, after grappling with the problem in his mind, stopped



Red defenders of Petrograd

the car and let them go.

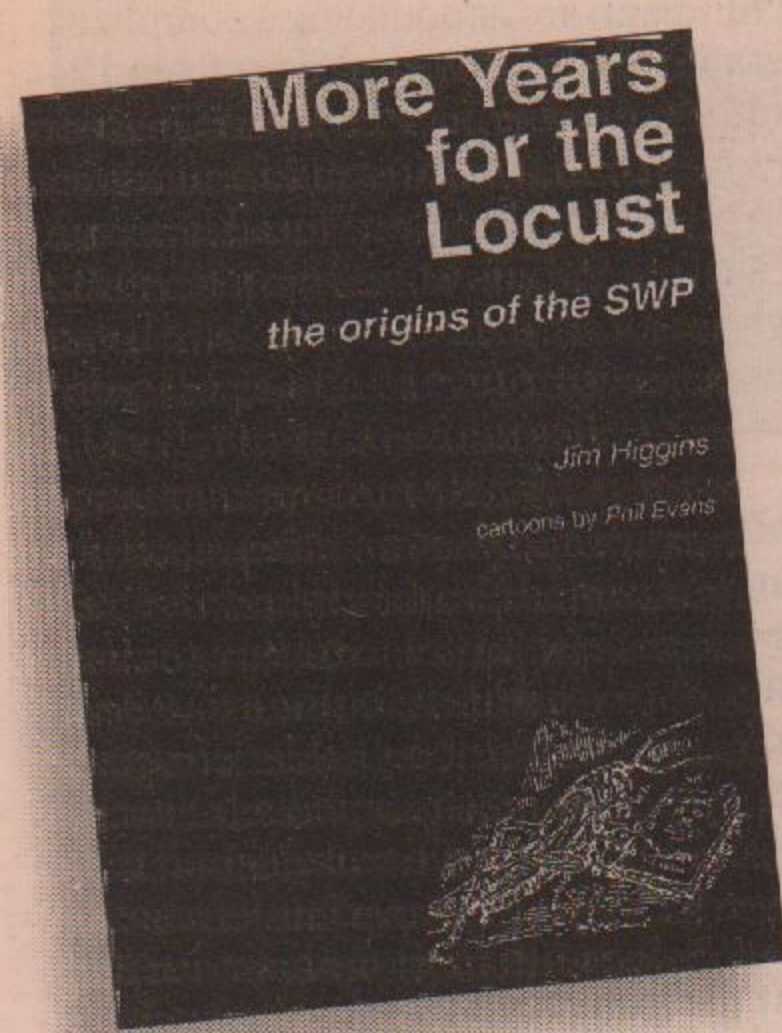
Through a single incident, Serge gives a glimpse into the political turmoil that the revolution caused within the ranks of anarchism. Into that turmoil Serge launched the polemical pamphlet, *The Anarchists and the Experience of the Russian Revolution*, the third part of this collection.

Serge sums up the choices facing anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism during a real revolution: to side with the workers' government - terror and all - or end up either standing on the sidelines or, worse, siding with reaction in the name of "liberty".

Serge himself, along with some of the key figures of pre-1917 anarcho-syndicalism, completed his political evolution under fire to become a leader of the Communist International and a courageous fighter against Stalinist counter-revolution. This book is an excellent account of the events that propelled him along this road. ■

Higgins on the origins of the SWP

So much to answer for



Stuart King reviews
More Years for the Locust - the origins of the SWP, by Jim Higgins (IS Group £5.99)

DON'T BLAME ME! "...the International Socialist was the very best chance we have had since the 1920s to build a serious revolutionary organisation. It was a chance that was not taken and those who were responsible for that error have much to answer for..."

As a leader of the International Socialist Group (IS - forerunner of the Socialist Workers Party) in the 1960s and its National Secretary in the early 1970s when it grew significantly, Jim Higgins should be in a position to shed a clear light on its errors. Certainly, a critical political analysis and history of IS would be useful to a new generation of revolutionary militants. Higgins unfortunately produces bad history and even worse

analysis.

