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# Climate change

# How do we avoid a catastrophe?

**T**he world is hurtling towards a potential disaster. Temperature rises of between 1.4C and 5.8C are predicted over the next century - but already existing warming is having dramatic effects.

- The Arctic ice has shrunk by a fifth in a few years. As a result the region will absorb more heat. Melting ice sheets over Greenland could in the long term raise sea levels by six metres - whole island states will disappear, coastal regions throughout the world will be inundated.
- Glaciers and mountain snow is in retreat. Millions in Asia and Latin America rely on seasonal melting for water supplies, but soon it will no longer be available. The speed of melting is already causing major avalanches and mudslides and threatens existing dams and hydro-electricity production.
- Whole areas of the world will turn to desert and food production will be disrupted or reduced. The heating of the seas will lead to a growth in extreme weather conditions. The abnormal hurricane season in the US that destroyed New Orleans is one symptom of this.

Millions, perhaps tens of millions, will die as a result of climate change this century.

The reasons for global warming are well understood. It is primarily caused by the production of CO<sub>2</sub> from the burning of fossil fuel - oil, coal, gas etc. The solution is also straightforward - organise a massive shift away from fossil fuel burning power and tackle the wasteful



Due to global warming the Columbia Glacier in Alaska has retreated 15 kms since 1980

uses of energy.

If our world leaders were serious about tackling climate change they would be immediately adopting an emergency plan, in their own nation states and internationally, to tackle the problem. At a minimum this would involve:

- A massive shift from fossil fuel production (to renewable energy wind, bio fuels etc) and adaptation of power

stations to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions or their forced closure.

- Real government action to alter transport patterns - priority for public transport over private, an enforced move to cleaner cars and transport vehicles, a reduction in air travel in favour of fast continental wide train travel.
- Real measures against waste of energy - a national plan to bring all hous-

es up to the best insulation standards, new build with higher standards, subsidies for domestic solar and wind power, strict measures to improve efficiency of industry.

There is a reason why Bush, Blair, Chirac etc will not take such basic measures - they would cost big business enormous sums of money. They would make power more expensive and goods more expensive. Bush is at least honest.

He says openly that the US government will not take measures that damage US business. Blair blathers on about being a "world leader" on climate change while his actions, or rather the lack of them, have the opposite effect. Britain's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions have risen 5.5 per cent since Blair came to power in 1997.

He now says the answer is Nuclear Power, despite the enormous dangers of this technology. The reason is not its supposed green credentials, but the fact that it means fat contracts for the big building multinationals. And as they did with the previous generation of plants, they will pocket the profits and leave the state, the working class tax payers, to pick up the bill for safe disposal of waste and dismantling.

The fact is capitalism is incapable of tackling climate change. Its factories and offices are very good at producing large profits for the few at the expense of polluting the environment. But US businesses are in competition with China - why would they take environmental measures that would make them less competitive? The neo liberal politicians like Blair and Bush are so wedded to big business that they are not willing to regulate business to avoid an environmental catastrophe.

We should certainly fight every inch of the way to impose an emergency action plan on these governments - who will only listen to mass action by environmentalists and workers fighting together. But in the end only by throwing out these pro capitalist politicians and their system will we be able to save the planet and its people from a catastrophe.

## THE PROFIT SYSTEM MUST GO!

# Deportation fightback continues

By G R McColl

The Home Office boasted last month of the rising number of deportations carried out between June and September, as the British government shipped more than 3,460 people to countries, including Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia. Meanwhile, the number of detainees rose to more than 2,200 in Britain's immigration removal centres, of whom more than 1,600 were asylum seekers.

The government has also begun to carry out its threat to deport Iraqi Kurds to northern Iraq as 15 men were herded on to a military transport, handcuffed and then deposited at Irbil's airport with £100 to fend for themselves (see box).

But not everything has gone according to the Government's plans recently. In October, the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal made a ruling that has made it extremely difficult in the short term for the Home Office to remove Zimbabweans because of beatings and torture by Robert Mugabe's thugs against several individuals already deported to Harare. The victory at the Tribunal was a result of a campaign by Zimbabweans in the UK that began more than a year ago. Zimbabwean women have also taken part in a hunger strike at the Yar's Wood detention facility in Bedfordshire.

In November, the House of Lords also upheld an Appeal Court's decision



Demonstration in Manchester on 19 November, part of international day of action against deportations

made earlier this year that section 55 of the Nationality, Immigration & Asylum Act 2002 beached the human rights of asylum seekers. Section 55 refused support to those who did not appeal for asylum within a time that was "as soon as reasonably practicable", which the government interpreted as almost immediately getting off the train or boat.

In Scotland, immigration officers raided, before dawn, the Vucaj family

and deported them to a remote village in northern Albania. This sparked media outrage and an occupation of immigration offices in Glasgow by campaigners, including Scottish Socialist Party MSP Tommy Sheridan. Another protest in Glasgow, at a centre that sends out snatch squads, ended with the arrest of Sheridan and two other demonstrators.

Immigration minister McNulty also blocked a meeting between demonstra-

tors and a Home Office civil servant and snubbed the leader of the Scottish Executive, Jack McConnell.

Meanwhile, the Bolton-based Sukula Family Campaign is to the fore in building a national conference against both deportations and Section 9 of the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc.) Act 2004, which threatens to leave families destitute and literally break them apart by placing chil-

dren in care. This legislation has come under attack from such respectable organisations as the British Association of Social Workers and the children's charity, Barnardo's.

Social workers in the Bolton Metropolitan branch of Unison have voted for non-compliance with Section 9 by local government workers, and pushed for non-compliance across the North West.

In Newham, East London, Unison members are organising opposition to a senior management edict in the council's social services department that demands the withdrawal of all support from "failed" asylum seekers and "illegal" immigrants currently receiving Community Care packages. Some 50 people are affected, many of them HIV-positive, and several with severe mental health problems.

There is an urgent need to bring trade unionists together to co-ordinate resistance to the use of social workers and others in local government as enforcers of the government's asylum and immigration policies. The trade unions must take up the task of refusing the asylum lies that the likes of the Express, Mail and Sun retail daily.

Alongside this, they must also link up with community campaigns and take action - including industrial action, to defeat the legislation.

The January conference at Manchester Central Hall provides an excellent opportunity to develop this work. Make sure your union is represented.

## Kurds deported from Sheffield

In Sheffield between 150 and 200 Kurds have been evicted by National Asylum Support Service housing providers such as Angel, NMQ and the grotesquely named Refugee Care and Safe Haven. These include people who signed the recent Home Office ultimatum to agree to return "voluntarily" to Iraq. Police were out in force last month in the Burngreave and Firth Park areas of Sheffield checking the IDs of people they thought might be Kurdish.

Many asylum seekers have stopped signing on at police stations for fear of being arrested, which means that they will also lose their vouchers and accommodation.

Reports from people deported show that removal is forcible. One Kurdish asylum seeker was left at Irbil airport with no personal possessions, dressed in military uniform (why?) and not even given the nominal \$100 that others reportedly got.

Persecution of political opponents

by the Kurdish Democratic Party in Iraq is commonplace and a major fear. In fact, the Home Office has dismissed evidence from a UN report from August this year, which noted "first and second hand accounts from... Mosul, Kirkuk and the Kurdish governorates, as well as corroborating information from other credible sources, consistently point to the systematic use of torture during interrogations at police stations and within other premises belonging to the Ministry of Interior."

The Government seems determined to expel between 5,000 and 7,000 Iraqi Kurds over coming months in its unceasing effort to show its "tough" attitude to immigration. In the case of the Kurds, New Labour politicians are also keen to show that the war and occupation have "liberated" the regions now run like personal fiefdoms by factions of the Kurdish Democratic Party and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

## Yet another racist Asylum Act

The government last month introduced yet another attack on asylum seekers. The Immigration, Asylum and Nationality bill 2005 introduces more measures to fast track decisions and detain and deport asylum seekers.

- It gets rid of indefinite leave to remain for refugees and gives them initially a five-year temporary stay with no right to appeal if they are refused a permanent stay after the five years are up. The five-year period has been in operation since August but the bill makes it and the lack of appeals explicit.

- It no longer allows refugees to claim backdated benefits but provides a loan.
- It tightens up border controls and make it more difficult for asylum seekers to get into the country. It also allows greater use of fingerprinting, electronic checking of visas, biometric testing and so on.

- The bill removes the right to appeal against the refusal of a visa to many categories.

- Clause 51 of the Bill excludes the right to claim asylum to those the gov-

ernment defines as "terrorists", supporters, advocates, inciters or encouragers of terrorism. Campaigners have pointed out this would have stopped members of many oppositional organisations claiming asylum, such as the ANC or members of Iraqi political organisations who were fighting Sad-

dam Hussein.

The bill is another stage in the government's plan to tighten up and stigmatise asylum seekers and immigrants and to use these laws as a political weapon to repress opposition to its policies and allies. We need to ensure it becomes unenforceable from day one.

## Working conference against Section 9 and deportations

The Sukula family campaign has launched a call for a national conference for trade unionists, anti-deportation and anti-racist campaigners to kick-start a campaign against Section 9 of the 2004 Asylum and Immigration Act and against the mounting wave of deportations by the Home Office. It has already attracted the backing of organisations such as Liberty and the British Association of Social Workers, along with union branches in the North West and the region's Unison United Left.

Working conference against Section 9 and deportations: Methodist Central Hall, Manchester, Saturday 28 January 2006, 11.00 am - 5.00 pm. For further information please contact Jason Travis, Sukula Family Campaign, 07976-476 181, or George Binette, CDAS, 07905-826 304.

# After sell out: bosses on the offensive over pensions

By Keith Spencer

Gordon Brown is at loggerheads with a former chief of the CBI, but he isn't arguing with British bosses that workers need better rights or more holidays.

Brown is telling Adair Turner that his commission into the future of pensions has its sums wrong. Turner has called for the relinking of pensions to earnings. But Brown wants to maintain means-testing for pensioners despite more than a million eligible pensioners not even applying.

But Turner wants to pay for this relinking by raising the retirement age from 65 to 67. His argument, which is supported by the Tories and Lib Dems, is that workers are living longer and so can work longer.

Turner and his friends in the boardrooms may well be living longer but life expectancy for manual and routine white collar workers is proven more stubborn to increase.

In Manchester, London and Glasgow life expectancy is 65. Across the country the average life expectancy for a manual worker who has reached 65 is less than 67. So workers are expected to work until they die under Turner's plans, while paying taxes and national insurance all their lives.

Meanwhile, new laws coming in soon will allow rich people to offset against their pensions extra houses, boats, wine cellars and a host of things associated with the good life.

The pensions debate shows that Brown and Turner may have different ideas but they are all united about mak-

ing workers work longer and paying them less pension.

Which only shows how craven the public sector trade union leaders were last month when they accepted the government's framework agreement to increase retirement age for new entrants to the public sector workforce, and even refused to ballot their members over the issue. A wonderful opportunity earlier in the year, when public sector trade unionists voted in large numbers for strike action in defence of their pensions, was squandered when the union leaders called off the strikes for negotiations.

And now the bosses are back for more concessions.

But some sections of workers are leading the fight back. BP tanker drivers, who were transferred over from

Exel, recently threatened strike action over the company's refusal to include them in the final salary pension scheme. They won. Nearly 6,000 British Gas workers voted for strike action last month to defend their scheme and stop the company giving new entrants worse conditions. Strikes are expected to start over the Christmas period.

Actions like this are necessary to defend existing schemes.

But existing provision is still inadequate. State pensions are currently only 16 per cent of average earnings. By 2035 the state pension will be less than 10 per cent of average earnings. Also the number of private sector workers in final salary pensions has fallen from 6.5 million in 1991 to 4.2 million today.

There is a way to have good pensions for all workers and that is to tax the rich.

The UK is the fourth richest country in the world and can easily afford it. But Blair and Brown have presided over a government that has seen a widening gap between the rich and the poor, despite Brown's much-vaunted means testing. For example, 200 city financiers will share out £4 billion in bonuses this year for doing what Lenin called "share clipping".

That £4 billion, along with all the other bonuses and wealth of the rich, would provide for all workers a pension linked to two-thirds of the average wage that would abolish poverty for older people. These are the kind of socialist demands that can really make a difference to the British working class.

• For more read issue 300 at [www.workerspower.com](http://www.workerspower.com)

*Iraqi workers need their own party*

Next month Iraqis will go to the polls to elect a government under the new constitution. There appears to be little appetite to boycott the process. But who should the workers vote for? Which party is resolutely opposed to the privatisation of the oil industry, for example? US inspired Production Sharing Agreements, which will drain between \$74 and \$194 billion out of the country and into the coffers of the likes of Shell, Amoco and BP, are being drawn up now. Who in the new parliament will rip them up?

Which party will issue a clarion call for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of US, UK and all other coalition troops, and combat the sectarian killers in the Badr brigades and al Qa'ida? Who will fight to protect women's rights, now that women are afraid to go out alone for fear of a beating? Which party will table motions in parliament to make trade unions legal, a matter the new constitution left aside?

To ask these questions is to answer them; there is no one among the coalitions of Shia and Sunni confessional parties that will do these things.

That's why the working class organisations need to band together to form a new party and stand candidates. While it is vital to represent workers and their demands in these elections, such a party should not be primarily a vehicle for standing in elections. It needs to be a militant combat party that represents the masses of Iraqi workers in each and every struggle - against the presence of foreign troops, against repression and for civil liberties, against religious sectarianism. Its members can and must be drawn from all ethnic and religious groups in Iraq, Shia, Sunni, Kurd, but the party itself must be secular in its outlook.

Fortunately, such a party is not a pipe dream. The Iraqi Federation of Oil Workers (IFOW), with its 23,000 workers in the main production fields around Basra, and more around Baghdad and Kirkuk, represents a powerful starting point for such a party. Hassan Juma'a, the leader of the IFOW, touring Britain this month, has accepted publicly that "the Iraqi working class needs political representation". But to date the IFOW has drawn back from initiating steps to form an independent, secular working class party, preferring to press on other parties the case for workers' rights.

The problem with this approach is twofold.

Firstly, the working class cannot fight for its needs simply by placing demands on the parties of the bourgeoisie or the middle class. Of course workers can and should place demands on these parties and even enter into temporary blocs with them over certain reforms and struggles, especially against imperialism.

However, all existing parties in Iraq are committed to private property, and in the last analysis will always put the profits of the capitalist system above the needs of the working class. Even those that say they are against imperialism and repression will, in the face of a rising and confident working class, change sides and support the forces of repression and imperialism. That is why workers need their own independent party.

Secondly, the road to working class freedom is not a gradual one, paved with piecemeal reforms, especially in a country like Iraq. So long as the imperialists intend to plunder the country's massive oil reserves, they will do all in their power to impose and maintain a brutal and tyrannical regime, only demanding its loyalty to their strategic interests. Democracy and the rule of parliament will be subordinated to this end.

That is why there can be no peaceful, democratic stage to Iraqi development, an illusion peddled by the Iraqi Communist Party as a cover for its serial capitulations to imperialism and dictators like Saddam.

The only social force that has both the power and the interest in throwing out imperialism and securing real democratic rights is the working class. And to raise workers to the level where they can become the leading force in the national liberation struggle, it is necessary also to fight for socialist demands.

This is not a "maximum" or utopian political programme. It is the only realistic programme available to the Iraqi working class. It is the programme of permanent revolution.

Whoever wins the election this month, the struggle for such a party must begin now.

# College teachers need to escalate action

Lecturer *Dave Ellis* argues that last month's one-day strike in the colleges was a good start but action must be spread to link up with other workers and students in the sector

On 16 November the teachers union Natfhe held a one-day strike over pay. The college employers have offered 2 per cent now with a further 0.8 per cent later. The union is demanding 7 per cent to bring Further Education (FE) teachers in line with school teachers.

Some 220 colleges came out on strike for the day with reports of well organised colleges fully participating in the strike and other colleges using it to rebuild union organisation.

Meanwhile, hundreds of Natfhe members attended a rally and demonstration in Birmingham where they mounted a noisy protest outside this year's Association of Colleges (AoC) conference.

Education secretary Ruth Kelly was the keynote speaker of the conference but she still had to slip away using the side entrance to avoid meeting angry protestors. The strikers kept up the noisy protest with the favourite chants being "Low pay, no way! Opus Dei, no way!" - a reference to the Education Secretary's archreactionary religious beliefs.

The demonstration was followed by a rally with speakers. But what was sorely lacking from the main speakers, especially the union leadership, was a strategy on how we are going to win our pay demand and also ensure that there is sufficient funding from the government to pay for it.

As each college is actually a separate employer the government insists it is up to local colleges to set their own pay rates. The government argues that it funds the colleges but then it is up to each college to budget from within its own funds how to pay for any wage rises. This means colleges often claim they don't

have the money for pay rises or claim that any pay rise will hit the provision of education. The last pay deal that the union and the AoC came to was supposed to be a national deal but in the end only a minority of colleges actually met that deal. Of course most of the colleges that did cough up were the ones where the local Natfhe branches took strike action.

This time around the union, under pressure from its membership, has had to carry out a national ballot. It has also called on local branches not to make any local deals. This is a step forward as it means the dispute is a national one. In fact the whole policy of the union must be to force the government, through the education department and the funding bodies, to negotiate national pay and conditions. This must be part of a campaign to end the corporation status of the colleges and reintroduce a national FE system.

The latest news coming from the Treasury is that Brown has already notified public sector unions that there will be pay restraint this year, so determined action will be needed to win a pay rise above 2 per cent. The one-day strike was useful in building and gauging support for the campaign but one-day strikes on their own will not shift the government.

The union leadership has claimed that the strike was a success. While it was successful in so far as it mobilised many rank and file members for the picket lines and Birmingham demo, it did not win more pay or funding for the FE sector or even drag the government to the negotiating table. So far the union leadership has not proposed any further action on how to take the dispute forward.

The first thing for any plan is to be clear on what we are fighting for. The union must stick to the agreed policy of fighting for a national pay rate and pay rise. Second, we must insist that local colleges should be fully funded by the government to implement any national deal.

There needs to be a plan to escalate the action and to try to draw in other groups as part of a wider struggle against the government's policies for education.

The demand for increased funding in the sector would gain the struggle an immediate ally, the students. Already this year, cuts in government funding have hit student welfare hard. Many students have not been able to get any assistance with essential things to enable them to study, such as transport or child care costs.

Natfhe should also take the lead in campaigning against privatisation of the education system. Once again we would find immediate allies in workers in the FE sector who have either seen their wages and conditions worsened by privatisation or who are under threat from it. We should link up with campaigns against the academies in the school system.

FE teachers may not have enormous economic power but a national all-out strike by lecturers that pursued militant methods of strikes, occupations and demonstrations and aimed to link up with the demands of other workers in education could force the government to agree to our demands.

If spread it could also raise an alternative, socialist way of teaching students and providing education rather than letting Blair and co. hand it over to the private sector profiteers.

## Sefton: all out until all are back

By Mark Hoskisson

Strike action by workers at Sefton has forced the council to reinstate five workers after a protest against council policy.

The Merseyside council had responded to a legal and peaceful protest against its plans to sell off its housing stock several months ago by suspending six well-known Unison members who had taken part in the protest. It accused the Unison members of "gross misconduct". Their misconduct was to be against privatisation.

There were a series of strikes against this blatant act of revenge by the Council, with 50 workers from several local

government departments on all out strike. This resulted in four members being reinstated (three with official warnings from their bosses). The latest concession from the council is that Paul Summers can go back to his job after being earmarked for the sack. But key activist Nigel Flanagan is still going to be dismissed and the strike in his defence is going ahead.