His idea of responsibility is to lay the blame almost entirely on Tony Cliff. While Cliff has enormous influence on his organisation, Higgins reduces the twist and turns of IS politics, which are a symptom of its empiricism and centrism, to the political vagaries of a single person. He informs us that:

"For Cliff, the group is like something he owns and, in the final analysis, can dispose of as he wishes even on a whim; for he has a whim of iron."

This is convenient for Higgins' analysis but he cannot be allowed to get off that easily. He was himself complicit in the purges and manoeuvres which reduced the democratic rights of the members in IS. For example, he was absolutely in favour of expelling the Trotskyist Tendency, led by Sean Matgamna at the end of 1971.

Of course in the process, Higgins and others strengthened the Cliff faction's bureaucratic tendencies. Permanent tendencies were banned. Political debate was increasingly limited to the leadership, "cabinet responsibility" was imposed on NC members at conferences. The lively internal life, which could have ensured an educated membership able to control its leaders, withered.

But the Trotskyist Tendency was only the start. Higgins does not mention the expulsion of the so-called right faction in 1973. He supported it. The Left Faction of IS, of which this reviewer was the secretary and which went on to form Workers Power, hardly gets a mention either.

Formed in 1973, the Left Faction opposed the capitulation of the IS leadership when the IRA bombing campaign started in Britain. Leaders like John Palmer appeared before the press to condemn the bombing of the Aldershot barracks without a word of support for the Republicans' struggle against the British

army. Jim Higgins took an identical position. Unconditional but critical support of the IRA, the formal IS position, was unceremoniously dumped.

The Left Faction, between 1973 and 1975, fought to change the organisation not only on Ireland, but in its whole politics and perspectives. It exposed the economism of IS practice in the workers' and women's movements, its contempt for building an International, its failure to understand or develop tactics towards reformism and above all its rejection of fighting for a transitional action programme, within the working class.

Anyone who has been in the IS or the SWP for any period of time would recognise the cycle of events that led to Higgins' own removal from the leadership. Higgins remarks on Cliff's tendency to boost this or that favoured individual:

"Woe betide the chosen one if he or she falls short of the mark or develops contrary ideas. From flavour of the month he is transformed into last night's dodgy vindaloo."

By 1974 Higgins had become the dodgy vindaloo.

Higgins can provide no political explanation for the sudden outbreak of factional warfare in the 1970s except the personal desire of Cliff to keep control of "his" organisation. In contrast, the Left Faction, because it recognised the weaknesses of IS politics, knew why the Cliff leadership was thrashing around during this period, looking for a new schema.

Between 1970 and 1974, IS grew from around a thousand members to nearly 3,500. But after the defeat of the Tories growth faltered, turnover of membership became an increasing problem. Cliff looked for new short cuts to maintain growth but the problem was that a key part of the IS theory and perspective had been proved bankrupt by events.

From the late 1960s, IS had argued that reformism, in the shape of the Labour

Party, was losing its influence as workers entered into renewed struggle after the quiescence of the long boom. The "changing locus of reformism" for IS meant that the Labour Party was an empty shell, workers were looking to their own strength, developing a "do-it-yourself reformism". The Left Faction challenged this idea, pointing out that reformism remained influential in the trade unions, especially via the union leaders and their link to the Labour Government.

The 1974 Labour victory and the social contract deals struck between Labour and the unions led to an immediate downturn in struggles. These events hit the IS leadership like a broadside. Cliff thought the solution to their problems lay in recruiting "raw workers", those who he thought were unsullied by reformist traditions.

Socialist Worker had to become more popular, it had to be a workers' paper, written "by workers, not for workers". Anyone standing in the way of the new turn was irredeemably conservative and had to be removed. Roger Protz, the editor, and Jim Higgins, now a reporter on the paper, were duly sacked.

By May 1975, Higgins was leading the IS Opposition, a faction committed to taking IS back to its political roots which gained over 130 signatures, including long-standing NC members and full timers as well as significant numbers of experienced blue collar trade unionists, particularly in the Birmingham area.

The days of oppositions in IS were,

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Fourth Congress of the LRCI

THE FOURTH CONGRESS of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI) was held near Vienna in August. For six days, thirty five delegates from our eight sections discussed and adopted a series of documents and resolutions.

The purpose was to review and analyse the major events of the class struggle in the last three years, to give the League the clearest perspectives possible, sharpening the programme and tactics which will guide our work during the last three years of the century and to elect a new international leadership.

As well as the sections' delegates, members of the League who are working to establish new sections in Spain, Italy and Japan were present. The congress also had the benefit of the participation of three representatives of the Marxist Left of Sweden and three representatives of the Trotskyist Fraction and the PTS of Argentina.

The congress of the LRCI, held every two to three years, is a living expression of international democratic centralism. It is not a federal assembly of separate delegations mandated by their sections, each representing their own national point of view; instead it is a collective expression of the membership of a truly international organisation.

All of the delegates felt keenly the value of this experience: not only in the breadth of the discussions and their results in terms of resolutions adopted but also in welding together an international cadre, overcoming barriers of language and the limited experience of our national labour movements.

The sections of the LRCI contributed the experience of their recent interventions. The discussion on Europe was enriched not only by the experience of the French section of the League in the strikes and demonstrations which have shaken their country since the autumn of 1995 but also by the resurgence of class struggle in Germany. Similarly, discussions on the social democratic and labour parties were able to draw on the differing but related dynamics which led to the strengthening of former Stalinist parties such as Rifondazione Comunista in Italy and the election of the Blair and Jospin governments in Britain and France.

The perspectives we adopted in 1994 were amply borne out by events over the past three years. This Congress reaffirmed our analysis of the new general period which began in 1989-91 as one of greater instability and revolutionary upheavals than the post-war period of 1949 to 1989. It also reaffirmed our recognition of the seriousness of the defeats which the capitalist restoration process in Eastern Europe and China has inflicted. A resolution that recognised that capitalism has been newly restored in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland and the Baltic States, as well as the imminence of restoration in a number of other states, was debated and passed.

At the same time, we rejected the view of the pessimists who conclude that these defeats will inaugurate a decades-long period of profound counter-revolution during which revisions of the revolutionary programme or a retreat from the strategy of the Leninist party and International are necessary. There was not the faintest echo of that view within the ranks of the LRCI.

The inability of the workers' move-

ments to resist the restoration of capitalism is a long term consequence of those earlier defeats at the hands of the Stalinists. On the whole, the counter-revolutionary effects of those defeats on the labour movement have already been experienced in the previous period and do not lie ahead.

Indeed, despite the reactionary effects of restoration, the Congress recognised that what we are actually witnessing now is the recomposition of working class movements. It is a slow process, too slow in most cases to prevent the catastrophe of restoration, but it is taking place and in a manner which makes the creation of stable, expanding, capitalist states with strong anti-working class regimes the least likely outcome.

When it came to discussing the League's own perspectives, the Fourth

It is not a federal assembly of separate delegations mandated by their sections, each representing their own national point of view; instead it is a collective expression of the membership of a truly international organisation.

Congress concentrated on two important areas of work. Firstly, the League has pledged itself to the much greater development of its youth work, especially of its larger sections (France, Britain and Austria) which already have youth papers or youth organisations. It has recognised the necessity over the next two to three years of building organisationally autonomous youth groups in solidarity with our sections, and of welding them together into an international organisation. Related to this was an emphasis on work among students in all of our sections.

The revival of struggle, which can now be seen and felt right around the world, will mobilise and enthuse first of all the youth, who are not burdened with the defeats of the 1980s and the early 1990s. They hate the arrogant ideology of a capitalist system that is imposing mass unemployment, low wages, austerity programmes, cuts in social services and education systems, and is wantonly destroying the planet.

The second major orientation of our work is to attempt to regroup with revolutionary forces breaking with centrist organisations as a result of the crises they have undergone since 1989. The intense programmatic discussions with the Marxist Left of Sweden (a split from the Committee for a Workers' International/Militant Tendency) have borne fruit and discussions aimed at a fusion with the LRCI's section are at an advanced stage.