Unison General Secretary, Dave Prentis, said: "This is a disgraceful act. Nigel has been dismissed for taking part in legitimate trade union activities, promoting the policies of the union and defending council housing. The council spent £5m of council taxpayers money trying to hoodwink council tenants. Defend Council Housing campaign

spent £15,000 and the tenants voted against transfer. The council is now seeking revenge."

Strike action must now not only continue but also be spread throughout the entire council. An all out local government strike will bring Sefton to its knees within hours and is far better than turning to an Employment Tribunal and court case, as Prentis and other officials are now suggesting. By all means pursue the legal case, but combine it with pressure from below to get Nigel reinstated as quickly as possible.

• **Donations to the branch hardship fund and messages of support should be sent to: Sefton Unison, Mersey Seaman's Mission, Colonsay House, 20 Crosby Road South, Waterloo, Liverpool L22 1RQ**

**Climate March, London 3 Dec**  
Protest the lack of action on global warming  
March from Lincoln's Inn Fields 12pm (Holborn Tube) to US Embassy via the Exxon Mobil offices

**The challenge of climate change Workers Power public meeting**  
London, Thursday 8 Dec, 7.30pm  
Clapham Community Project, St Anne's Hall, Venn Street, Clapham, London SW4 0BN

## What next for the Labour Party?

The defeat of Blair on terrorism has shown an opposition to his policies. But can the Labour Party be reclaimed, asks *Andrew Smith*

In the next two or three years there are likely to be some serious conflicts in the Labour Party as Blair's departure as party leader and prime minister looms. Before that day, he will pursue a "scorched earth policy", hoping he leaves his successor as little as possible that is progressive to inherit.

Blair wants to push ahead ever faster with a programme of neoliberal reforms - for the NHS, schools and college, benefits, etc. Nothing new there. What is new, however, is the increasing preparedness by a number of Labour MPs beyond the usual suspects in the Campaign Group to oppose the New Labour agenda.

This was demonstrated in the parliamentary defeat on Blair's anti-terrorism measures when 49 Labour MPs defied the whip and voted against the government plan to introduce detention without charge for 90 days. This, allied with the fact that Blair's majority is down to 66 since June's election, makes his position vulnerable. Continued privatisation at home and deceit and mass murder in Iraq has made Blair unpopular.

Opposition is likely to increase and this could take the timing of his departure out of his hands. Blair knows this and is acting to try and prevent serious opposition developing. Fresh from his defeat over the anti-terrorism bill Blair outlined his thinking on the future structure of the Labour Party in a speech on 15 October to a Progress conference at the TUC headquarters entitled "Renewing the party in government".

In the speech, Blair said that it's time for "further modernisation" in order

to sustain a Labour government through the third term and into a fourth. He then went on to outline two key areas that require changes.

On the question of trade union involvement in the Labour Party, he said: "A situation where constituency delegates regularly get voted down by a bloc union vote doesn't do any good for our relationship or credibility. The union relationship is important and we should keep it... But like everything it should be modernised."

At present the unions have 50 per cent of the vote at conference. Blair wants to reduce this figure much further. A clue to by how much was provided by Alan Johnson in a recent interview with *The Times* where he talked about the unions holding no more than 15 per cent of the votes at the conference in the future. Whatever the final figure turns out to be, there is little doubt that new proposals will be brought to next year's conference and that there will be a fight with the unions on this issue.

It's an irony of the modern Labour Party that today's right wingers pose as defenders of the rights of constituency delegates, while in previous decades it was the opposite with constituency delegates being termed "loony lefties". This is no accident. It is because the unions have formally opposed most of Blair's major policies that they are coming under attack. It is their votes at conference that provides the legitimacy for Labour MPs to vote in opposition to Blair. That's why their votes must be curtailed.

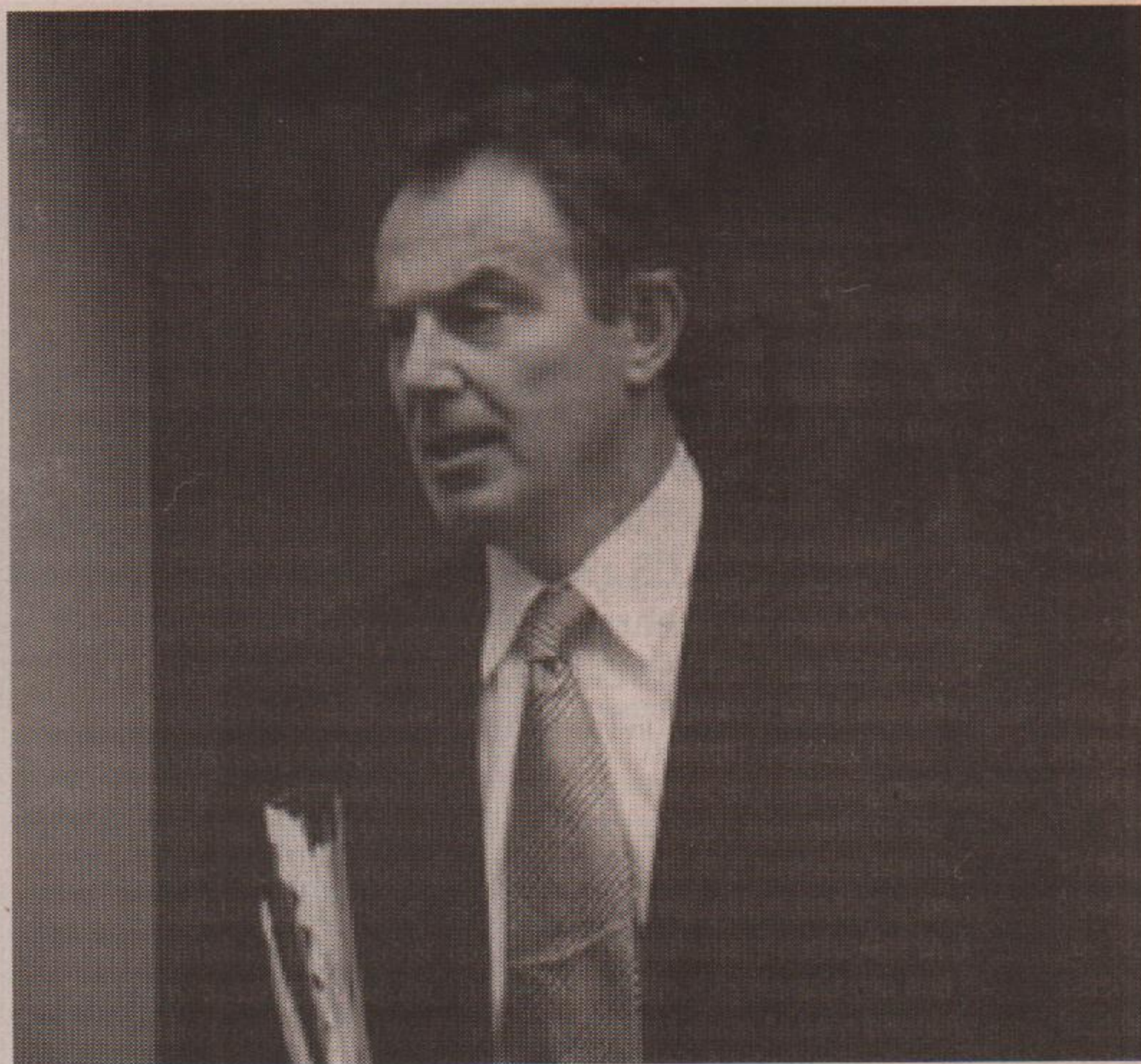
And all of this is notwithstanding the fact that on the key issue of our times - the war in Iraq - it has been the bloc vote wielding union bureaucrats who have protected Blair by refusing to follow through on opposition to the war at the party conference, usually ensuring it is taken off the agenda. This is now not good enough for Blair - the unions must not be allowed to oppose him on any issue for fear of derailing his right wing agenda.

At the same time the Blairites have found another excuse to float their plans for the bloc vote. The potential formation of a new "super union" means members and supporters will be squeezed out. The possibility of the four largest unions affiliated to Labour - T&G, GMB, Unison and Amicus - merging is cited as an undemocratic threat to the party.

The idea that this union could effectively determine conference policy through its bloc vote is posed as blackmail. However, what the Blairites fail to point out is that it is they who flout democracy by continually refusing to implement democratically agreed conference policies. For example, the last conference voted by a 71 per cent majority to extend trade union rights to take solidarity action - only to be told immediately by the leadership that such a policy will never see the light of day.

What Blair wants is not democracy but legitimacy conferred on decisions, cooked up in the number 10 policy unit by house-trained union officials and docile constituency delegates.

The second aspect of Blair's modernisation proposals is to involve Labour



supporters who are not members. Since Blair became prime minister in 1997, the party has lost 200,000 members, many constituency organisations barely function. At this year's conference only half the possible delegates turned up.

Blair estimates there are 100,000 supporters around the country and he argues that the party should be "opened up" to them. His model for this is the USA. In the Progress speech, Blair said: "There is a vast store of experience built up in the last US presidential campaign from the Republican's network of community volunteers to the remarkable use of the internet in the Dean campaign."

In other words the modern approach is to have virtual members rather than real ones. Why? Because if they are not members they can't vote and so the prospects for organised opposition are reduced. Yet they have time on their hands and money in their wallets - which must be tapped.

Even more, if you are struggling to get through repressive legislation in parliament you can organise an internet plebiscite of the supporters to isolate the opposition inside the party. The

focus group has always been a central force in the determination or fine-tuning of party policy under Blair; in this vision, it can become decisive.

The progressive weakening and bureaucratisation of the party structures must be resisted by Labour MPs and affiliated unions. They must throw out and vote down any attempt to dilute the influence of the unions in policy making. The Labour left and union leaders must expose every manoeuvre and trick that is run by the NEC as the plot is hatched.

In order to play any progressive role in re-equipping the working class to combat Blair and Brown, the Labour left needs to: challenge Blair for leadership; publicly resist all his pro-war, anti-welfare policies; defy the whip, even if this results in a split in the parliamentary party.

But we warn the Labour left and those who look to them in advance: the Labour Party cannot be "reclaimed" because it was never a party that could establish a socialist alternative in Britain.

Its leadership, as well as its centre opposition, would rather destroy it than see it used to seriously challenge capitalism. That's why we need a new one.

## Stop the Terrorism Bill

By Keith Harvey

The government's Terrorism Bill limped its way out of the House of Commons and into the House of Lords for its second reading last month. Having chosen to "tough it out" and face down his critics in the Labour Party over a key aspect of the bill, Blair received a humiliating defeat by 31 votes - his first parliamentary defeat since he was elected in 1997.

His majority melted away as 49 Labour MPs voted against him due to his refusal to back down on insisting that the police should be able to detain suspects without charge for up to 90 days for questioning. Nevertheless, an amendment from Labour MP David Winnick to extend the period of detention from the present 14 days to 28 days was adopted and all the other reactionary clauses to erode civil liberties remain intact.

When the bill was flagged up at the end of the summer - after the London bombings on 7/7 - most attention and outrage focused on the proposed offence of "glorifying terrorism". By the time the bill appeared in the Commons, this had been diluted to "encouraging terrorism".

As it stands, you could be convicted of this if you are reckless as to whether someone else will be incited to commit an act of terror by listening or reading to your words, irrespective of what you intended. It is already a criminal offence to incite someone to com-

mit a crime, but that requires a degree of intent be shown. No longer. People will not have any control over how their words are interpreted; it is enough for someone subsequently to say they were encouraged by words, however tenuous the connection.

It is also clear that any attempt to encourage people to overthrow an oppressive regime will be a crime under this law - whether that is Ceausescu in Romania in 1989 or the Mugabe regime in Zimbabwe today.

The determination to extend the time in police cells without being charged is most obviously an attempt by the police to go on fishing expeditions for intelligence, especially in the Muslim communities.

The profile of the London bombers from Yorkshire - integrated young British-born Muslim men - made the police determined to find out more about these "closed" communities. The revolt by MPs over 90 days was a recognition at least that they know this measure will stoke up resentment within the Muslim community and could even act as a recruiting sergeant for radical Islamist groups.

The third intact measure is the broadening of the proscribed organisation now to be extended to outlaw non-violent political organisations - a handy weapon to curb and cover the left and human rights groups.

Some critics complain that there is little need for new legislation when there is so much on the statute books

already that can be used to combat terrorism. One reason is purely political; Labour is determined to be seen to be doing something tough after 7/7 and to wrong-foot the Tories if there is another bomb outrage. But the new proposed measures do narrow even further the scope of the rights to organise, to free speech and to protest. Police powers are once more greatly increased.

All democratic and socialist forces should combine to derail this draft legislation. To this end it was good that a resolution was adopted at the Respect National Conference last month that said:

"The proposed anti-terror laws will seriously weaken human rights and civil liberties and will not prevent terrorist attacks. We therefore oppose all legislation currently being proposed or prepared which will be detrimental to civil liberties or freedom of speech in various ways. This includes..."

"The Terrorism Bill 2005 including its proposals for new crimes of incitement of, or encouragement of terrorism and the extension of police powers to hold suspects without charge..."

Well said; which is why it is astonishing that Respect leader and its only parliamentarian George Galloway voted for the amendment to increase the detention period to 28 days. Respect is exactly the kind of organisation that will be targeted by the new law if passed and, if for that reason alone, Respect should disown the actions of its main leader.

## Plan for NHS cuts

Patricia Hewitt, the health secretary, has ordered a winter round of NHS cuts to eliminate the deficit of up to £700m being forecast this year by hospitals and NHS trusts across England.

The cuts will lead to closure of wards and beds, even of smaller hospitals, a possible 8,000 redundancies and a freeze on vacancies. Already East Suffolk primary care trusts said patients will no longer be considered for hip and knee replacements at Ipswich hospital if they have a body mass index of more than 30, the clinical definition of obesity.

No one is denying the real reason is to meet the instruction to clear a £47m deficit by next April.

The national cuts plan was put together when the 28 strategic health authorities in England reported to Sir Nigel Crisp, chief executive of the NHS, that they were heading for a big deficit by next April.

Hewitt is desperate to ensure that NHS trusts have a balanced budget so that they can be made to compete with the private sector. Existing services are being put at risk to establish a competitive market system incorporating for-profit private providers in place of a planned system of public healthcare.

New Labour pledged to scrap the costly internal market system introduced by the Tories. But they have created a market in which the NHS competes on unequal terms with the private sector that is free to cherry-pick the most profitable specialities and treatments.

Hewitt's plans to spend billions on buying in treatment from private hospitals and treatment centres will therefore increase costs. Private sector care, especially for-profit care, costs more in almost every country where it is purchased alongside public provision.

The unions must match Crisp's emergency plan for cuts with an emergency plan for nation-wide resistance to the closures, service restrictions and threats to jobs.

A conference of rank and file union delegates and community campaigns like Keep the NHS Public should meet to thrash out a campaign of strikes this winter to ensure the government coughs up the money needed to keep the NHS functioning and not give more financial handouts to private providers.

# Robbing a generation of young women

In the third of our series of articles looking at current issues affecting women, *Kirstie Paton* charts the lack of progress towards the United Nations goal of equal rights in education



An estimated 60 million girls are still denied access to education

Last month, the Millennium plus five World Summit met in New York to review progress in meeting the Millennium declaration, a set of targets agreed by United Nations member states to tackle global poverty and inequality by 2015. Like the G8 summit in Edinburgh of this year, it became a major focus for anti-poverty activists, especially organisations campaigning for the rights of young women across the globe to an education.

Five years ago, the UN Millennium summit set just one goal for achievement in 2005: gender parity in primary and secondary education. Despite worthy speeches from the likes of Kofi Annan and Hilary Clinton, the UN and the 189 heads of state that signed the declaration have failed to deliver on this promise. Over 90 countries still fail to offer girls equal access to education.

An estimated 60 million girls are still denied access to education. Of the nearly one billion adults who cannot read and write, almost two thirds are women. It is a tragedy that any child is robbed of the opportunity to go to school, but girls experience far more barriers to education than boys.

In South Asia, for example, only 63 per cent of girls completed primary education compared to 84 per cent of boys in 2000. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the situation is far worse: 46 per cent of girls compared to 56 per cent of boys. In secondary school, only one in five girls are enrolled at school and this figure has hardly changed in recent years. There have been gains in parity in some regions, but this often reflects a reduction in the number of boys in school as much as an increase in girls.

This continuing gender disparity in education has enormous consequences for women in the developing world and is an important factor that ensures women continue to experience poverty, exploitation and oppression. The Global Campaign for Education in their report *Girls can't*

*wait* (2005) spells out the consequences for women who have been denied access to schooling (see box). Because of the devastating impact of poor educational opportunities for girls, the UN and international development agencies see this as a priority for achieving a range of other goals in relation to population, health and poverty.

Yet despite all the targets and pronouncements by the World Bank and others, progress has been poor, and in many parts of the world girls have less chance of getting to school than they did 30 years ago. Tremendous progress was made toward universal primary education during 1960 to 1980, but by the 1980s school enrolments had slumped. Neoliberalism, the economic policy sporned by Thatcher and Regan, brought free market economics. By the 1990s, many countries were saddled with massive debts as their economies went to the wall under competition in the global markets.

IMF Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) were imposed on governments as a condition for future loans and these adjustments had devastating effects on public services, especially education and health. Cut backs and privatisations were the orders of the day. In countries such as Kenya and Uganda school fees were introduced. The more expensive education is the less likely families are to invest in education for girls and enrolment for girls fell dramatically. Poverty is a major factor in access to school for girls, and under the international cosh of the SAPs poverty and inequality increased.

Surveys from developing countries show that children from the poorest 20 per cent of households are three to four times more likely to be out of primary school than those from the wealthiest 20 per cent. In some regions and countries, this is even more dramatic: in the former Soviet Union and central/eastern European region (CIS/CEE) as a whole the

poorest children are 1.6 times more likely to be out of primary school, while the ratio stretches to 4.5 in both Middle East/North Africa, and in Latin America/Caribbean this rises to a 4.5 fold difference. Yet even in the CIS/CEE region, individual countries show wide disparities: in both Kazakhstan and the Republic of Moldova, children from the poorest households are at least 5.0 times more likely to be out of school than richer children.

## LESS STATUS

The unequal enrolment of girls is both a reflection of women's oppression and a major factor perpetuating inequality. Girls simply have less status in patriarchal cultures. In many parts of the world, the division of labour within the household reinforces the view that a women's role is as a wife and mother. Why should the family invest in their daughter's education when her main role will be to marry and raise a family? In subsistence farming households, girls and women play an essential role in feeding and caring for the family. In Africa, the colonial legacy of cash crop plantations for export means that men will often leave the home to work as agricultural labourers. Women and their children will be left to run the farm and it is not uncommon

for girls to work an average of 10 hours a day.

In countries hard hit by HIV/AIDS, girls are shouldering much of the burden of caring for the sick and looking after younger children. Under these conditions, it is extremely difficult for families to send their daughters to school. In sub-Saharan Africa, one million children have lost a teacher to AIDS; others, often girls, have to leave school to look after sick parents or other siblings. Globally 10.4 million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS.

Where acute poverty persists, girls will more than likely be forced to work rather than attend school. In the sweatshop industries that have sprung up in countries like Cambodia, Indonesia and Vietnam, young girls are employed in the textile factories producing garments for multinationals like Nike and Gap. Employers assume this will be a compliant and subservient workforce and with little need for training, young girls work 10-hour shifts, six days a week for less than a dollar a day.

The very same leaders who justified the invasion of Afghanistan to 'liberate' women from the Taliban are happy to see US and British based multinationals reap their super profits by exploiting child labour in the developing world. Only immediate and effective measures to eradicate child labour will allow children to attend school.

That is why the Millennium Goals issued by the UN ring hollow. In reality, there is no serious commitment to providing education to children across the globe. Any real commitment would require enormous investment by governments in the developing world. But how can such governments invest in education when they are paying back debts to the West? Only the immediate cancellation of all debt from the Third World could release the capital needed to provide free universal education.