More problematic have been discussions with the Trotskyist Fraction, led by the PTS of Argentina. No new differences of a programmatic character have emerged over the eighteen months of discussions and joint work; but the congress had to register little progress on the major

issues set out in the agreement struck in December 1995.

A series of joint declarations on important developments in the international class struggle have been agreed. These display a common method in intense periods of the class struggle such as, for example, in the French strikes of November and December 1995. However, the main aims of the 1995 declaration have not been realised. These included the creation of a joint LRCI-TF liaison committee to discuss and re-elaborate a common programme, discussion of the restoration process in the Stalinist states and what this means for perspectives and programme, the possibility/necessity of achieving democratic centralism in an international tendency and the slogan of the International for which we are fighting.

The congress recognised that if these obstacles were not addressed very soon, and overcome in the years ahead, there is a distinct danger that events will blow the LRCI and the TF apart.

Lastly, the Fourth Congress took up again an issue which had been debated at the LRCI's third congress: the nature of the state form in the degenerate workers' states. This involves the question of whether the state machine was smashed, in the Marxist sense of the term, during the post-war overthrow of capitalism in Eastern Europe, China, Indochina and Cuba, and the related question of whether the state machine had to be smashed to allow capitalism to be restored in the post-1989 period.

At the Fourth Congress, the former minority position secured a narrow majority. The congress adopted the view that the bureaucratic Stalinist overthrows took place without the smashing of the bourgeois form of state apparatus. These changes in analysis will be set out in an article in the forthcoming issue of Trotskyist International.

The Fourth Congress registered the successes of the League over the last three years. Despite the desertion of the Bolivian section and half of the New Zealand section in 1995, the LRCI has more than recovered its numbers and is larger now than it was before the splits.

Congress ended on an optimistic note with delegates and observers returning to their sections armed with a clear set of priorities and with excellent prospects for increasing the size and the number of its sections substantially.

A further cause for optimism is the fact that our congress was followed two weeks later by a highly successful summer school of the French section attended by representatives of several groups in the process of breaking with centrism in France. The LRCI's German language school in the early autumn will continue the trend of drawing significant new forces towards the LRCI.

WORKERS POWER

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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.



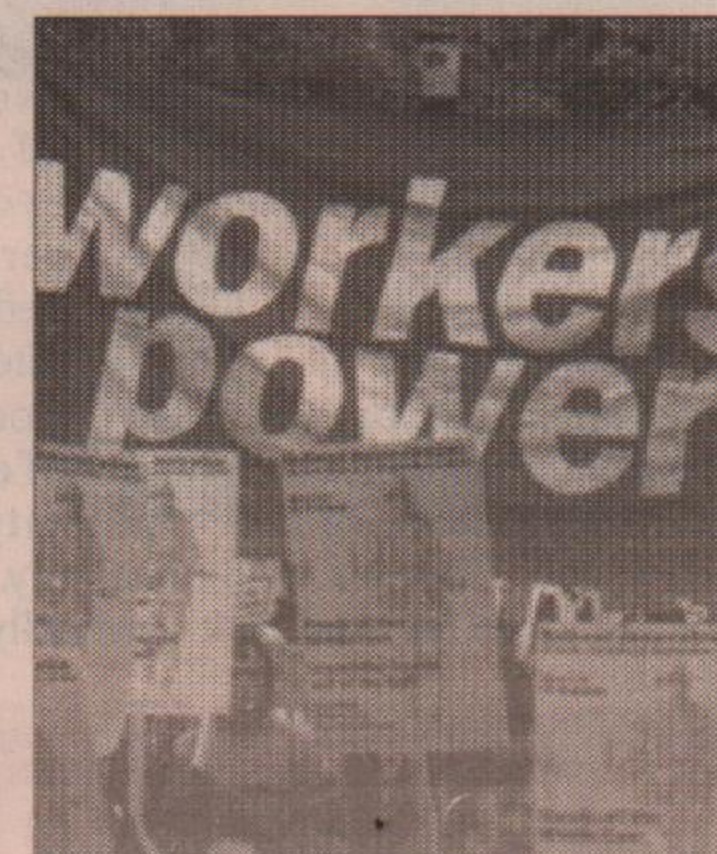
Social Oppression

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 the imperialist 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 International and the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International. 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. If you are a class-conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!★

Workers power

Socialism, Internationalism, Revolution

British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

No 214 September 1997 ★ 50p

Students: No to fees, no to loans, yes to grants

Fight for free education!