The pernicious role of organisations like the World Bank and the IMF should be exposed for what it is - exploitative. World Bank projects are driven by capitalist ideology - for example, offering aid on the condition that it is spent on the establishment of private fee paying education and the use of western expertise in the establishment of such programmes. Oxfam recently exposed the so-called benevolent role of the IMF in Zimbabwe where the structural readjustment programme imposed on the population has led to the sacking of more than 8,000 teachers.

A massive injection of aid to the developing world could have a profound effect

on getting girls into school. When Uganda abolished fees girls enrolment increased by 20 per cent overnight. When the Bangladeshi government introduced cash stipends in certain areas for female pupils, girls' enrolments rose double the national average. In Lesotho where AIDS was causing a mass exodus from schools, free education combined with school food programmes is attracting orphans back to school.

And yet the total G8 aid to basic education amounts to about half the cost of one Stealth bomber. But Blair and Bush have a different set of priorities - they would rather prosecute a bloody war for oil than offer the chance of millions of girls an education.

## WAR ON TERROR

There is another irony to the imperialist's war on terror. Part of their project to "democratise" Islamic regimes like Afghanistan and Iraq is the recognition that patriarchal practices, such as denying women the right to participate in public life, hinders capitalist development. An illiterate workforce is unlikely to reach economic take off so essential for industrialisation and a consumer lead market. Malthusian concerns about population control in the developing world have led to various development programmes in health and family planning.

The neo-conservatives hope such intervention will lead to the liberation of women from these backward religious cultures and release this untapped resource. In fact the opposite is true - the Middle East and Asia has experienced a resurgence of Islam as a reaction to Imperialism's domination in the region. Iraqi society today is far less secular and this has real consequences for women as Islamic ideology reasserts patriarchal practices. That is why part of the struggle for women's liberation lies in challenging these practices and demanding the rights of girls to participate in public life equally alongside their brothers. As socialists, we recognise that only by standing side by side with those fighting imperialism can we begin to challenge the sexist practices that are so deeply rooted in these societies.

Only a global movement based on militant struggle against imperialist domination and exploitation can begin to address the enormous inequalities that women face. Organisations such as *Global Campaign for Education* and *send a friend to school* have played an important role in highlighting the fact that 60 million girls will be denied the chance to open their minds and change their future through learning. But their strategy of lobbying UN summits simply won't do it.

Our inspiration should come from the women themselves, from South Africa to Bolivia, who have fought IMF imposed privatisation programmes and are at the fore in demanding the rights for their sons and daughters to enjoy school rather than be forced to work. We need a campaign that does everything to expose the rotten nature of an economic system that places more value on a barrel of oil than the potential of a child's imagination. We also need to start looking at the practical steps socialists can take to help build such campaigns within the global anti-capitalist movement.

## Girls out of school: the impact

- Failure to reach the 2005 UN girls' education goal will result in over 1 million unnecessary child and maternal deaths; 10 million over a decade
- HIV/AIDS infection rates are doubled among young people who do not finish primary school. If every girl and boy completed primary education, at least 7 million new cases of HIV could be prevented in a decade
- Failure to educate women perpetuates needless hunger. Gains in women's education contributed most to reducing malnutrition between 1970-1995
- Women with education are better able to successfully resist debilitating practices such as female genital cutting, early marriage and domestic abuse by male partners

Source: Global Campaign for Education, *Girls can't wait* (2005) [www.campaignforeducation.org](http://www.campaignforeducation.org)

Perhaps prompted by the RMT union's calling of a conference on working class political representation in the New Year, the Socialist Party's (SP) leadership has also sprung into action. With a series of articles in *The Socialist* and in *Socialism Today* and a declaration produced at *Socialism 2005*, the SP has launched a campaign for a new workers party.

Workers Power (WP) agrees with the SP that the time is ripe for such a campaign. Indeed we have been arguing this policy for several years – both within the now defunct Socialist Alliance (SA) and in particular since both the RMT and the FBU left the Labour Party.

As the SP says, the outright neoliberal and pro-big business policies of New Labour have alienated hundreds of thousands of class conscious workers, many former supporters and members of the Labour Party – a party that has shrunk from 400,000 to 200,000 members in a few years. The growth of the Scottish Socialist Party, the considerable votes that the SA received in 2002, and the success of Respect in the last election all point to the fact that important sections of workers and youth are fed up with Labour and looking for a left wing alternative.

Indeed, one of our criticisms of the SP has been that, while it has formally been in favour of a new mass workers party, it has done very little to bring it about – preferring to concentrate on its own electoral campaigns. WP, despite our smaller size, has taken up the question and played no small part in getting the RMT to call the January conference. The SP with much greater trade union forces at its disposal – as can be seen from the signatories to its recent declaration – has left its “campaign” at the level of propaganda, through occasional articles or slogans in its paper and journal.

The decision by the SP to launch a campaign and invite others to join it is therefore a step forward. WP immediately responded positively, with proposals for joint work and we still await a response from the SP leadership.

We do not hide the fact that we think there are serious political problems with the way the SP leadership approaches the question of building a new, mass workers party. Firstly there is their analysis of the Labour Party and history of work within it.

For decades the Militant Tendency (forerunner of the SP) did entry work in Labour, believing that the only route to a mass revolutionary party was through “reclaiming” the party for Marxism. Those who worked outside, or who criticised their perspective of transforming Labour, were denounced as “sectarians on the fringes of the labour movement”. With Neil Kinnock's purge of the Militant in the 1980s, the closing down of Militant's key base, the Young Socialists, and the expulsion of its leadership, Militant began to reassess – a process that led to a major split in their organisation.

It decided that the Labour Party itself had changed. It was no longer to be considered a vehicle for working class change – it had become an out and out bourgeois party, one that was neither reclaimable nor reformable.

The old Militant point of view nevertheless finds its way into the declaration. We are told that “In the past the Labour Party, however imperfectly, provided a voice for the working class”, that the “Labour Party conference no longer has any power”, that the

# HOW DO WE BUILD A NEW WORKERS PARTY?

At its recent national event *Socialism 2005* the Socialist Party launched a campaign for a new workers party. *Stuart King* looks at some of the problems in their approach

“chance to reclaim the Labour Party has long past”.

But Labour was always, as Lenin insisted, a bourgeois workers party – a party with a bourgeois programme and leadership, one that always defended big business. At the same time, it was a party with organic links to a mass working class base. It was the possibility of turning this base against its pro-capitalist leaders that made united fronts with, and even entry into the party an important tactic for revolutionaries.

Labour was never a “voice of the working class” in the sense of defending its real interests – although it put through some reforms in the interests of workers. On important issues, the conference never had any power; its decisions were ignored – over nuclear disarmament, for example – just as they are today. Nor was it ever “reclaimable” – its leaders would have split and destroyed the party rather than lose control of it. Yet to endorse the declaration of a new workers party, workers and organisations signing will have to agree with the SP's idea of a “golden age” of Labour. Clearly this is a non-starter.

## REFORM OR REVOLUTION?

There is an even more serious error in the SP's approach to building a new workers party. From the outset they believe that such a party will be a reformist one. Indeed, like the SWP and ISG in Respect, the SP believes it would be a mistake to put forward a revolutionary programme, as the basis for the new party. Thus Peter Taaffe declares “Consciousness has been thrown back, partly because of the lingering effects of the collapse of the Berlin wall and the idea of socialism and a planned economy, together with the effects of neoliberal policies. It is therefore necessary for any new formation or party to proceed, in the first instance, with a

basic programme, which can unite significant left forces, appealing above all to the new generation.” (*Socialism Today* 96, November 2005)

What Taaffe is saying is that the workers who are likely to rally to a new workers party are not class conscious enough to accept a revolutionary, anti-capitalist programme. Instead he puts forward

**Of course Workers Power does not think that workers and trade unions breaking from Labour will immediately embrace revolutionary socialism, but we do think it is our duty to explain why only such a programme can defeat capitalism and liberate workers**

the following programme of “basic fighting demands”:

- The immediate abolition of the legal ban on “secondary industrial action” and the repeal of all Thatcher's anti-union legislation.
- No to privatisation in schools, hospitals, the civil service, etc.
- For a fully funded, democratic socialist health service and for the immediate taking into public ownership of the pharmaceutical monopolies, compensation being only on the basis of proven need.
- A living national minimum wage at the level of at least the European decency threshold and a living pension for all, as well as opposition to the government's programme to raise the age of retirement for public sector workers.
- For a socialist, democratic housing programme and a crash programme to build cheap, “social housing” for those most in need.
- For a democratic socialist plan to save the environment, both in Britain and worldwide, with concrete measures to undo the environmental damage done by unrestricted capitalism.

• For the public ownership of the “commanding heights” of the economy.”

(*The Socialist* 17 November) This is an appallingly inadequate programme, even as “basic fighting demands”. No mention of the fight against war and for ending the occupation of Iraq, of fighting the attacks on civil liberties – the so called anti-terror legislation.

ing the workers’ “consciousness has been thrown back”.

The SP leaders regularly claim they base their ideas on Leon Trotsky's method. Yet this is what Trotsky had to say about the relation of programme to consciousness:

“Here we must ask ourselves if the programme should be adapted to the mentality of the workers or to the present objective economic or social conditions of the country... The programme must express the objective tasks of the working class rather than the backwardness of the workers... It is an instrument to overcome and vanquish backwardness. That is why we must express in our programme the whole acuteness of the social crises of the capitalist society.” (*The Political Backwardness of the American Workers*, May 1938)

The SP leadership long ago abandoned this revolutionary method, as did the SWP and the ISG. Little in terms of method separates the SP from Respect, Taaffe's criticisms of which are largely organisational.

## FEDERALISM

Taaffe explains how the SP too discussed with Galloway the launching of a “broad, left party” and did not turn their back on the project immediately. Rather, they waited to see “what his formations' political character was and, crucially, what kind of structures would be set up” (our emphasis). That is, it was not the SWP/Respect's adoption of a reformist programme or even the explicit avoidance of the word socialism that led to the break, but rather, “crucially”, the organisation. Respect rejected the notion of a “federal structure” and based itself too narrowly on “a section of the Muslim population” (*Socialism Today* 96).

Why does the SP leadership fetishise the “loose federal structure”? Why is this the key question? Taaffe suggests the SA floundered

because the SWP “refused to accept the traditional method of the British labour movement in forming political organisations, in particular the federal principle”. Respect did the same at its founding meeting “excluding the Socialist Party”. On their new initiative they say, “it is vital that the most democratic, federal and loose type of organisation is adopted in the first instance”.

We certainly want trade unions to affiliate to such a party, and left parties and groups too. Thus we recognise that it is quite likely to be federal in structure, initially. But this is not a good thing in itself. An effective fighting organisation needs the maximum unity in both its programme and in action. It needs to be both democratic and centralised. In this sense revolutionaries should never enshrine federalism as a principle. If federalism is the predominant tradition of the British Labour movement this is only because there was never a mass Marxist party.

But this is 2005, not 1906. We have a century's experience of party building. Most importantly we have the lessons of Bolshevism and the Communist International. Just as our goal should be to win the new party to a revolutionary transitional programme, so too it should be to win it to becoming a democratic centralist combat party. We do not want another party dominated by union bureaucrats, MPs and local councillors.

It is true that a movement for a new workers party and the first steps to founding one may require organisational compromises with the trade unions and political organisations. To the extent that this campaign remains a united front of different forces we are in favour of each of them being able to express their own point of view in their own public press. But we are also in favour of disciplined unity in action.

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

All those who think it is necessary to build a new working class party should welcome the SP's initiative and join in the campaign for a new workers party. We should be forming committees for a new workers party in the localities wherever we can, drawing in workers, students and youth.

We hope the SP leadership sincerely means it when it says that any “pre-party formations be open, democratic and welcoming to all those who want to work together against the neoliberal onslaught on the working class”. We hope the instruction from the SP's leadership to its Leicester branch to pull out from a joint meeting on building a new workers party with WP was not a symptom of how the SP intends to run its campaign.

We should push for a maximum mobilisation for the RMT conference and argue for the right to put resolutions to that conference. If key trade unions like the RMT and FBU take a lead then there is no doubt that Respect, despite at the moment setting its face against it, will in whole or part come on board.

Such an outcome is certainly not a foregone conclusion. We do not think, as the SP seems to, that Bob Crow has “courageously and consistently” argued for a new party. Crow has in fact said the new workers party should not be on the agenda of the January conference. To achieve such an outcome will be a result of struggle against Bob Crow.

The fight for a new workers party and to break the unions from Labour will essentially be a fight against the union bureaucracy.

# Respect: class politics ditched in search of electoral breakthrough

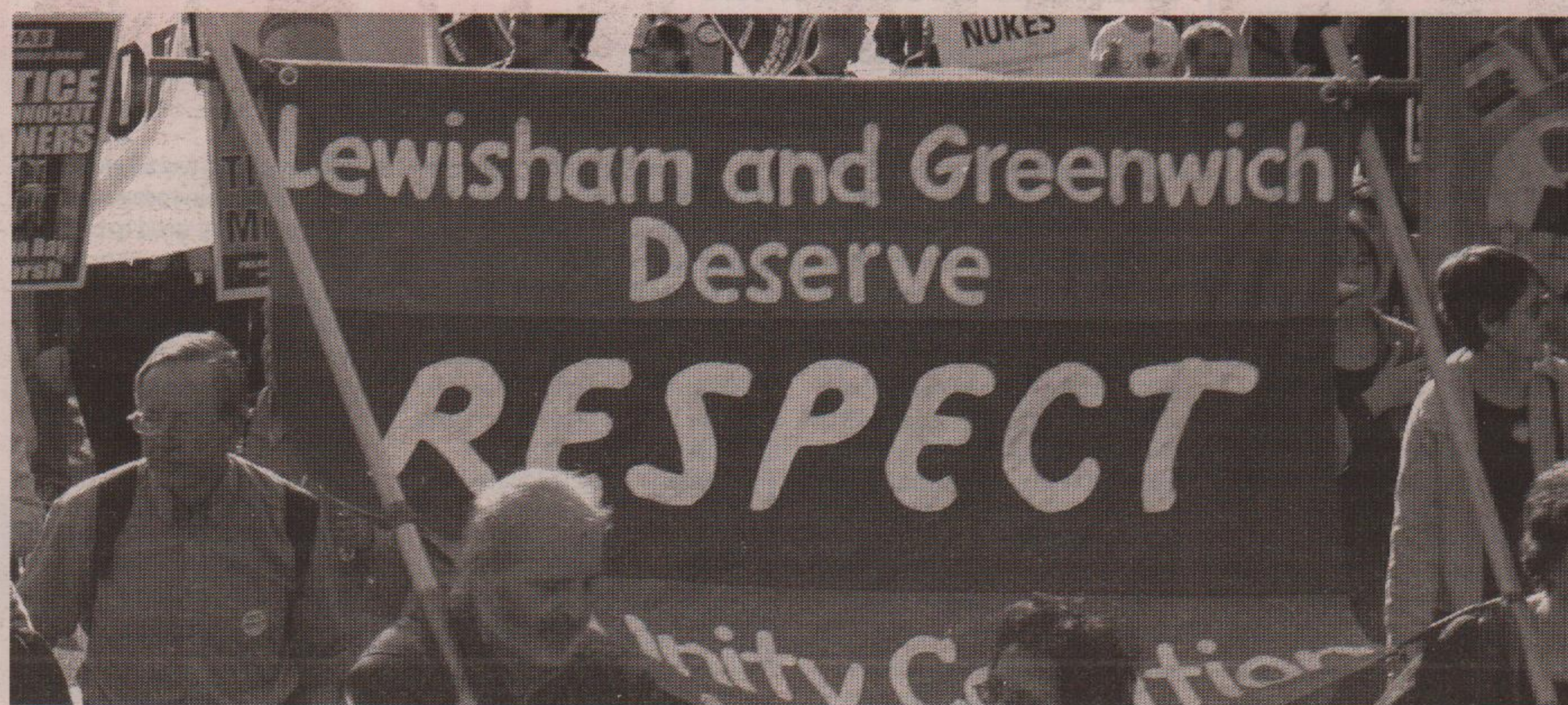
Jeremy Dewar reports on Respect's second annual conference and its further right wing drift

Respect held its second conference in London on the 19-20th November. Only 250 delegates attended, a small gathering for a party that claimed last summer to have made a breakthrough. As Alan Thornett – of the International Socialist Group (ISG) and a Respect National Council member – pointed out, the party has failed to grow since the election of George Galloway back in June.

For the Socialist Workers Party and George Galloway, who are the originators and controllers of the Respect project, the answer to this problem is less socialist politics and ever more concessions to liberalism, in particular the middle class and clerical parts of the Muslim community.

Despite a section on the trade unions, not one of the 45 resolutions up for debate mentioned the working class as the agent of social change. The only resolution tabled on the economy called for “an exploratory discussion of western and Islamic attitudes to economic policy”. While nationalisation of services like transport and healthcare were called for, these were within the framework of the Muslim concept of *dawa* (welfare), rather than the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and democratic socialist planning.

The one mention of socialism, in a motion calling for greater democratic accountability of the leadership, was actually voted down. Even a resolution support-



ing lesbian and gay rights was only passed after the SWP had amended it to insinuate that the gay rights group OutRage is racist.

It must have been hard for the guests from the Scottish Socialist Party, Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire and Linkspartei – or anyone else – to believe they were at a left party conference.

Ironically even the SWP decided that Respect National Council's main resolution on civil liberties had gone too far to the right and had to be amended. References to “the sacrifices made by our forefathers during the Second World War”, the “community and brotherhood of human beings”, and “the harmony and diversity that is Britain” were at the last minute

erased.

The only contentious policy resolutions were on subjects that would cause Respect's sole MP George Galloway discomfort. Resolutions declaring opposition to the government's proposed laws on incitement to religious hatred (which threaten individuals rights to attack and criticise religion by extending the blasphemy laws to cover Islam) and to immigration controls were both defeated overwhelmingly.

On the latter point, SWP members were dragooned to the microphone to explain why they were objecting to policy that they and the SWP supported. But this simply revealed their rank opportunism; one delegate said she

did not want to alienate white workers by fighting for policies that most might not agree with because “Respect, unlike the SWP, should become a mass party”.

Another, Gary Macfarlane, likened no borders policy to the abolition of the wages system, something socialists might agree on, but not fight for as it would contradict the struggle for pay rises. The fact that this socialist aim is in the RMT's rulebook has never stopped the railworkers' union fighting for wage increases!

In another decade, carrying out a different “turn”, the Cliffites would have scoffed at such excuses, indeed one remembers only a few years ago how they took on

the Socialist Party in the Socialist Alliance when they tried to delete the slogan “No Immigration Controls” from the SA founding programme.

But the real purpose of the weekend was to shield Respect's prize celebrity leaders from criticism and the SWP from any accountability. So, a perfectly principled motion and debate condemning the public sector union leaders' treacherous deal on pensions passed without a single mention of the fact that Respect member Mark Serwotka was one of those very leaders!

John Rees, national secretary and SWP central committee member, summed up the relationship between the leaders and

members of Respect with a blistering piece of demagoguery, “What George Galloway said in the House of Commons after the 7 July – that was political leadership. Resolutions and structures are important, but you can't write down in a resolution the kind of political leadership that will build Respect and get us elected. If you want a national secretary or an MP sitting behind a desk answering e-mails, then you can get yourselves another one.” Accountability and initiative are counterposed. If you want one, you can't have the other. Conveniently, a tame conference hall agreed.

At the heart of these errors lies a belief that principles can be ditched, like fetishes, in order to grab some supposed golden opportunity to make an electoral breakthrough. Concessions to the Muslim middle class, however, will slow down and prevent progress in winning over radical Muslim youth, including young women, as well as Muslim workers and others in the trade unions.

Those people from ethnic and religious minorities who face discrimination, racism, poor housing conditions and low pay could be won to a party that fights for their interests alongside white workers and others who are oppressed, such as women or lesbians and gays. But having an “exploratory discussion of western and Islamic attitudes to economic policy” isn't going to do this.

## RMT conference

Get your trade union branch to support and send delegates to the RMT's conference and send a letter to the RMT, arguing for the conference to debate resolutions.

**Conference on the crisis of working class political representation**  
Saturday 21 January, Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London

Pass this resolution to go forward to the RMT conference

### FORWARD TO A NEW WORKING CLASS PARTY

1. This conference recognises that the Labour Party is the party of privatisation, imperialist war and racism. It has become nakedly pro-big business and anti-union. It has effectively expelled more militant unions like the RMT and the FBU and its leadership is plotting to minimise the capacity of affiliated unions, which make huge financial contributions, to influence policy.

2. This conference further recognises that the Labour Party is New Labour. It is now impossible to reform it through conference resolutions, leadership challenge or constituency selection of candidates. Gordon Brown has made it clear that, if and when he takes over, he will not introduce any change of substance in the Labour Party; Blairism will continue as Brownism.

3. This conference therefore resolves to launch a campaign for a new mass party of the working class. The campaign will

- approach the leaders and the rank and file of all the trade unions, as well as the numerous political and social organisations like Stop the War, etc. inviting them to affiliate to the campaign
- organise fringe meetings at union conferences
- convene regional conferences in late Spring or early Summer 2006 as a means of i) gathering support, ii) hammering out policies and organisational proposals for the new party, and iii) agreeing on joint action against Labour and the employers' offensive.

4. This conference also resolves to work towards a recall conference, made up of delegates from affiliated bodies and local branches of the campaign, in the Autumn of 2006, where the structure, rules and political programme of a new workers party will be debated, and, if agreed, the new party will be founded. A steering committee, elected today, will oversee the campaign and make the necessary arrangements for this conference.

## Respect and the struggle for a new working class party

The RMT has called a conference of trade union delegates, political organisations and campaigning groups to discuss the crisis of working class political representation in January next year. Respect should have immediately embraced this conference if it wanted a left alternative backed by the trade unions. It should have organised support for the conference amongst the trade unions where it has support – the FBU, CWU, Amicus and PCS – where it has executive members.

Instead they have adopted a sectarian, boycotting position. They argue Respect is the new party the working class needs and that people like Bob Crow should join them. This was the line taken by Galloway and Serwotka at a recent meeting in London called “What way forward for the unions?” Members of the Socialist Party and Workers Power were of course not allowed to speak in favour of the conference, but this did not stop the top table from denouncing it in no uncertain terms in their summing up.

The RMT conference could be the start of a serious debate about the programme, structure and goals of a new mass working class party, based on the trade unions. It could relaunch the campaign, stalled since the demise of the Socialist Alliance, to break the monopoly hold of Labour over the trade unions and win them to a socialist

alternative.

In that debate, in that campaign, Workers Power will argue strongly for a revolutionary action programme. Real power, we will say, does not lie in parliament; we must mobilise the working class and the radicalised poor to establish their own power, based on democratic workers councils. We will warn that the capitalists will not give up their power and wealth without a fight; a revolution will be needed to seize the banks and factories. Imperialist capitalism is an international system; so must our resistance be internationalist. We will fight for the new party to seek allies abroad and establish a new, revolutionary International, a Fifth International.

Of course, we will very likely be in a minority to start with. Many workers, who now want a new party, think that the road of major social reforms, step by step nationalisation, if seriously pursued, will lead to a socialist Britain. Many self-professed revolutionaries, unfortunately, will refuse to argue for a revolutionary programme, because they think workers' are reformist and only a long evolution will change that. They will reinforce these workers reformist perspectives at precisely the time they are becoming open to new arguments, revolutionary ones – this is the tragedy of Respect which must not be repeated in any new campaign for a workers party.

## Post Worker

A postal worker explains the vital role a newspaper can play in organising the rank and file and assesses how well the *Post Worker* bulletin fulfils this role

Lenin famously called the revolutionary newspaper the "scaffolding" on which the communist party is built, getting out the message and organising its members and, through them, wider layers of workers. The same is true for a rank and file movement in the unions. It needs a regular bulletin or paper, controlled by its members, in order to argue its tactics to its readership and become a factor in the key debates taking place in the union.

A rank and file paper, if it is to fulfil these tasks, needs to be open to the membership and activists. While maintaining an editorial line developed in democratic conferences of the rank and file, it should become a genuine mouthpiece and sounding board of the membership, full of letters but also opening up its pages to take on the arguments from the leadership or others in the union, the better to win them decisively. It should report the news that members might not otherwise hear, reports from the workplaces and union branches on strikes, victimisations, protest actions and organising efforts, both the victories and the defeats.

Such a paper would not just be a debating society for the militants of the union, it would become an important tool to cohere the membership of the union around its left wing and to win wider layers to taking up its tactics and supporting its campaigns.

*Post Worker* is the most consistently produced bulletin from the Socialist Workers Party in recent years. How does it measure up as a rank and file bulletin?

*Post Worker* is a well produced bulletin, with a good coverage of current disputes in the union, from tackling what we need out of technical agreements like the new Industrial Relations Framework, to how to build workplace organisation and political issues, like the opening up of the post to competition in 2006, and privatisation of Royal Mail.

It has a range of writers, mostly SWP members, but some pro-Labour, with a good spread from around the country. When there is a real debate going on in the union, such as the 2003 election battle for Deputy General Secretary (Postal) between John Keggie and Dave Ward, the full page of letters shows that *Post Worker* is read and workers respond to it.

Neither does it just take on the issues, but it also reports the action, and always reports on protests and the anti-war movement. This year it had limited debates about whether to vote Labour or Respect. Its format and balance of coverage is excellent.

What is frustrating about *Post Worker* is that five years on it remains a bulletin, not a movement. The most "organisation" it has is electing an editorial board at a fringe meeting at the CWU's annual conference. It has no conference of its own to debate its policy and generate campaigns, no members to agitate for it and no meetings to organise the rank and file. It has called no conferences for militants in the CWU, nor organised any campaigns within the

union itself. Constant articles on the BNP never once argue for posties to boycott their leaflets or offer ways to organise such action.

Since it has never gone beyond being a newspaper, its impact on the union has remained minimal, despite reported orders of up to 5,000 copies.

Why has the potential of *Post Worker* never been realised?

In a nutshell: the SWP's control of the editorial board of *Post Worker*. While they may want to encourage debate, they don't want anyone to challenge their control. Throwing the editorial line open to democratically decided positions by the rank and file members or enabling rank and file activists to take initiatives not sanctioned by their central committee is not an option for the SWP.

The SWP's orientation towards the leadership of the union also limits their willingness to allow criticism of the bureaucracy. The SWP wants to avoid alienating the left wing of the CWU bureaucracy. This approach becomes clear from

### **Post Worker floats on the radicalism of the rank and file - and adjusts its policies accordingly**

the content of the articles in *Post Worker*. Despite sharp criticism of leaders such as Billy Hayes' sell-out over the privatisation of the postal engineering section ROME, this is the exception rather than the rule. This year Billy Hayes had columns in two issues, just like he does in the CWU's own magazine *Voice!* In fact *Post Worker* ducks consistent criticism of the last five years of sell-outs and inadequate action by the leadership.

*Post Worker* has never debated or adopted a political programme. The SWP defends this fact, by saying they don't want to "impose" their politics. Fine, let's have a democratic debate then and then decide on policy, that is how the workers movement sorts out internal differences.

Their failure to fight for politics which could build a rank and file organisation in the post leads to the SWP tailing the left bureaucrats. In fact, Jane Loftus, the party's member on the national executive, explained that she voted for "Major Change" a management package that involved job cuts, in order to "maintain the unity of the left": unity of the graveyard, more like!

*Post Worker* floats on the radicalism of the rank and file - and adjusts its policies accordingly. What it doesn't do is map out a way to channel that radicalism into a wholesale transformation of the union. And isn't this just what the left leaders of the unions always do too?

*Post Worker* does have successes here and there, but overall it fails to seriously challenge the CWU bureaucracy or reorient the union. Either the SWP changes tack and transforms the bulletin into the nucleus of a rank and file movement, or *Post Worker* will not merit more than a footnote in the history of the CWU.

Many union activists believe that electing left officials can defend workers' interests. But *Kate Ford* argues that this strategy is doomed unless control of the unions is wrested from the bureaucrats

The year 2005 began with the prospect of over a million public sector workers uniting to defend pension rights. The Labour government were on the back foot, horrified by the prospect of a massive strike in the run up to the election. A new layer of trade union leaders, dubbed the "awkward squad" by the press, were gearing up to make life very awkward for Blair and co. In the game of Pensions Poker it seemed like we held all the cards.

The year 2005 ends with a "deal" between the government and the union leaders which will divide the workforce with current employees able to retire at 60, whilst new workers will be forced to work until 65. Also left out in the cold are local government workers, among the lowest paid in the public sector.

The *Economist* estimates that the agreement with the unions has saved the government £13 billion over the next 50 years. The government gets £13 billion, existing workers get nothing and new workers get to pay.

So where did it all go wrong? Who threw away our winning hand?

So we were betrayed, we were misled. If we could just get rid of these incompetents and get some new leaders, would we win? Well, apart from the fact that it is incredibly difficult to get rid of union leaders once elected, the solution isn't really about individ-

uals. It's about politics: the politics of the bureaucracy and the politics which dominate the left in unions.

Marxists understand that the nature of the bureaucracy stems from the role they play in class society. Their existence relies on appearing to be honest brokers between the workers and the bosses.

Marx and Engels located the emergence of the bureaucracy in the British trade unions with the development of a "labour aristocracy". As certain sections of workers became relatively more privileged, with higher wages, they could afford to pay union dues to employ full time officials. Part of their role was to maintain the scarcity of skilled labour in order to secure higher wages and better conditions.

Alongside this development, the workers' political struggle resulted in the right to vote for skilled male workers with the 1867 Reform Act. The bosses began to use this new layer of labour leaders to neutralise and control the expanding working class electorate. The union leaders obliged by delivering their votes to the Liberal Party.

Marx and Engels also pointed to the failure to break down craft divisions between unions, their failure to reach out to the unorganised, less secure workers, the tendency to ban politics inside the unions, and the very structures of the unions, which left 99 per cent

# HOW SHOULD WE MAKE THEM

of members passive: all elements, which still exist in today's unions; all elements that need to be combated.

Unfortunately the bureaucrats in the leadership were never our only problem. On the contrary, they are the natural consequence of these other ailments in our organisations.

Of course that doesn't mean that they are insignificant in the struggle, or that we can afford to ignore them. Revolutionaries cannot stand aside from the question of leadership. The mistakes occur when we raise this aspect of the union above all others. When the answer to all our problems is seen as simply getting enough "good" left leaders, rather than a more fundamental political transformation of the union. This is the politics of the "broad lefts".

What is a broad left? The name derives from the policy of the Communist Party in the 1960s and 1970s to build networks among branch secretaries and officials to get the vote out for new left wing candidates in union elections. The Stalinists were never interested in dissolving the bureaucracy; after all, their whole politics rested on the defence of the Soviet bureaucratic tyrannies. Indeed, the classic Broad Lefts usually dissolved themselves once they got their candidate installed.

Today, this policy is kept alive in a number of unions: Unison United Left, PCS Left Unity, Social-

ist Teachers Alliance, and others. In most of them, organisations to the left of the Stalinists are dominant: Socialist Workers Party, Socialist Party, Alliance for Workers Liberty and the Labour left. Most of them add campaigning and solidarity activities to electioneering, but all of them share a strategy that does not go beyond the election of left general secretaries and executives.

This task becomes paramount. As a result, the broad lefts compromise their own politics or hide their political organisation in the hope of attracting more votes. For example, in last year's general secretary campaign in the National Union of Teachers, Martin Powell-Davies stood. At organising meetings there were discussions about whether to include in campaign material the fact that Martin was a member of the Socialist Party. Despite arguments from Workers Power members and others, it was decided not to.

Broad leftism, because it prioritises the election of lefts, is always subject to this pressure. The election campaigns of many left candidates do not serve to galvanise the struggle, but often result in watering down divisions and smothering dissent in the desperate attempt to win enough votes.

And what happens when the left candidate does get elected? Again the politics of broad leftism leads ultimately, and painfully over and over again, to defeat. Just look

## What became of the Aw

The most recent experience of left union leaders is that of the "Awkward Squad". They comprised Andy Gilchrist (FBU), Mick Rix (Aslef), Bob Crow (RMT), Mark Serwotka (PCS), Billy Hayes (CWU), Paul Mackney (Natfhe) and Jeremy Dear (NUJ).

Unlike the emergence of other left leaders in the movement's history these men (and they are all men!) did not sweep to power on a wave of strikes. Rather, they emerged in parallel with the anti-globalisation movement and rising anger against Labour. Not having been elected on the back of action, they acquired their kudos by reflecting the successes of the anti-capitalist movement and gave vent to the frustration of workers who had elected their party, Labour, and was getting nothing in return.

The experience of the Awkward Squad provides important lessons for the future. Let's take three of them: Rix, Gilchrist and Serwotka.

First Mick Rix, who succeeded in winning the leadership of Aslef despite a vicious campaign against him from the right wing. Once elected he took on the right wing but in a very bureaucratic manner. Reflecting his Stalinist background, he purged the union of the right wing, but did little to mobilise the rank and file. His only objective was to gain control of the union machinery. The result? When the right wing came back at him, he lost. He reduced the membership to passive observers in a power struggle at the top of the union.

Gilchrist appeared promising at first. He led the union into action to win £30,000 for all firefighters. The vote in the ballot for action was massive, public support was strong and the braziers were soon burning on the picket line.

Not surprisingly Gilchrist and the whole union became a target for the right wing press. It was not long before they tracked

down the man famous for his sharp suits to a high class restaurant, where he paid the bill on the union's credit card.

But it was the political pressure exerted on Gilchrist in the run up to the war against Iraq and his bureaucratic running of the dispute that finished him off. The press went into a frenzy when Gilchrist went on a Stop the War platform and hinted that, as the army was needed to scab on the firefighter dispute, Gilchrist was sacrificing "our boys" for the selfish interests of a few.

Meanwhile he kept a firm, bureaucratic grip on the FBU dispute and resisted calls for an all-out strike. Successful though the strikes were, they began to lose momentum. When the war against Iraq began the strikes were called off. When militants won a vote to continue the action Gilchrist used delaying tactics. With the government now attacking jobs and conditions, the membership were finally worn down and at a recall

conference the dispute was called off. Gilchrist's days were numbered, and the union membership ultimately replaced him with Matt Wrack.

And finally Serwotka, darling of the left. He has led action. He has supported Respect. He galvanised the whole union

### **Despite appearing on Stop the War platforms, none of the trade union leaders called their members to take strike action against the war**

movement into taking up the issue of pensions by posing the prospect of a public sector general strike on the day of the election. Serwotka seemed the best of the bunch, with his past in the Socialist Caucus and AWL.



# COULD ACTIVISTS THE UNIONS FIGHT?

at our most recent experience of the awkward squad (see box). However "good" an individual union leader may be, s/he does not exist above society - even with the aid of inflated salaries.

There is a contradiction lodged in the bureaucrats' position with-

in society. Their whole existence relies on compromises with the bosses, so they will attempt to diffuse and curtail struggle; but we pay their wages, so they are supposed to represent us. The bosses will pressurise them into sell-outs, but we can also pressurise them.

However, so long as our unions remain bureaucratic institutions, our ability to exert pressure on our leaders will be considerably weaker than the slick machine of the government and the bosses. This is where broad leftism fails. So we see the per-

petual need to elect just one more left candidate, who will be better than the last one.

Instead, we need to mobilise the rank and file of the unions, and unite them into a social force that can bring pressure to bear on the left leaders from the other side: a rank and file movement, that raises the political awareness of union members, so that they can hold their leaders to account, that democratises and takes control of the union, so that leaders are the servants of the union, not the masters, that breaks down the divisions between workers, blue collar and white collar, skilled and unskilled, so that the unions represent the whole class, not just its privileged upper layer.

The only safe and sure way to achieve all this is to elect revolutionary communists, who will use their positions to dissolve all the powers and privileges of the bureaucracy and put control in the hands of the membership.

But, even more than this, we need to bring revolutionary socialist politics to the unions. The only answer to Mark Serwotka's excuse that the pensions agreement was "the best deal on offer" is to reply, "We don't start from what the bosses are prepared to offer. We start from the needs of the working class - then work out a strategy to get it." Far from hiding our politics, revolutionaries put workers' control and the overthrow of capitalism at the centre of our programme.

## BUILD A RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT

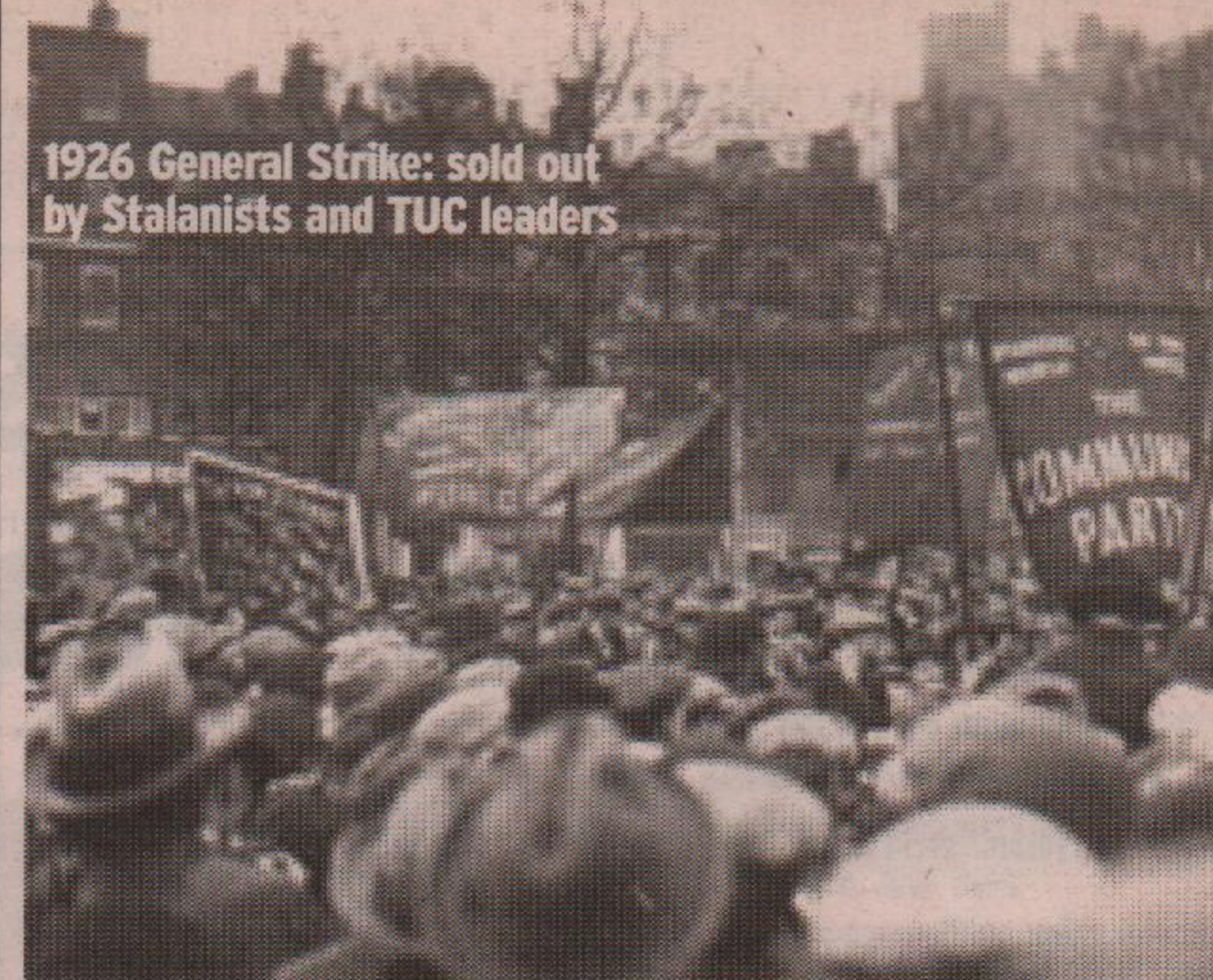
**A**gainst the politics of Broad Leftism revolutionaries argue for the building of a rank and file movement. A rank and file movement would aim to fundamentally transform the unions.