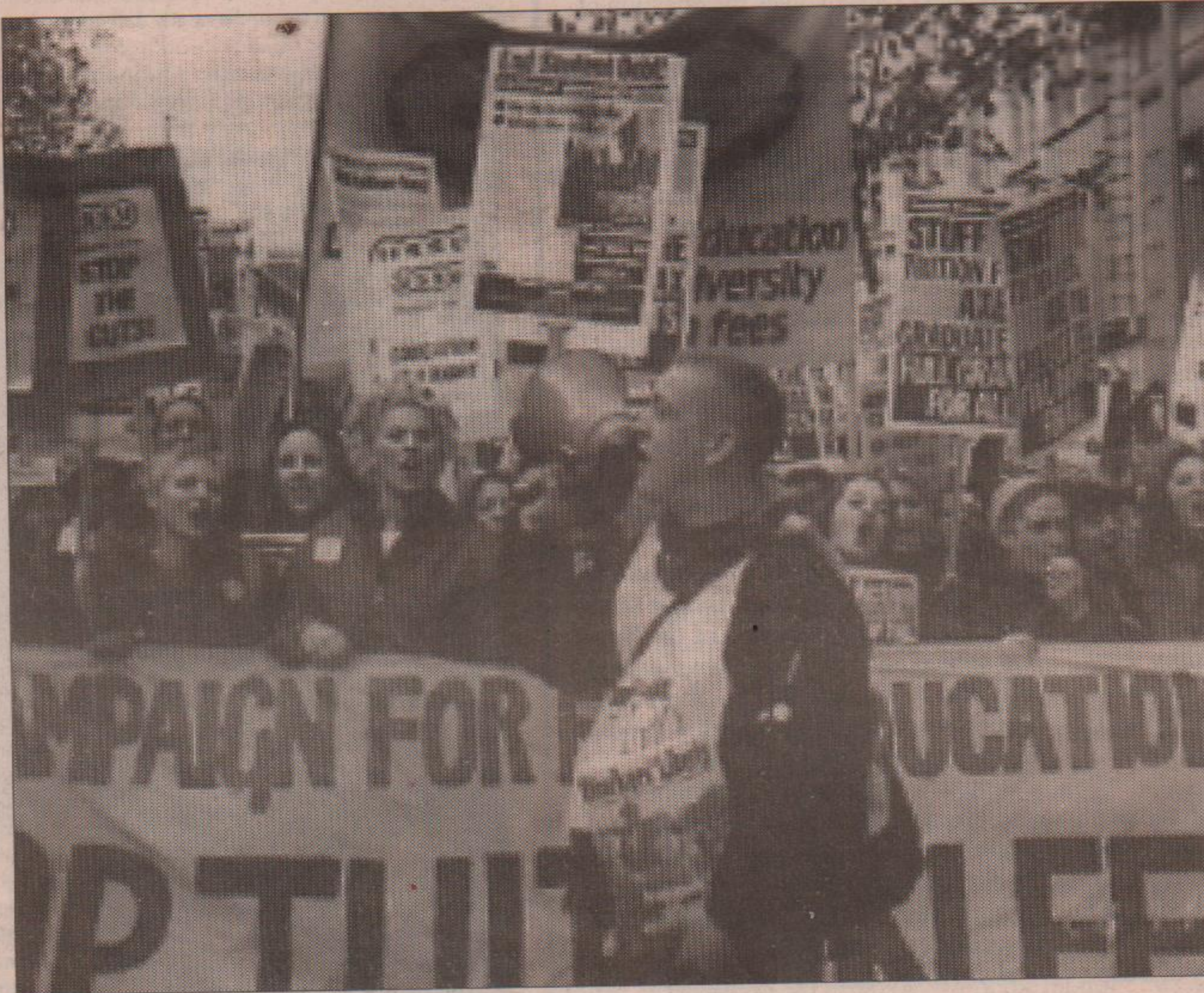
LABOUR HAS announced the scrapping of the student grant. And students will also have to pay £1000 a year tuition fees. A university place is set once again to become a privilege for the better off. Hundreds of thousands of working class school leavers – and many potential mature students – will be barred from going to college.