The early years of the Minority Movement in Britain in the 1920s show the potential for such a movement. The Minority Movement grew out of the need to revitalise the unions after the defeats that followed the First World War. When the bureaucrats dissolved the Triple Alliance and the miners were defeated on Black Friday in 1920, the bosses went on an offensive against the divided and demobilised workers. By 1921 over six million workers had seen their pay cut by 8 per cent, By 1924, miners' wages were down 26 per cent.

Stalinism. This led to an over-reliance on the leadership of the TUC General Council in the General Strike, which ultimately ended in defeat. However, the Minority Movement remains a model for rank and file organisation today.

A rank and file movement today would be built around the following key demands:

- Rank and file control of the union. Joint union action committees. Elected strike committees. Mass meetings of the membership to decide on any negotiation or settlement. No secret deals.
- For the right of all black, women, lesbian, gay and disabled worker to caucus.
- Against any discrimination at work.
- Mass unionisation drive. Workplace branches. For



1926 General Strike: sold out by Stalinists and TUC leaders

The call for a rank and file movement was led by the British Communist Party before it had degenerated into Stalinism. The Communists recognised the need for "a new ideology amongst the union membership and a new leadership". They sought to build a united front with non-revolutionary workers around transitional demands which could resist the bosses' offensive and build a bridge to a socialist offensive.

At its first conference in Battersea in 1924 the Minority Movement discussed resolutions on fighting for better wages and shorter hours, as well as on organising unemployed, young and women workers, and for international unity.

At its high point in 1926, prior to the General Strike, the Minority Movement held a conference at which 547 organisations were present, representing 957,000 workers.

Despite its success, the Minority Movement fell foul of the political degeneration of Bolshevism and the victory of

industrial unions.

- Democratised the unions. All stewards, reps, branch secretaries and officer of the union to be accountable and recallable. Annual election of all officials.
- All officials to be paid the same salary as the average wage of those they represent. Workers control of the bureaucrats' expenses.
- For strikes and occupations to win better conditions and decent pay for all. If the bosses say they can't afford it, let them prove it and then nationalise their assets with no compensation.
- Link up the unions with the anti-capitalist and anti-war movements.
- Defy the anti-union laws.
- Demand New Labour repeal the anti-union laws.
- For international solidarity. For cross-European rank and file organisation. Transform the ESF into a coordinator of struggles.
- Democratised the political funds of the unions. Fight for a new, anti-capitalist workers party.



Striking FBU members outside the CBI: the strike was demobilised by the bureaucracy

## Awkward Squad?

But for all his rhetoric and genuine attempts to win real gains for his members, Serwotka has never fundamentally broken from the bureaucracy. He, alongside the other impressive left heavyweight Bob Crow, has never breached the agreement that you don't interfere in the affairs of other unions, you don't jeopardise the union funds by calling for unofficial action, and you don't attempt to mobilise the members of other unions even when they are betrayed by their leaders.

The first real test came with the outbreak of war against Iraq. Despite appearing on Stop the War platforms, none of the trade union leaders called their members to take strike action against the war, not even Serwotka who had members in the civil service.

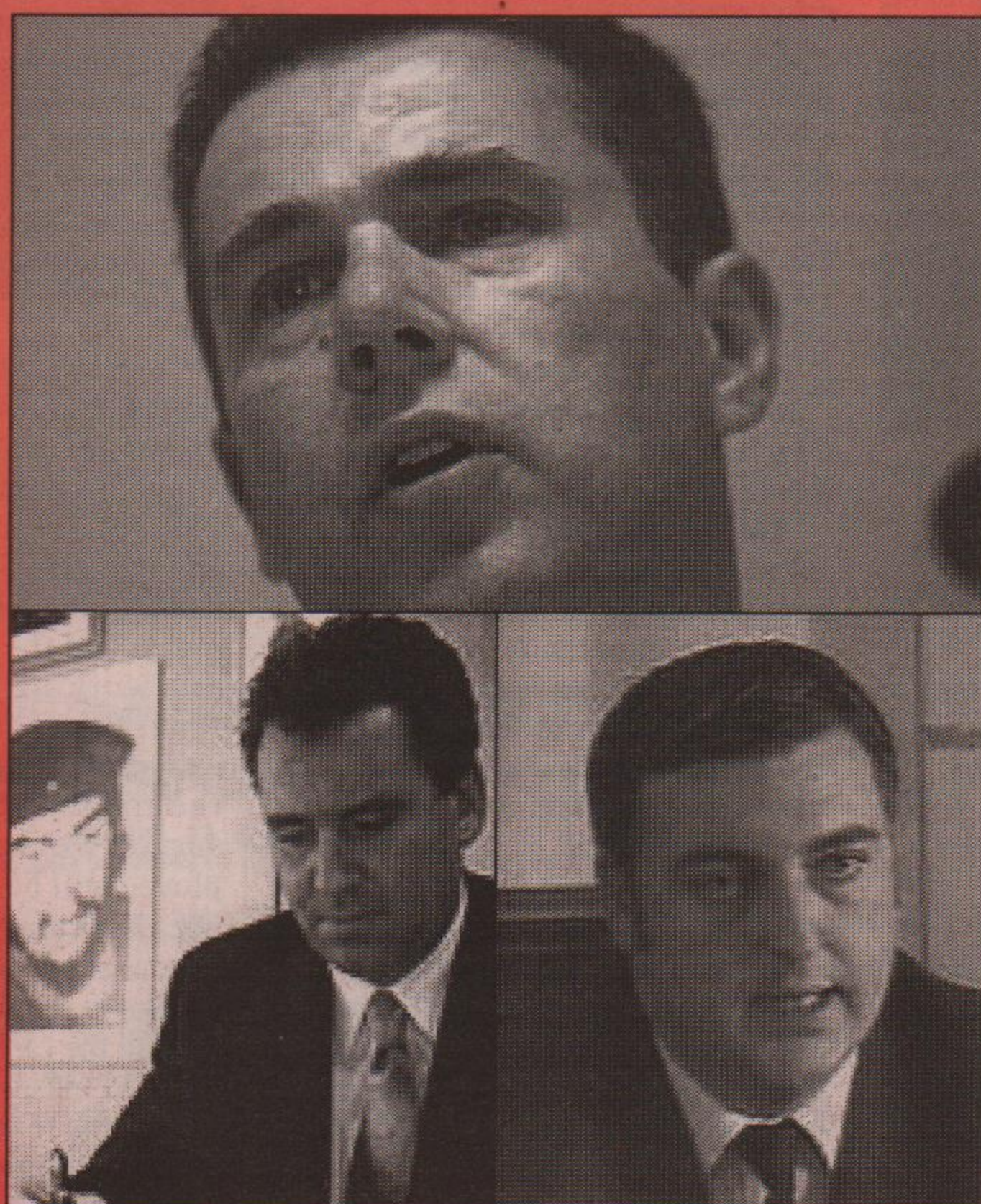
It is sad to see Serwotka now being put up as the chief apologist for the sellout over pensions. At the end of November, Serwotka was the only union general secretary who dared to turn up to a meeting to

explain the deal to local government workers and other activists.

He told the audience he and his Executive had never called the deal a victory, but that unfortunately is simply hiding behind words. He was unable to explain why the poorest paid, predominantly female and black workers in local government as well as new, young workers had been left out of the deal.

The experience of the Awkward Squad shows union militants the limits of electing a left leadership, without the right politics:

- You can't take over a union by stealth and bureaucratic manoeuvre
- You can't win major disputes without allowing the rank and file workers to organise and control that dispute
- You can only lead a fighting union successfully by totally transforming that union, defying the anti-union laws, and attacking the cosy existence of the bureaucracy as a whole.



Serwotka (top), Gilchrist (bottom left) and Rix (bottom right)

# Sharon forms new party to push through US plan

Natalie Sedley examines the realignment of political forces in Israel, and asks who's pulling the strings

The resignation of prime minister Ariel Sharon from the right wing Likud party, which he himself helped found, has sent shockwaves around Israel, one Palestinian spokesman describing it as "like a volcano going off".

He plans to form a new party called Kadima (Forward) with the stated aim of fulfilling the US-backed "roadmap to peace". Four Likud cabinet ministers and nine other MPs went with him.

Sharon's acceptance of the roadmap, and therefore of a Palestinian state, had caused an ideological revolution inside Likud. Many members had long dreamt of Greater Israel, including all of the occupied territories, and bitterly opposed the pullout from Gaza. This meant that Sharon had to rule with the Labour Party, until the election of Amir Peretz as Labour leader in November led to the government's collapse.

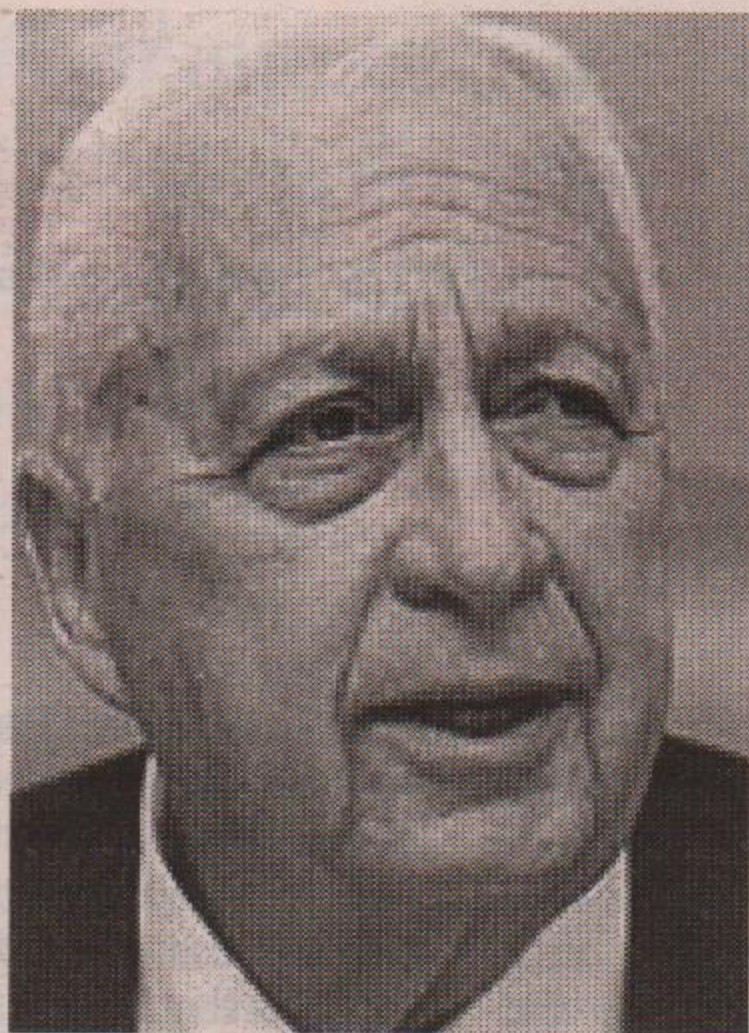
Hence Sharon resigned saying, "staying in the Likud would have meant wasting time with politics instead of working for the good of the nation". Sharon's

move means that elections, originally scheduled for November 2006, are now to be moved to a much earlier date, probably 28 March. The likely outcome is another coalition, dominated by Labour (who are moving upwards in opinion polls) and Kadima.

Likud may be driven to the margins. Overall, this sounds like a triumph for the left, and it has certainly been greeted with excitement. Yossi Beilin (former Labour cabinet minister who now leads the small Meretz party) called the situation "a real opportunity for a coalition headed by the peace camp".

In reality, these developments will not lead to the liberation of Palestine. In Israeli speak "peace camp" means ending the Palestinian Intifada on Israel's terms. The removal of settlers from the Gaza strip has allowed Israel to tighten its stranglehold on the much larger, occupied West Bank, where settlements have increased this year.

Meanwhile, the destruction of the infrastructure (sewerage, water and roads), created by the settlers, and the



Sharon: Man of peace?

continued Israeli control of most of the borders means Gaza is a limited and incredibly unviable "statelet".

Sharon's future plans for concessions to the Palestinians are vague. Yossi Mekelberg of the UK think tank

Chatham House points out, "Sharon talks about a Palestinian state but we don't know what kind of state - his endgame is completely unknown."

Sharon and the Israel ruling class (even its "liberal" sections) will never allow the formation of an independent Palestine. Even a return to the 1967 borders would lead to a tiny Palestine, squeezed on all sides by a much more powerful Israel, which would still deny the right to return to the 6.5 million Palestinians, currently living in refugee camps in the Middle East. But such a "concession" is out of the question. After all, Sharon has built the Apartheid Wall to mark out a future Palestinian state.

The most important factor at play in influencing his political manoeuvres, and therefore his future direction, is the Bush administration's determination to implement "the roadmap" that it helped design.

This is not to say that the USA cares about the Palestinians; it funds their massacre by the Israeli state by billions of dollars every year. But US impe-

rialism is itself under threat from the mess that it has got itself into in Iraq, and the growing size, strength, militancy and widespread support of the Iraqi resistance.

Under these circumstances the imperialists need to demobilise the Palestinian struggle, by attempting to forge support from the Middle Eastern ruling classes and reduce the hatred of the US that exists throughout the Arab world. Hence their attempts to broker a deal between the Palestinians and Israelis, purporting to shift the balance in the Palestinians' favour by following the "roadmap".

But whatever the appearance, the truth is that Sharon and Bush are totally committed to the maintenance of the racist settler state of Israel. Palestine will never be free until this state is overthrown by the Israeli, Palestinian and other Arab working classes, and a unified, socialist Palestine established with equal rights for all Arabs and Jews. Any "peace camp" that leaves the Palestinian refugees homeless will be a failure in the long term.

# Germany: coalition signals new attacks

The new Linkspartei could grow from further anger at the SPD. Martin Suchanek of Arbeitermacht outlines how

After weeks of negotiations, Germany's Grand Coalition between the CDU/CSU and the SPD is in office. Its programme includes:

- VAT up from 16 to 19 per cent
- Weakening of safeguards against redundancy
- Cuts in benefits and pensions

- Increase in the age of retirement to 67
- Privatisation of pensions and health-care
- Increased competition in education
- Increase in the public sector working week.

Interestingly, during the election, the CDU "promised" to raise VAT to 18

per cent; the SPD called this a "social injustice" - then settled for 19 per cent!

Naturally German finance capital and top industrialists are quite positive about the new government. Their strategy is to "push and support" Angela Merkel (CDU) and Franz Müntefering (SPD) towards a strong European imperialist bloc under German

and French leadership and to remove the potentially still strong positions of the working class which they believe impede this. With growth continuing at low levels (1.5 per cent) and with mass unemployment (4.5 million officially) Germany's bosses are now demanding a massive attack on the working class.

The SPD, which still rests on the trade union leaders, will come under enormous strain in such circumstances. The union tops will try to back the government by pointing to the "bigger evil" of a CDU/FDP/Green government.

state elections rather than struggle on the streets and in the workplaces. The PDS has for some time been little more than an electoral machine, aiming for coalition government with the SPD. The WASG leadership has now adopted a similar position.

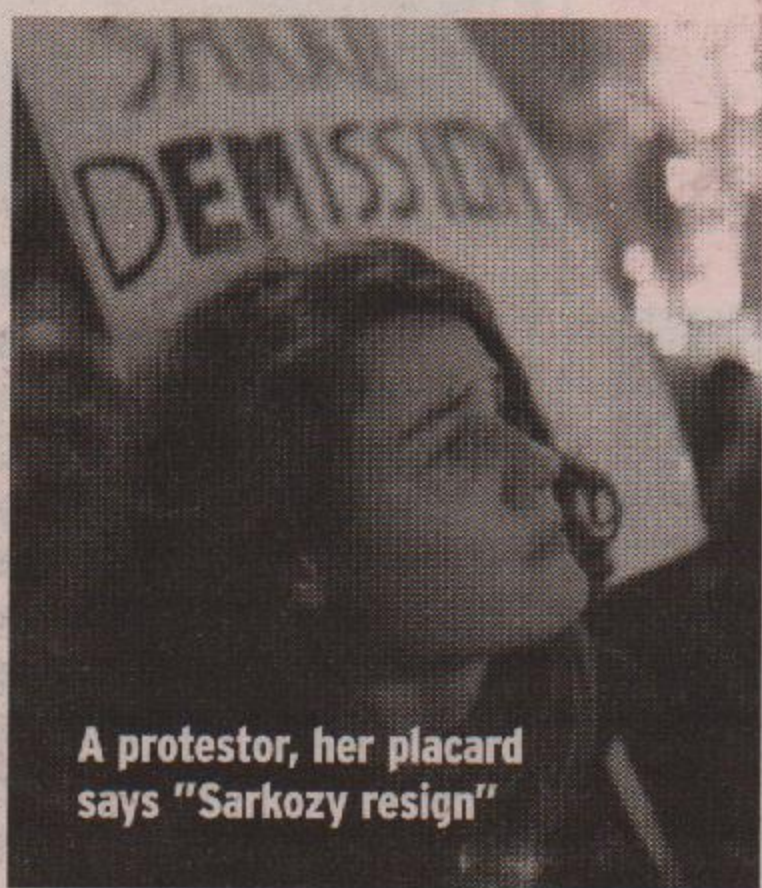
The strength of the Linkspartei has also significantly altered the balance of forces in the social movements. On 19 and 20 November an "action and strategy conference" of the social movements took place in Frankfurt. The conference was dominated by an alliance of the Linkspartei (mainly PDS), Attac,

# France: Workers must unite in struggle with the youth

By LSI militants in Paris

On 19 November around 30,000 people demonstrated in defence of public services and against privatisation. The turnout reflected the fact that the main union federation, the CGT, effectively boycotted it.

This explains why it fell so short of the last day of action on 4 October that mustered one million people. It most certainly was not a sufficient expression of anger given the blows presently raining down on workers and the repression against the rebellious black and Arab youth in the banlieues, the run down suburbs of Paris and other major cities.



A protestor, her placard says "Sarkozy resign"

complicity of the reformist leaders, who have refused to launch any struggle against the state of emergency, the government has partially succeeded.

We need a genuine programme of action that strongly links the fight against the state of emergency, repression and racism, to the general strike, which is

representatives, Nicolas Sarkozy, does not hesitate to carry out such a policy against the most repressed part of the working class: to mount provocations, threaten deportations, impose daily police checks.

We should also learn the lessons of the 1995 struggles. We need to establish our own co-ordinations to control the movement - not just mobilise for the days of action - to occupy the factories on strike and to organise solidarity. Without such a plan, it is empty to talk about an "emergency programme" as Lutte Ouvriere and the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire regularly do.

Their programmes do not advance the workers and youth in their current struggles and do not challenge the reformist misleaders. To do this we need to mobilise the workers both around the attacks on their conditions and around the following demands:

- Down with the state of emergency and the repression!
- Solidarity with the youth in struggle!

We must reply tous ensemble against the attacks of the government and the employers. We need fighting bodies uniting the whole working class, we must organise a strike to unify all the sectors in struggle.

Let's finish with their "order" and system of exploitation!



Angela Merkel: Germany's Thatcher

The new Linkspartei must become a party of struggle in the social movements and in the unions

the Stalinist DKP and sections of the trade union bureaucracy (particularly from IG Metall and ver.di).

Whilst the meeting agreed to mobilise for a national demonstration in March, it refused to discuss how to link up the ongoing, local defensive struggles. Certainly a massive demonstration could be a rallying point and add further pressure on the Linkspartei and the unions. But we need to argue for a set of demands to spread and unify strikes nationally across Germany and Europe - to build action committees at local, regional and national level, and to call for conferences of shop stewards, works' council and trade union activists and lay the basis of a rank and file movement.

Most importantly we must address the questions of political leadership. The last two years have seen significant outbursts of struggle. But all of them ended in isolated defeats, retreats or sell-outs. The new Linkspartei must become a party of struggle in the social movements and in the unions. It must not be allowed to establish itself as yet another electoral reformist machine. Rather we must fight for it to become a revolutionary party fighting against capitalism.

But the coalition's actions will undoubtedly lead to further ruptures in the unions and the SPD.

In the next period the attacks will focus on factory closures and threats of mass redundancies, undercutting national wage agreements and the introduction of flexible working hours. At the same time, the government and courts will attack legal safeguards against redundancies. Likewise, public sector workers and the unemployed will be under attack. It also means attacks on education, school students, students and, particularly, apprentices.

Will the Linkspartei offer a lead?

The Linkspartei was formed by the PDS of the former East Germany and Wahlalternative (WASG) to fight the recent elections - it won eight per cent of the vote and 53 MPs. But its leadership wants to focus on forthcoming

# World Trade Organisation

Ministers from the 148 member countries of the World Trade Organisation will gather in Hong Kong from 13 to 18 December for its sixth ministerial conference. *Din Wong* gives an eye-witness report about the plans of the demonstrators, while *Keith Harvey* predicts that no agreement will be made

## Global south fights back

**M**ilitant protests greeted the 21 heavily guarded leaders of the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation Forum (APEC) in Busan, South Korea, in mid-November, writes *Din Wong*.

Protesters included peasant farmers, impoverished by falling rice prices and the move by the South Korean government to open up the rice market, as well as women's and students' groups. Among them also were Indonesian farmers and trade unionists from the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union.

The protesters will again be out in Hong Kong in mid-December. More than 1,000 NGOs, the largest number so far, have been accredited at Hong Kong and 10,000 protesters are expected. The Korean Peasants' League is planning to bring up to 2,000 demonstrators.

The Hong Kong People's Alliance, consisting of more than 40 NGOs, churches, migrants' groups (such as the Asian Migrants Co-ordinating Body and the United Filipinos in Hong Kong) and anti-globalisation groups, has issued a statement calling on governments of developing countries to "junk the WTO".

The Hong Kong administration has drawn up a plan to deal with any unrest, focusing particularly on the first and last days of the meeting. Between 2002 and 2004, Hong Kong police were

sent to observe a number of protests and demonstrations at various events, like the G8 meetings. Under the plan, the coast and area around the heavily booked Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre will be closed off.

WTO talks have for years focused on facilitating the free movement of agricultural products and manufactured products, but are now discussing the critical field of services, which includes travel and tourism, plus other service

sectors like banking, telecommunications and health. The movement of people is covered by a section of the WTO's Generalised Agreement on Trade in Services (Gats).

Of particular concern to the protesters in Hong Kong is a proposal that will restrict travel by millions of migrant workers from poor countries, while relaxing visas and work permit regulations in these countries to facilitate the relocation of expatriate staff from the global north.

This proposal will only benefit skilled, white collar professionals and lead to a brain drain from developing to industrialised countries, while semi and unskilled workers will be blocked from movement across borders as before. "No borders" will be an important slogan.

Six years ago the WTO in Seattle was the spark for a coming together of antiglobalisation protesters and trade unions which unleashed wave of struggles around the world. By holding the conference in Hong Kong, the imperialists are sending a sign that they plan to further open markets in China.

The protesters in Hong Kong need to take up the spirit and activity of Busan, and earlier demonstrations, to close down the WTO and defeat the latest plans of the capitalists to carve up the world.

Protestors at Busan last month



## Why the WTO talks will fail

**I**n the past five years the ability of Washington trade officials, Eurocrats and big business leaders to bribe and bully the governments of the global south to surrender their markets to western multinationals cheaply has waned.

Since Seattle in 1999 the NGO movement has provided an army of number-crunchers and policy advisers to aid the global south negotiating teams in countering the spin of Brussels, Washington and Geneva. Also many of these countries have had time to reflect on the negative experience of 10 or more years of globalisation and free trade on the social fabric of their countries. Memories of economic meltdown in Argentina and revolts against privatisation in Bolivia are vivid and raw.

This has led to the key capitalist governments of the global south uniting to thwart attempts to divide and rule. And since the WTO is large, growing and only works through "consensus", it is therefore very difficult for the imperialist powers to get everything they want. Already the WTO's director-general Pascal Lamy has expressed pessimism over what Hong Kong can achieve.

In 2003 a bloc of countries from the global south, led by Brazil and India, blocked attempts by the USA and EU at the Cancún conference to push through measures to open up third world markets. In return for this opening up, western governments had made unspecified promises to lower export subsidies to their own multinationals.

After the failure in Cancún, the USA worked hard to divide Brazil and India from the much poorer Less Developed Countries (LDCs). In April 2004 a group of five was set up (US, EU, Australia, Brazil and India) to hammer out a deal

### Cost of subsidies

The overall level of subsidies in agriculture alone in the OECD (top 30 global economies) stood at \$362 billion in 1998, up from \$182 billion in 1995. Total subsidies to domestic farmers in these countries amount to more than \$1 billion a day. This cash mountain means that every cow in the EU receives a dollar a day, the same amount that the poorest 1.1 billion people in the world have to live on.

These subsidies benefit almost entirely the wealthiest farmers. What they cannot sell at home they dump on third world markets at around one-third below the cost of production, destroying domestic markets in the process and impoverishing farmers.

For example, before China's accession to the WTO in 2001, Guangxi farmers had invested heavily in growing cane sugar and sugar refining and, as a result, raised their annual income per family to 2,500 renminbi. Since 2001 cheap sugar imports caused prices to drop; now annual income is down to 300 RMB a family.

and get Brazil to represent the 100 or so LDCs and sign up to any agreement.

In addition, negotiating powers were transferred from the large ministerial conference and its standing committees to the smaller Geneva Council; this had the effect of side-lining many of the critical NGOs which advised the LDCs.

This manoeuvre led to a July 2004 agreement to phase out export subsidies

ment can be ready within a year.

But in recent months the wheels have come off the Doha train over the question of farm tariffs. The EU's latest offer would see an average reduction of just 39 per cent, with some products being designated as "sensitive" (such as poultry and beef) and subject to even less cuts. The G20 group, headed by Brazil, China and India, insists on

**These agricultural subsidies mean that every cow in the EU receives a dollar a day, the same amount that the poorest 1.1 billion people in the world have to live on**

and some export credits. The big winner was to be Brazil, with some estimates placing its gains from access to EU and US markets as high as \$10 billion. It seemed that the so-called Doha round, which began in 2001, was back on track. A framework agreement is necessary in Hong Kong, so that a detailed agree-

a 54 per cent reduction. The EU is less efficient in farming and hence it wants to keep a higher level of protection; it also insists on clear gains from market access in goods and services to compensate. But the G20 refuses to discuss these areas seriously until the EU relents on agriculture.

### Does free trade decrease poverty?

The advocates of corporate globalisation argue that free trade decreases poverty in the global south. Martin Wolf of the *Financial Times* recently insisted: "the great majority of developing countries would gain from full liberalisation... There would also be reductions in the number of people in extreme poverty: the World Bank estimates a fall of 32 million in 2015, relative to the baseline level of 622 million."

Any losers (such as low income net food importers) should be compensated via aid, but otherwise gains would come from investment in sectors that produce exports competitive on domestic and world markets.

But the evidence suggests otherwise.

In a new book by World Bank researchers it is admitted that "the impacts on poverty are rather smaller than the bank thought in the past"; they estimate that the effect is half or third previously thought.

Full trade liberalisation might over time - the study argues - lift 127 million people out of extreme poverty (out of an estimated 1.1 billion). The Doha round, if completed, would only lift 20 million out of poverty. Even worse, if more than 2 per cent of farm products were exempted from cuts in tariffs, then the effects on poverty "would be negligible". The EU want 8 per cent of farm products exempted!

We will not dwell on the fact that all these studies on the "poverty reduction effect" of trade make their calculations based on raising people from just below \$1 a day to just above it! We would like to see Martin Wolf and World Bank professors live on \$400 a year.

Yet even these revised claims are suspect. First they assume that poor countries can switch labour and capital easily to other areas; this "free market" dogma conveniently ignores the impediments to this caused by the unequal relations between imperialist nations and those of the south. These ensure less access to capital markets, foreign debts, higher interest rates, lower levels of education and mobility in the workforce, and less infrastructure compatible with growing new hi-tech areas in services.

These estimates also assume that domestic producers in the Third World reap the full benefits from reduced tariffs in the EU or the USA. But studies have shown that the main benefits accrue to consumers in the North in the form of lower prices and to the big buyers of farm goods such as Wal-Mart in the form of higher profits.

Socialist planning - not the market - is the only way to permanently abolish poverty. And that is in the interest of workers and poor farmers, north and south. En route they will have to abolish the WTO!

### FREE TRADE AND WORLD POVERTY

As the Hong Kong WTO meeting takes place, Keith Harvey looks at the protests and issues

7.30pm Thursday 15 December  
University of London Union  
Malet St, London WC1  
Nearest tubes: Goudge St, Euston Sq, Russell Sq

# 'The soviet is preparing an

In the third of our series of articles on the Russian revolution of 1905, *Richard Brenner* looks at the highpoint of the revolution - the workers uprising in Moscow and why it failed

In the last article in this series we left Russia gripped by a general strike, led by the newly formed St Petersburg soviet of workers' deputies (Workers Power 299). It had forced the Tsar Nicholas II to issue the 17 October Constitutional Manifesto, which promised freedom of speech and organisation as well as a Duma (Russian Parliament) with some real powers. Its author Count Sergei Witte was appointed prime minister.

Elements of dual power now developed - two sources of authority in society existed. Though the Tsar still had a monopoly of the armed power, he scarcely dared use it. The police hardly appeared on the streets and the troops, especially the sailors, were openly mutinous. On the other side, the St Petersburg soviet armed its own militia.

This situation lasted fifty days: the "Days of Freedom". The soviet abolished censorship, freedom of assembly was won with a wide variety of meetings, revolutionary and liberal newspapers were freely on sale and political parties organised openly. Local government bodies consulted the soviet over food supplies and order.

These democratic rights were not enshrined in law, let alone enforced by the state, but by the soviet. In other cities soviets were also set up.

Deprived of the use of the police and the army, the Tsar and the secret police (the Okhrana) resorted to creating an auxiliary force from the dregs of both the propertied classes and the lumpenproletariat: the so called Black Hundreds. A wave of anti-semitic pogroms and terrorist attacks on revolutionaries broke out and raged for a month. These mobs killed between 3,500 to 4,000 people and wounded over 10,000. On 8 November the Black Hundreds formed the Union of Russian People. Thus the revolution of 1905, a dress rehearsal for so many things, pre-figured fascism too.

Lenin was later to observe: "The whole course of the Russian revolution after October, and the sequence of events in Moscow in the December days, strikingly confirmed one of Marx's profound propositions: revolution progresses by giving rise to a strong and united counter-revolution" (On the Moscow Rising July 1906)

But the tide of revolution was still rising. On 26-27 October, a major mutiny occurred amongst the sailors on the island of Kronstadt and on 30-31 in the port of Vladivostok. In the countryside a wave of

peasant disturbances took place. Between 6 and 12 November a Peasants' Union was founded.

On 29 October the St Petersburg soviet launched a struggle for the eight hour day. There was, however, a serious obstacle. Whereas the liberal bourgeoisie had supported the strike for a democratic constitution, the eight hour day would hit them where it hurt, in their wallets.

The bosses responded immediately with a lockout and the strike had to be abandoned. The limits of the mass strike in a period of economic recession were becoming obvious. But this did not mean that the revolution was over, that nothing could be done.

Dual power cannot last indefinitely - one or the other power must triumph and liquidate its rival. The leadership of the St Petersburg soviet, which included Bolsheviks and Mensheviks as well as Leon Trotsky and Alexander Helphand (Parvus), appealed for the formation of soviets across Russia and for them to join an armed uprising. Only a provisional revolutionary government could destroy the state and summon a constituent assembly, they argued. New workers' councils were indeed formed, though not in Moscow until 21 November.

The spreading of the revolution across the vast Russian Empire, combined with the reverses suffered by the workers in the capital, restored decisiveness to the counter-revolutionary forces. These were led by the Interior Minister Trepov, the city governor Durnovo and the Tsar himself.

On 26 November, Durnovo and the Tsar had the chair of the St Petersburg soviet, arrested. The soviet declared: "The soviet is electing a provisional presidium and continuing its preparation for an armed insurrection." Trotsky, long the real leader, became the chair.

It was not till the 3 December that the soviet called the general strike. But, at that very moment, troops surrounded the building and the deputies were all arrested. A third general strike began. But it soon became clear that the centre of the movement had moved to Moscow.

• For past articles of the 1905 series, October and January, go to [www.workerspower.com](http://www.workerspower.com) A more indepth look at the 1905 revolution will appear in the forthcoming Fifth International - journal of the League for the Fifth International

## The uprising in Moscow



Workers on the barricades during the Moscow uprising

The Moscow soviet was formed late. Why? The Bolsheviks' negative attitude, to non-party bodies may have played some role in this. But Lenin's growing conviction that soviets could organise the armed insurrection and form the basis of the "dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" changed attitudes. The Mensheviks also followed Trotsky and Parvus' line - towards an armed insurrection and a workers' government.

For two months Lenin had been urgently advocating the formation of small fighting groups: "What is needed is furious energy, and again energy. It horrifies me - I give you my word -

it horrifies me to find that there has been talk about bombs for over six months, yet not one has been made! And it is the most learned of people who are doing the talking... Go to the youth, gentlemen! That is the only remedy!"

He urged the Bolsheviks to take the lead, obtaining weapons from mutinous regiments, striking an agreement with the Socialist Revolutionaries, and agreeing the timing and launch of an uprising.

The Bolshevik committee, headed by Lyadov, Vasiliev and Shantser, led the Moscow uprising. By December a militia had around 1,000 men with arms - some with rifles, most with

Mauser revolvers, and a small number of bombs. Above all, central coordination and communications were weak. Nor was there any overall plan for how the uprising should proceed, no selection of strategic targets to capture.

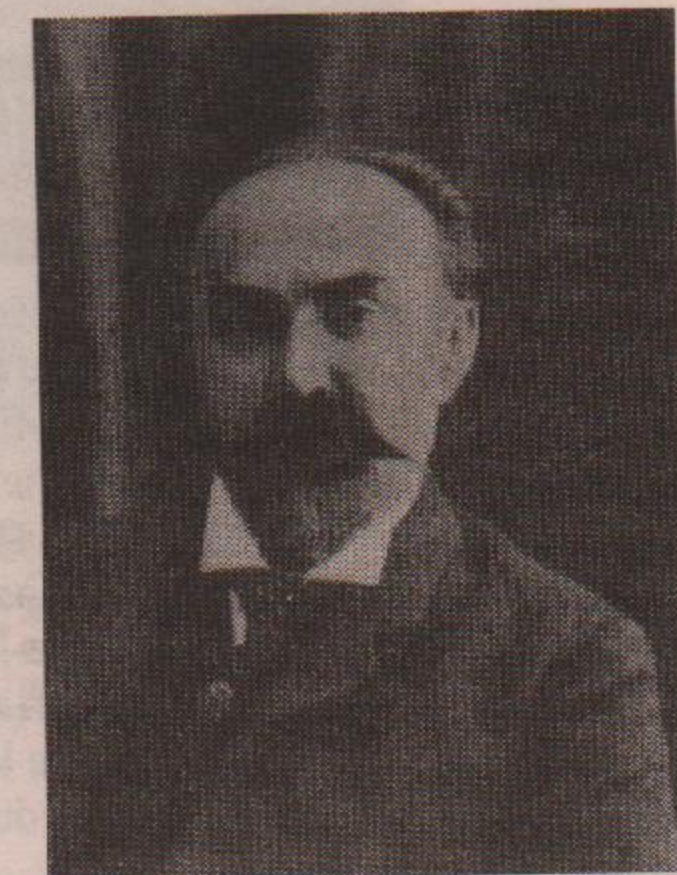
Despite the insurrection being the Bolsheviks' key slogan since January, the attack on the Petersburg soviet caught the party unawares. A special conference of several hundred Bolsheviks was held in Moscow, with delegates sent from each by district and factory. It decided to agitate for a rising.

The next day, 6 December, Moscow saw a mutiny and rising of one of the Rostov regiments.

## Mensheviks and Bolsheviks

Once the rising was over a debate developed as to whether it was an error - either tactical or strategic. The Mensheviks especially the exiled leaders Georgi Plekhanov and Pavel Axelrod thought it was. The Social Democrats should not have tried to take power because this was not a socialist but a bourgeois revolution. The Mensheviks in Russia too, despite having supported the rising, began to criticise their own headstrong actions. Trotsky and Lenin staunchly stood by the rising.

Trotsky argued in his work 1905: "But in a developing revolutionary situation a planned retreat is, from the start, unthinkable. A party may have the masses behind it while it is attacking, but that does not mean that it will be able to lead them away at will in the midst of the attack. It is not only the party that leads the masses: the masses, in turn, sweep the party forward. And this will happen in any revolution, however powerful its organisation. Given such conditions, to retreat without battle may mean the party abandoning the masses under



Plekhanov was opposed to the uprising

enemy fire."

He goes on: "The army's political mood, that great unknown of every revolution, can be determined only in the process of a clash between the soldiers and the people. The army's crossing over to the camp of the revolution is a moral process; but it cannot be brought about by moral means alone... Only when the soldiers become convinced that the people have come out into the streets for a life-and-death struggle - not

to demonstrate against the government but to overthrow it does it become psychologically possible for them to cross over to the side of the people. Thus an insurrection is, in essence, not so much a struggle against the army as a struggle for the army. The more stubborn, far-reaching, and successful the insurrection, the more probable - indeed inevitable - is a fundamental change in the attitude of the troops."

Lenin totally agreed with this analysis, harshly rejecting the view of Plekhanov that the uprising was a mistake, but also making a self-criticism of the way the revolutionaries had prepared the uprising.

"In December, we, the leaders of the Social-Democratic proletariat, were like a commander-in-chief who has deployed his troops in such an absurd way that most of them took no active part in the battle. The masses of the workers demanded, but failed to receive, instructions for resolute mass action.

"Thus, nothing could be more short-sighted than Plekhanov's view, seized upon by all the oppor-

# insurrection'

Though this was quickly suppressed, General Dubasov dared not put most of the garrison on the streets, fearing their reliability. He kept wiring the government and Tsar to send reinforcements from St Petersburg. They hesitated, still fearing an uprising in the capital.

The Moscow soviet met on 6 December in a sombre atmosphere: no one was sure what the attitude of the troops would be; unless the garrison came over to the side of the rising, it would probably fail. But delegates were also aware that the working mass-

building was also raided that evening. In response barricades began to be built to impede the movement of the cossacks and the police. On 10 December the regime used artillery fire; the workers responded by building barricades on a mass scale. The rising had begun.