Labour got a landslide because it promised to act “for the many, not the few”. Blair claimed his priority would be “education, education, education.” But now he is safely in 10 Downing Street, Blair and his Education Secretary David Blunkett are going even further than the Tories ever dared. They are trying to turn the universities back into what they were before the war: institutions for the sons and daughters of the elite. All this will save money that would otherwise have to be taken from the rich in taxes.

Students will have to take out loans of around £10,000 to get through a 3 year course. Some students from poor families will be exempt from the tuition fees (though Labour hasn't made clear exactly who). But all students will have to pay back their loans once in work. For most this will take years (unless they have rich parents who can just wipe the slate clean).

Labour is considering bringing in an extra tax on graduates or even selling off the Student Loans Company to private business. Either way the changes will steal from the poor to give to the rich.

Lorna Fitzsimmons, a new Labour MP who was once a



leader of the National Union of Students, claimed that for many young people it is “a point of pride” not to go to college. How does that justify erecting barriers to the hundreds of thousands who do want to go? It is just a patronising way of trying to justify the theft of our right to a free education.

Whose Education?

The government's proposals will make higher education once again a preserve of the most privileged. Courses will become even more focused on

the needs of businesses to compete with their rivals. Funding will be channelled in the interests of businesses and profits rather than being used to provide a broad education in a variety of subjects that serve the good of everyone and raise the culture of the whole of society.

There is only one way to purge education of the disease of profiteering and the obsession with vocational and business links. If education is to serve the majority and be open to the majority, it will have to be democratically run by the majority.

How can this be achieved? In the fight to restore free education, students, education workers and parents will need to exert control over how funds are applied, what is taught, and how universities and colleges are run. Action committees to co-ordinate the campaign are the first steps to establishing rival college administrations, to take forward the fight for a socialist education system and a socialist society based on human need, not private greed.

Now turn to page 4 for more on the fight for a free education

INSIDE:

- Kenya in crisis
- Labour conference
- Legalise drugs now!

Urgent action!

IF YOU want to stop Blair and Blunkett turning the universities into centres of privilege for the rich minority get active now. Students, school students, teachers, parents, every working class family is affected:

- Sign the petition against tuition fees and the scrapping of the grant produced by Workers Power Students.
- Call a mass meeting at your college or school. Invite representatives along from every year, every course, every floor of every hall of residence, every local school, Sixth Form, every group of workers including maintenance staff, lecturers, teachers, parents from local estates, trades unions and local Labour Parties. Set up a delegate based action committee. Explain the issues and discuss how action can be taken.
- Collect signatures for an Extraordinary Meeting of your student union and propose the following action at the meeting:
- Call local marches for free education. Picket every government minister that visits your town. Bombard local papers with letters protesting Labour's proposals;
- Hold an occupation of your college's central maintenance block in protest and appeal to trade unions to take direct action in support;
- Bombard NUS with demands for a national mass demonstration in London this autumn. Let's bring the capital to a standstill!

Education crisis – make the bosses pay! – see page 4

**workers
power**

£1000 tuition fees?

Abolition of student grants?

Let's tell Blair:

**EDUCATION IS
A RIGHT NOT A**

PRIVILEGE!

- **For a nationwide wave of occupations**
- **Tax the rich to fund full grants**
- **Don't rely on the NUS leadership**
- **Build action committees of students and workers**

Join the revolutionaries

 **0171 357 0388 – BCM Box 7750, London WC1N 3XX**