Squads of militia fighters – druzhniki – spread out across the city in teams of three and four. They attacked police stations and military units to secure arms; they raided gunsmiths' shops and stores. The general strike promised by the railwaymen came

Despite all this, the insurrection had a real prospect of success. The academic historian J L Keep observed, "The evidence suggests that if the insurgents had made a sudden determined assault on the main centres of authority they could have gained control of the city." This vital lesson would be deployed to epoch-making effect just 12 years later.

On 10 and 11 December the fate of the rising hung in the balance. The troops were tired and frustrated, unschooled in responding to guerrilla operations. But the insurgents lost momentum.

**Barricades began to be built to impede the movement of the cossacks and the police. On 10 December the regime used artillery fire; the workers responded by building barricades on a mass scale. The rising had begun**

were thirsting for action. Even if the Soviet did not act it was very likely that fighting would break out. Thus, despite their forebodings, both the Social Democratic factions and the SRs voted for "a general political strike, which transforms itself into a rising."

On the first day 100,000 workers stopped work, and 150,000 on the second day of the strike. Huge demonstrations packed the streets; mass meetings were held in many venues. At one point an infantry regiment, marching down a central street, broke into singing the Marseillaise – one of the main revolutionary songs of 1905. Print workers rushed a deputation to meet them but it arrived too late, and the authorities marched them back to their barracks.

After some hesitation the city governor tried to round up the ringleaders. On 9 December dragoons attacked a huge crowd in Strastnaya Square. The Fiedler

good.

The fundamental weakness of the rising was its lack of central organisation and communication, and above all an offensive plan. A real disaster was the immediate arrest of two of the three members of the Bolshevik committee, Shantser and Vasiliev. The third, Lyadov, was unable to establish communications with the party cells or the fighting groups. It was several days before any instructions appeared and when they did, the advice focused on saturating the city with small fighting groups, pinning down the police, concentrating fire on officers and securing escape routes.

Good enough advice for guerrilla actions, but totally inadequate as a strategy for seizing power. The problem was that the forces of counter-revolution, initially paralysed, began an offensive against the insurrection. For an insurrection to remain on the defensive is fatal for just this reason.

Between 12 and 15 December the spirit of the masses finally began to weaken, when they saw no prospect of victory and casualties from artillery fire began to mount.

Critically, the St Petersburg-Moscow railway remained unsevered. Despite the rail strike the regime sent troops to occupy the line. It should, of course, have been destroyed at several points to delay the advance of the troops but this was not even attempted till it was too late.

As the crack Semyonovsky guards arrived from St Petersburg ever greater numbers of workers began leaving the city. The insurrection broke up into a series of district defences. The forces of order eventually concentrated on the Presnya district, finally taking it on 17 December. Reprisals began immediately, across the city. By official figures, 442 were killed and 822 wounded.

In reality the number of dead was probably near 1,000.

Josh Davies reviews the new pamphlet by Ian Birchall of the SWP: *A Rebel's Guide to Lenin*, Bookmarks 2005 £2.00

The SWP's new pamphlet on Lenin is aimed at convincing the reader that the SWP is the continuation of Leninism today. It does so in a format that boils down Lenin's life and work into sixty small pages. Unfortunately Lenin's fundamental ideas totally evaporate in the process.

Of course you wouldn't expect a pamphlet of this size and purpose to be too detailed in its analysis. But you wouldn't expect it to bowdlerise or totally omit many of the most basic elements of his life's work. And nowhere is this more striking than on the issue of the revolutionary party. Get that wrong about Lenin and you had better not claim to be a Leninist.

Like most fake Leninists Birchall can't stand Lenin's great work *What is to be Done?* Birchall wants it out of the way as quickly as possible. He asserts that after 1905 "The ideas of *What is to be Done?* were forgotten." By whom? Not Lenin. He himself had it reprinted in 1912, when the Bolsheviks really became a party. Not by the Communist International, which after 1919 had it translated into dozens of languages.

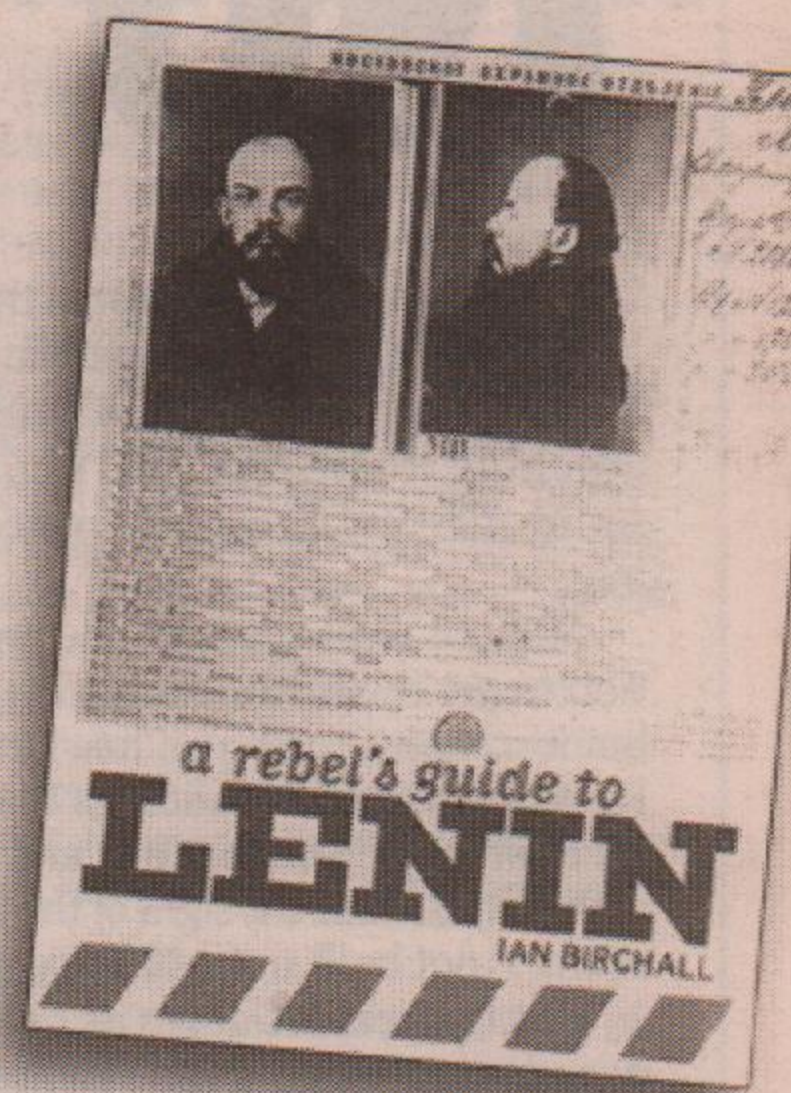
The main thrust of *What is to be Done?* is against what Lenin

disciplined and well organised party was needed precisely during a revolution. It could not just be improvised there and then. It required years of training and developing its members into cadres (leaders) in ongoing day to day struggles. Of course a sudden turn events can catch the best party by surprise – often its leaders. But in a party of cadres (leaders in workers struggles) they will be able to correct these errors as the Bolsheviks did theirs in April 1917.

What Birchall is obviously thinking about are the notorious "turns" and zigzags carried out by the leadership of the SWP, which catch the members by surprise and lead to large numbers of them leaving. The members always prove to be the "conservative elements". The previous ideas drummed into them by the party turn out to be an "obstacle".

Having got it wrong on the revolutionary party Birchall then goes on to omit an essential part of the theory of imperialism – what it means for the working class movement.

The spur to Lenin writing *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, was the outbreak of the First World War and the collapse of the Second International into



deeply Economist group and it is completely unable to fight reformism. In fact, despite repeating the basics of revolutionary politics – the need for a revolution, for a "revolutionary party" etc. – it is happy to leave these for just such pamphlets as Birchall's. The SWP has no programme to bridge the day to day struggles of the working class and the revolutionary struggle for power.

This can be seen in their total separation of the struggle for socialism (which means joining

## A revisionist guide to Lenin

calls Economism. Economism is the view that revolutionary socialist consciousness arises spontaneously out of the economic (trade union) struggle. This leads to a would be revolutionary organisation tailing behind the working class' existing level of consciousness rather than seeking to give a lead, to play the role of a vanguard.

In *What is to Be Done?* Lenin developed his idea of the revolutionary as "a tribune of the people" taking up all the issues of the masses' exploitation and political oppression, as the bringer into the working class of revolutionary socialist ideas, as the fighter for a revolutionary strategy embodied in a programme.

Of course Lenin's pamphlet deals with one particular phase of the Russian Marxist's development: that of work in deep illegality, in "the underground". It is true that Lenin made important additions to his ideas in 1905 – democratic centralism for one. But the basic ideas of the vanguard party found in *What is to be Done?* were a permanent part of Bolshevism and, after 1917, of Communism. They have only been "forgotten" when organisations degenerated into reformism or centrism.

Birchall asserts that "In order to survive long periods when not that much is happening, revolutionary parties need organisation, discipline, routine. But these qualities can become obstacles in a period of rapid change."

This odd idea tells us a lot about the recent history of the SWP and nothing about Lenin or Bolshevism. For Lenin a

patriotism. This suddenly revealed the scale of the growth of opportunism, reformism, and the trade union bureaucracy in the previous fifteen years or so. It was not enough for a Marxist to explain such a huge betrayal as the result of bad individuals or wrong ideas. If so, why was it so universal? Lenin explained that the social base of the chauvinist workers' leaders lay in sections of the working class making up what Lenin called "the labour aristocracy".

He talks about how in imperialist countries the capitalist class can buy off sections of the working class who, having better material conditions than other sections of workers, have less of an interest in the overthrow of capitalism. As Lenin said, "The effects are: (1) a section of the British proletariat becomes bourgeois; (2) a section of the proletariat allows itself to be led by men bought by, or at least paid by, the bourgeoisie."

The labour aristocracy is more inclined to act in its own immediate interests than the interests of the whole of the working class, just as the Economists had been happy to limit struggle to immediate economic demands without stressing the need for the political overthrow of the whole system. The result is the stifling of class consciousness and the encouragement (consciously or unconsciously) of working class division and impotence, which suits the capitalists. Birchall's pamphlet doesn't even mention Lenin's theory of the labour aristocracy.

The omission of these two crucial elements of Leninism is no accident. The SWP is itself a

the SWP and going to Marxist forums) and the politics they use for every immediate struggle. For the latter a whole series of non-socialist and increasingly non-working class policies and organisations are good enough.

In Birchall's pamphlet it comes across most clearly in his conception of the revolutionary party's relation to the movement, what it calls united fronts. In *Respect, Stop the War and Unite Against Fascism* they have formed blocks with reformist leaders and even non-working class forces, like Muslim elders. The united front as understood by Lenin meant unity in action but strict separation in politics and propaganda.

It meant clear, honest criticism of one's temporary allies. The SWP will have none of this. Instead they try to control the organisation behind the scenes. In *Respect* they vote against socialist resolutions, against the right to abortion on demand, against the immediate withdrawal of troops and the abolition of immigration controls. Of course "in the party" they believe in all these things but they fear their reformist or Islamist allies and their voters do not, and so, instead of fighting for them, they fight against them.

Birchall's deep unease with the Leninist conception of the revolutionary party can be seen in such statements as – "Lenin's work is not a set of recipe books." Yes, indeed. There is nothing in the SWP's opportunist recipes that comes from any of Lenin's books.

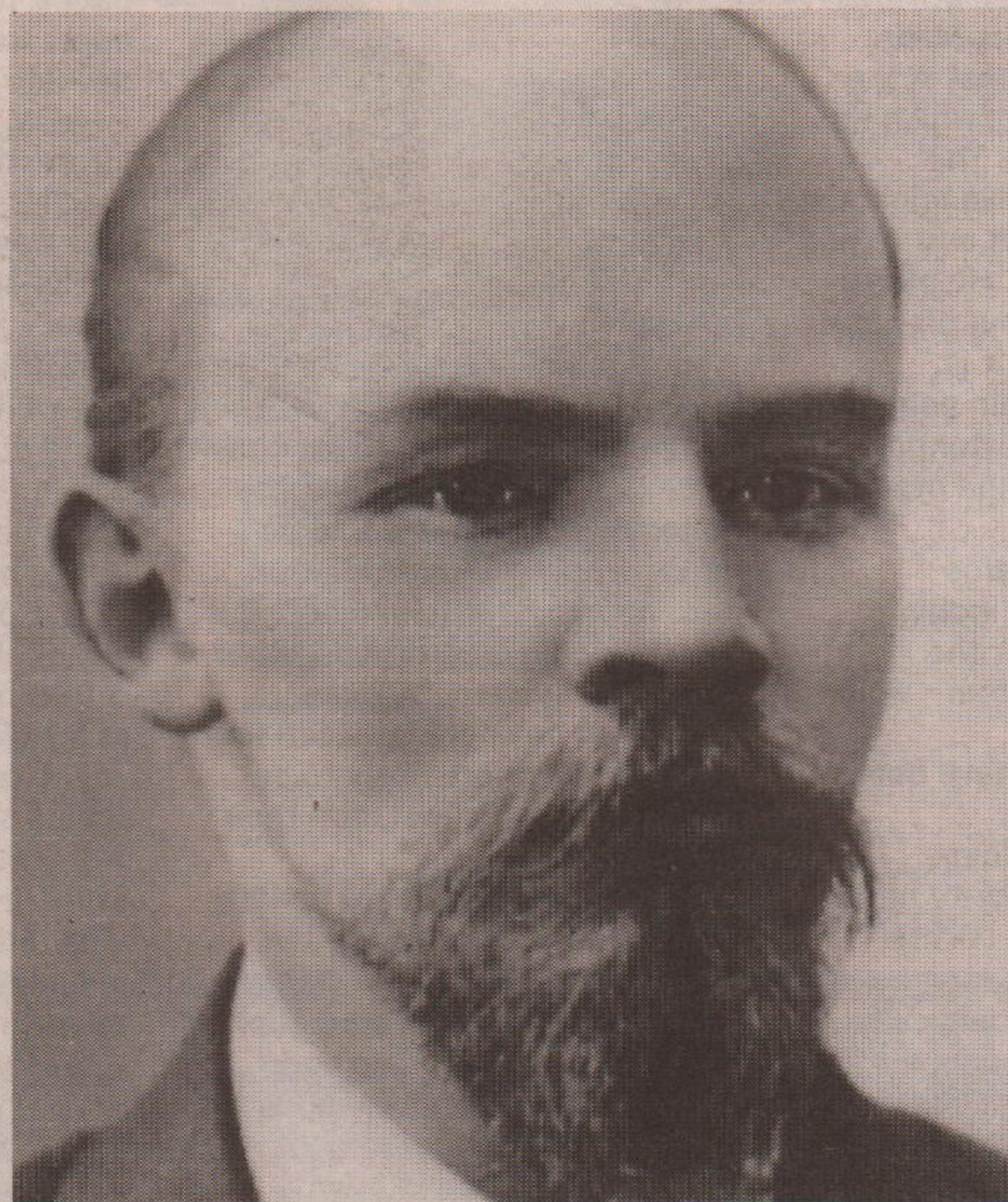
Any rebel will be well advised to turn to Lenin himself.

## debate the uprising

tunists, that the strike was untimely and should not have been started, and that 'they should not have taken to arms'. On the contrary, we should have taken to arms more resolutely, energetically and aggressively; we should have explained to the masses that it was impossible to confine things to a peaceful strike and that a fearless and relentless armed fight was necessary. And now we must at last openly and publicly admit that political strikes are inadequate; we must carry on the widest agitation among the masses in favour of an armed uprising and make no attempt to obscure this question by talk about 'preliminary stages', or to befog it in any way.

"We would be deceiving both ourselves and the people if we concealed from the masses the necessity of a desperate, bloody war of extermination, as the immediate task of the coming revolutionary action."

For all their mistakes, the defeated Moscow fighters of 1905 prepared the way for the victorious fighters of October 1917.



Lenin: "We must openly and publicly admit that political strikes are inadequate; we must carry on the widest agitation among the masses in favour of an armed uprising"

# No triumph in Rome

James Thorne reviews the BBC drama *Rome*

Anyone with an interest in the collapse of the Roman republic in the last century or so BC must be watching *Rome*, the BBC's current sword-and-sandal saga, with mixed feelings.

Millions were spent on the production to get the historical setting right but it contains some real howlers. The Roman Forum has buildings that didn't exist in the late republic and shots of the city include the sight of the Colosseum – not built until 100 years later.

But the real let-down has been the poor dramatisation. Bruno Heller, who wrote episodes one to five (of 12) seems to have forgotten the first rule of screenwriting: "the audience have got brains, and they won't be very satisfied if they're not allowed to use them". Instead we get a mass of un-dramatised expositions, including the town-crier in the forum at Rome actually reading out the narrative, "Julius Caesar has entered Italy," and so on.

Furthermore the various plot-lines seem disparate and unconnected: the overarching plot of Caesar and Pompey's battle for supremacy seems to connect not at all with the troubled marital relations of Caesar's centurion, Lucius Vorenus. Instead, various plots seem to merely co-habit the same one-hour slot every week. The writing may improve later in the series, but then John Milius (episode 6) lists Conan the Barbarian among his credits.

In the UK press there's been some criticism of the sex and comic-strip violence allegedly used to spice things up. But this is authentic, and we can thank the Romans themselves. The



technique goes back at least as far as Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus (69AD to 140AD). Chief secretary to the emperor Hadrian, he used the imperial archives (and hearsay) to write *The Twelve Caesars*, a scandalous and sometimes amusing account of the rulers of Rome from Julius Caesar to Domitian. Suetonius, alleges for example, that Nero tried to kill his mother, first with

a booby-trapped bedroom, and when that failed, with a collapsing ship. So some throat-slitting and bed-hopping does not seem inappropriate in the BBC's *Caesar*.

No doubt the Roman army buffs will have spotted inaccuracies such as the wrong sort of helmets and shields and that centurions are riding about on horseback rather than being foot sol-

diers, but parts of *Rome* have been well researched. Lucius Vorenus' homecoming to the slums of Rome rang historically true: the roughened, authoritarian NCO uneasily re-adjusting to his wife and now grown-up daughters is a hoary enough old cliché; what was more impressive was the portrayal of the returning centurion as a "big man" among his fellow proletarians (a term

which to the Romans meant the lowest class: citizens with, essentially, no property). A man of 15 or 20 years' service, he would be on 15 times the salary of an ordinary legionary, and if a senior centurion, his sons might enter the senate.

Roman society was highly polarised between a multitude of poor and a very rich minority, but avenues of social mobility existed, and perhaps this helps to explain the longevity of the Roman social order – as Marx said: "the more a ruling class is able to assimilate the foremost minds of a ruled class, the more stable and dangerous becomes its rule".

Also historically on the nail (and one of the few well dramatised scenes) was the harangue with which Caesar inspires his troops to join him against Pompey in a civil war. Caesar, an aristocrat, was also a populist, and built a political base on the genuine grievances of the poor, while really aiming at his own autocracy. Pompey, on the other hand, eventually sided with the optimates, the aristocrats who hung together to preserve the collective privileges of the senatorial oligarchy against Caesar.

To those who've found *Rome* to be what the Greeks call 'the Gallic bird' (clue: you eat them at Christmas) beware: like the city itself it may turn out to be eternal.

Why else the presence of young Octavian, a historical non-entity until Caesar's assassination which ends the current run? On the website of HBO, the BBC's US collaborator, it's billed as *Rome, season one*.

## Walk Hard – Talk Loud

Rachel Hodgins reviews *Walk Hard – Talk Loud* at the Tricycle Theatre, Kilburn, London

The American Negro Theatre gave a voice to hundreds of black actors, writers and directors in the 1940s. As well as nurturing the talents of Sidney Poitier, Harry Belafonte and Alice Childress, ANT released black actors from the restrictions of what actor Joseph Marcell calls "step-n-fetchit roles", and introduced theatre as a medium that could describe, explore and change the experience of black Americans.

It is 66 years since *Walk Hard – Talk Loud* was written by ANT's founder, Abram Hill. This Tricycle Theatre production makes you wonder how such an engaging, sharply political and well-rounded piece of writing can ever have ended so neglected. This is the play's UK premier, and marks another first – the three plays in the Tricycle's current series are performed by the first resident company of black actors to stage a season of plays in a British theatre. The strong ensemble acting of the cast and the pacey direction gives full rein to Hill's humour, as well as to the rage and humiliation his characters suffer trying to live with dignity despite the poverty of the Depression, and the institutional black oppression of the Jim Crow laws.

Hill uses the story of Andy Whitman, a young black man lured into the world of boxing, to land a well aimed blow to the exploitation of the industry itself and its parallels with

US society as a whole. In both, whoever is fighting at the bottom, blacks or Italians, the profits and the freedoms stay with the man at the top who holds the contracts.

At first Andy (played with powerful conviction by Kobna Holbrook-Smith) finds satisfaction in boxing as an expression of what his grandmother describes to him as "the resentment of our race against suffering", but it becomes clear that his success depends as much on remembering the rules of life as a black American as on his talent. His manager can't "put the whole world in the ring for you to swing at", his girlfriend challenges him to stay and try to build a different society instead of leaving the country, and his grandmother picks up one of the running themes of the plays when she reminds him not to live his life like a walking corpse even if the alternative feels like a lifelong fight.

The Tricycle has a longstanding reputation for political theatre. This production reinforces some truths applicable to today: that surviving with dignity and trying to change what divides and oppresses us really does mean fighting.

- *Walk Hard – Talk Loud* runs until 24 December. The other two plays in the series are August Wilson's *Gem of the Ocean* (6 January – 11 February) and Lynn Nottage's *Fabulation* (16 February – 18 March).
- Box Office: 020-7328 1000.

## Schools still failing black children

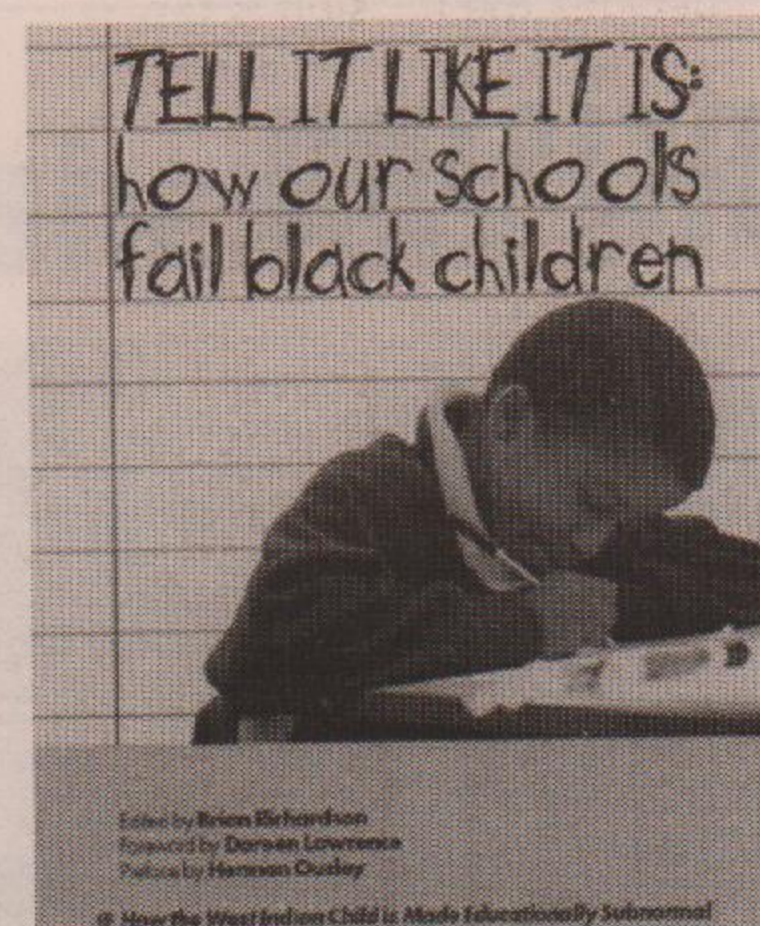
Kate Ford reviews *Tell It Like It Is: How our schools fail black children*, edited by Brian Richardson, published by Bookmarks Publications/Trentham Books

*Tell It Like It Is* serves as a timely reminder to all those involved in education that racism is still rife in our schools. The book began life with a proposal to republish Bernard Coard's pamphlet *How the West Indian Child is Made Educationally Subnormal* in the British School System, which was first published in 1971. The pamphlet had a massive impact at the time. Coard taught and so had first hand experience. He pulled no punches and laid out his case. It really did tell it like it is.

"There are five main points I want to bring to the attention of West Indian parents and others interested:

1. There are very large numbers of our West Indian children in schools for the educationally subnormal – which is what ESN means.
2. These children have been wrongly placed there.
3. Once placed in these schools, the vast majority never get out and return to normal school.
4. They suffer academically and in their job prospects for life because of being put in these schools.
5. The authorities are doing very little to stop this scandal." (p27)

*Tell It Like It Is* expanded to explore how much has changed



since Coard's pamphlet. As the editor points out "it would be wrong to simply conclude that nothing much has changed". But discrimination still thrives in our education system. "African Caribbean boys are between four and 15 times more likely to be excluded from school than their white peers."

The book attempts to update Coard's work and reignite the debate about black underachievement in education. The SWP are organising and campaigning around the book to achieve this goal. If the book succeeds, it will have been a fitting tribute to Coard's original.

While the book contains many articles there are two problems. First there are just too many different

contributors crammed into one book. There are four introductions and articles by 32 different people and one organisation in less than 238 pages. None of the contributors apart from Coard are able to fully develop their argument.

Also, it would have been interesting to hear more from teachers who are actually trying new ways of teaching. The National Curriculum has had a big impact in increasing disaffection of working class children, black and white. There is also research being done in the United States and in the UK on how testing discriminates against black and ethnic minority children.

But perhaps the most disappointing aspect of the book is that one voice is hardly heard at all: black and ethnic minority young people themselves. It seems strange that apart from one piece by the Tricycle group in Brent, young people directly affected by racism in education are missing from the myriad of voices in the book.

Despite these deficiencies this book is a welcome contribution to the struggle against racism in education and beyond. If for no other reason, buy it just to read Coard's original pamphlet. Even better, get your union branch to order some copies.

## Milan Rai sentenced to 28 days jail for Foreign Office protest

Dear comrades,

Last October, in the run-up to the assault on Fallujah, Milan Rai sprayed anti-war slogans on the Foreign Office building in Whitehall, calling on the Government not to deploy British troops to the Fallujah region as part of the US operation. He also poured fake blood on the building.

Mil was subsequently found guilty of criminal damage by Bow Street Magistrates Court, and ordered to pay over £2,000 compensation to the Foreign Office.

He has refused to pay this compensation, arguing that what he did was a morally and legally justified response to the impending assault on Fallujah. At Hastings Magistrates Court on 16 November he was sentenced to 28 days jail. Letters of support and cards can be sent to:

**Milan Rai**  
HMP Lewes  
Brighton Road, Lewes  
East Sussex, BN7 1EA



## Struggle in the Middle East

### Iran...

Dear Workers Power

A judge in town of Saqez, in Iran's Kurdistan province has sentenced five workers simply because they tried to participate in a May Day rally in 2005. Two other workers were acquitted.

Mahmoud Salehi, a well known independent workers' right activist, was sentenced to 5 years imprisonment and 3 years in exile. Jalal Hosseini was sentenced to three years imprisonment. Mohsen Hakimi, Mohammad Abdipoor and Borhan Divargar were sentenced to 2 years imprisonment.

Salehi and Hakimi had met an International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) mission that visited Iran officially in April 2004 and had told them

that the working class in Iran has been denied their internationally recognised rights.

His arrest with six other activists on 1 May 2005 proved that he was right.  
**Sediq Esmaili**  
By e-mail

### Afghanistan

Dear comrades,

Britain is sending 250 more troops to Afghanistan in the new year to take over the HQ role of the Nato force based in Kabul. The government is also wavering about sending elements of 16 Air Assault Brigade (2,200 troops) to replace US forces in the south of the country, and may need to send more if the Netherlands decides the mission is too

dangerous for the 1,000 troops it was due to provide.

The US is withdrawing 4,000 troops next year having suffered increasing casualties since arriving in the country, especially in the past year: 97 GIs have been killed so far in 2005, whereas the average was 49 per year in the previous three years.

Ironically, Donald Rumsfeld said a few days after the handover was announced, that Iraq was "several years behind" Afghanistan. Think of the consequences of that coming true: is Rumsfeld really predicting that the coming period will see US casualties in Iraq more than double (they currently run at 90 dead a month), and US troops hand the country over to the Europeans?

**James Thomas**  
Manchester

## Asylum shame of the Home Office

Comrades,

Delroy Edwards was a Jamaican man who came to the UK in 2001 to work, and subsequently claimed asylum on the grounds that gangs were persecuting him linked to the PNP party.

Despite bullet wounds to his shoulder and hands where he had been shot and the fact that two of his daughters had been killed in an arson attack on his home, the Home Office declared that he was an economic migrant and was not in genuine fear of persecution.

They detained him, moved him between detention centres, prevented his fiancé and friends from helping him with what was described by his fiancé as "appalling bureaucracy", and then deported him back to Jamaica. Nine days later, he was shot dead outside the house where he was staying.



**Delroy Edwards**

The killing of Delroy Edwards should shame the Home Office and every person who contributed to his death. The racist state in the UK has a policy of dis-

believing asylum applicants - even deporting them back to places like Zimbabwe where they faced torture and execution. This was only stopped by a hunger strike by Zimbabweans in detention centres knowing that they faced death if they were sent back! 25 Zimbabwean women are on hunger strike in Yarl's Wood protesting about possible deportation via South Africa where they face imprisonment.

Our asylum system needs to be scrapped. Britain should be a place of refuge for everyone who is fleeing persecution and poverty. In the current racist climate around refugees raising the call for no immigration controls is the best political message that we can give to workers.

**Thomas Carroll**  
**Doncaster**

## WHAT WE STAND FOR

### CAPITALISM

Long ago capitalism developed the material and human resources to end poverty and inequality on a world scale. Yet it will not do this. It cannot because of its fundamental features: private ownership of production and the division of the world into competing nation states. The factories, the land, the mines, oil fields and banks are all owned by a tiny handful of billionaires, whose power and wealth is defended by national armies, police forces and security services.

To liberate humanity from hunger, insecurity, war and disease this tiny ruling class must be overthrown. Only the working class has the strength, the centrality to production and the interest to carry this through. Capitalism must be abolished by a workers' revolution, and a society without class divisions, without bureaucratic, military and police repression, must be created. Only in such a society will the last traces of national and racial oppression, the oppression of women, youth, lesbians and gays finally disappear.

The exploiters will resist this revolution with savage ferocity. But their resistance can be broken by the force of millions acting together in a social revolution, disintegrating the forces of repression, the capitalist state.

The capitalist politicians, top civil servants, judges, the police and army chiefs must be swept away - the army and the police force must be smashed and replaced with a militia of the armed working people.

All power must pass into the hands of democratic councils of delegates from the working class, directly elected by the workers and poor farmers and subject to instant recall by them. This is the dictatorship of the proletariat.

For the exploiters it will certainly seem oppressive, indeed they will lose all their wealth and power. But for the all the formerly exploited classes it will be the most democratic society ever seen. And even this state will only be a transitional form on the road to a completely classless and stateless society: communism.

To achieve this, all large-scale production and distribution must be taken into social ownership and be democratically planned. Under workers' control, we could share the work between all able people and every improvement in productivity could be used to reduce the length of the working week. Poverty, social inequality and the underdevelopment of whole continents could be systematically overcome.

### IMPERIALISM

Imperialism is the highest and most violent stage of capitalism. In the imperialist system a few great capitalist powers and corporations exploit billions in all countries and use their vast military machines to crush anyone who resists them.

For this reasons we support all resistance to their invasions and occupations. We demand an end to the occupation of the Iraq and we support the Iraqi people's armed resistance. We support the Palestinians' struggle to free their homeland of Zionist occupation. We demand the withdrawal of all British troops from abroad including from Northern Ireland. We demand the dissolution of Nato and all other imperialist pacts.

### SOCIAL OPPRESSION

We fight all racism and national oppression and defend refugees and asylum seekers. We demand the opening of the borders, giving all migrants the right to work, social security and full citizenship rights. We fight to deny the fascists any platform for their views and support organised self defence against fascist gangs and racial attacks.

We fight for women's liberation from physical and mental abuse, from bearing the sole or main burden of domestic labour, from suffering sexual exploitation, unequal pay and discrimination at work. Women must have control over their own fertility, including the right to free abortion and contraception on demand.

Lesbians and gay men must be defended against harassment on the streets, at work and in the schools. They must have equal legal rights to marry and bring up children.

We must fight the oppression of young people. We demand an end to the harassment of young people by government, state and press. Young workers should get equal pay and the same rights as other workers. Schools and colleges must be run by the representatives of school students, education workers and local working people. We fight for independent revolutionary youth organisations linked to a revolutionary youth international.

### DEMOCRACY

We must fight for the abolition of all the many undemocratic elements in Britain today: the monarchy, the House of Lords, the unelected judiciary, the state church. There should be no privilege for any one religion. The rights of all faith groups to practice their religion must be protected but all religious schools must be abolished. All blasphemy laws must be abolished and restrictions on the right to criticise religion opposed.

### TRADE UNIONS

We must fight the privileged officials in the trade unions who sell out our struggles. All union officers must be elected, recallable, and removable at short notice and earn the no more than average pay of their members. Rank and file unionists must form a movement in and across all unions to dissolve the trade union bureaucracy.

### REFORM AND REVOLUTION

We oppose reformism and the pro-capitalist actions of the Labour Party in government and in opposition. Labour, for all its organised links to the trade unions, is a capitalist party in its programme, and leadership. It is a bourgeois workers party.

To lead a social revolution the working class needs a new type of party which unites its most conscious and active militants, giving a lead in the trade unions and other mass organisations in their day to day struggles and directing them towards the social revolution. For this purpose an action programme of transitional demands is essential.

### STALINISM

For decades Stalinism was wrongly described as Communism, has betrayed the working class. It established a dictatorship over the working class by a privileged bureaucratic elite. It blocked the road to democratic planning and socialism. This led eventually to the collapse of the USSR and other so-called socialist states.

Where Stalinist states survive - such as Cuba and North Korea - they must still be defended unconditionally against imperialist blockade, attack and the restoration of capitalism. But without a political revolution of the workers and the establishment of workers' council democracy they too will eventually collapse. The theory that you can build 'socialism in one country' has been plainly falsified by collapse of the bureaucratic workers' states.

We must reject the strategic legacy of Stalinism: 'democratic alliances', 'popular fronts' with capitalist parties or a 'democratic stage' which obliges the working class to renounce the struggle for power in the here and now. In every country, the workers must organise independently and fight to come to the head of the struggle. In the age of imperialism and globalisation only an international, global revolution and permanent (i.e. uninterrupted) revolution can consign capitalism to history.

### THE INTERNATIONAL

With the goal of revolution and communism, advancing along the road of the class struggle, we propose the unity of all revolutionary forces in a new Fifth International - a workers' party organised across national boundaries to fight for world revolution.

If you are a class-conscious fighter against capitalism, if you are an internationalist - join us!

**WWW.WORKERSPOWER.COM**

For the latest information and revolutionary political analysis log onto the Workers Power website

• Sign the call for the New Workers Party  
• Read our latest on the struggle of the unions

For an International perspective go to [www.fifthinternational.org](http://www.fifthinternational.org)

## No to chemical weapons, slaying civilians, torture camps...

# US AND BRITISH TROOPS OUT NOW!

**W**hite phosphorous reacts violently in contact with air, forming thick clouds of phosphorous pentoxide. When this falls and makes contact with skin it burns to the bone, causes extreme vomiting and a painful death from the disintegration of the lungs.

White phosphorous is banned under the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons from being used in civilian areas. The US never signed this protocol and its army has admitted – despite initial denials – using white phosphorous on the civilians of Fallujah in November 2004.

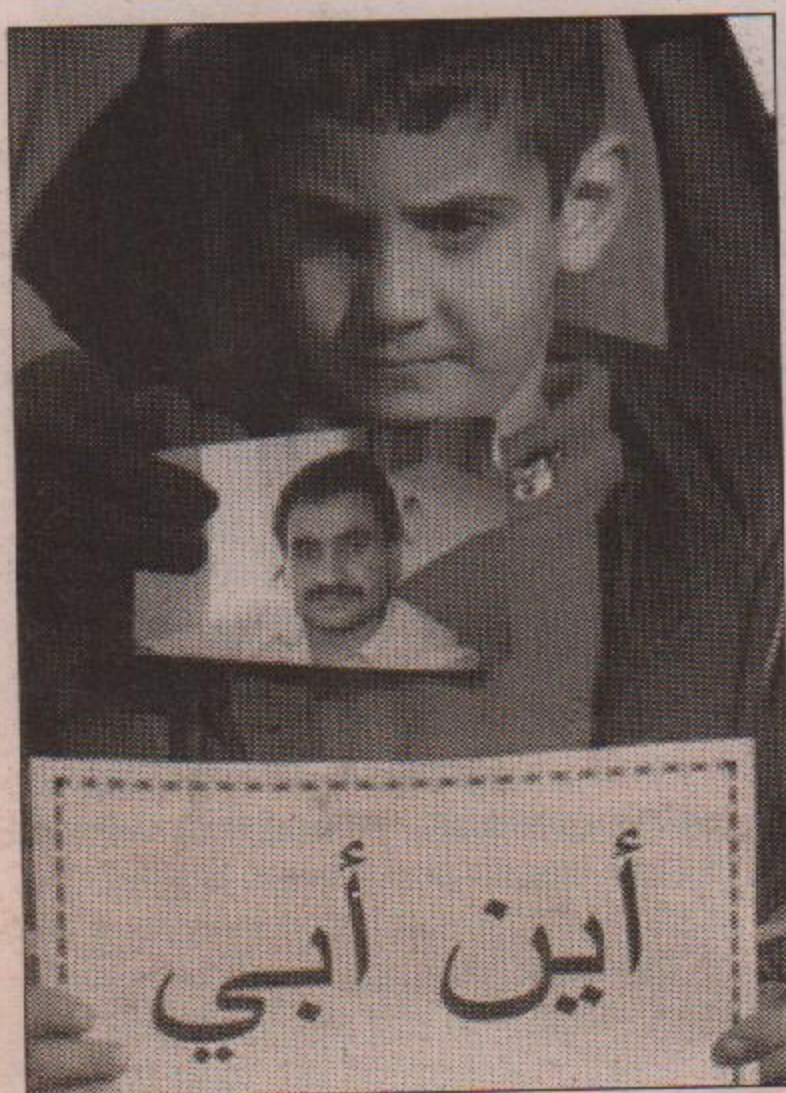
Infantryman Jeff Englehart told Italian television he saw “the burned bodies of women and children”.

But if we are only now learning about the war crimes committed the last time the US occupation forces besieged cities in western Iraq, what is happening now, as they repeat the sweep?

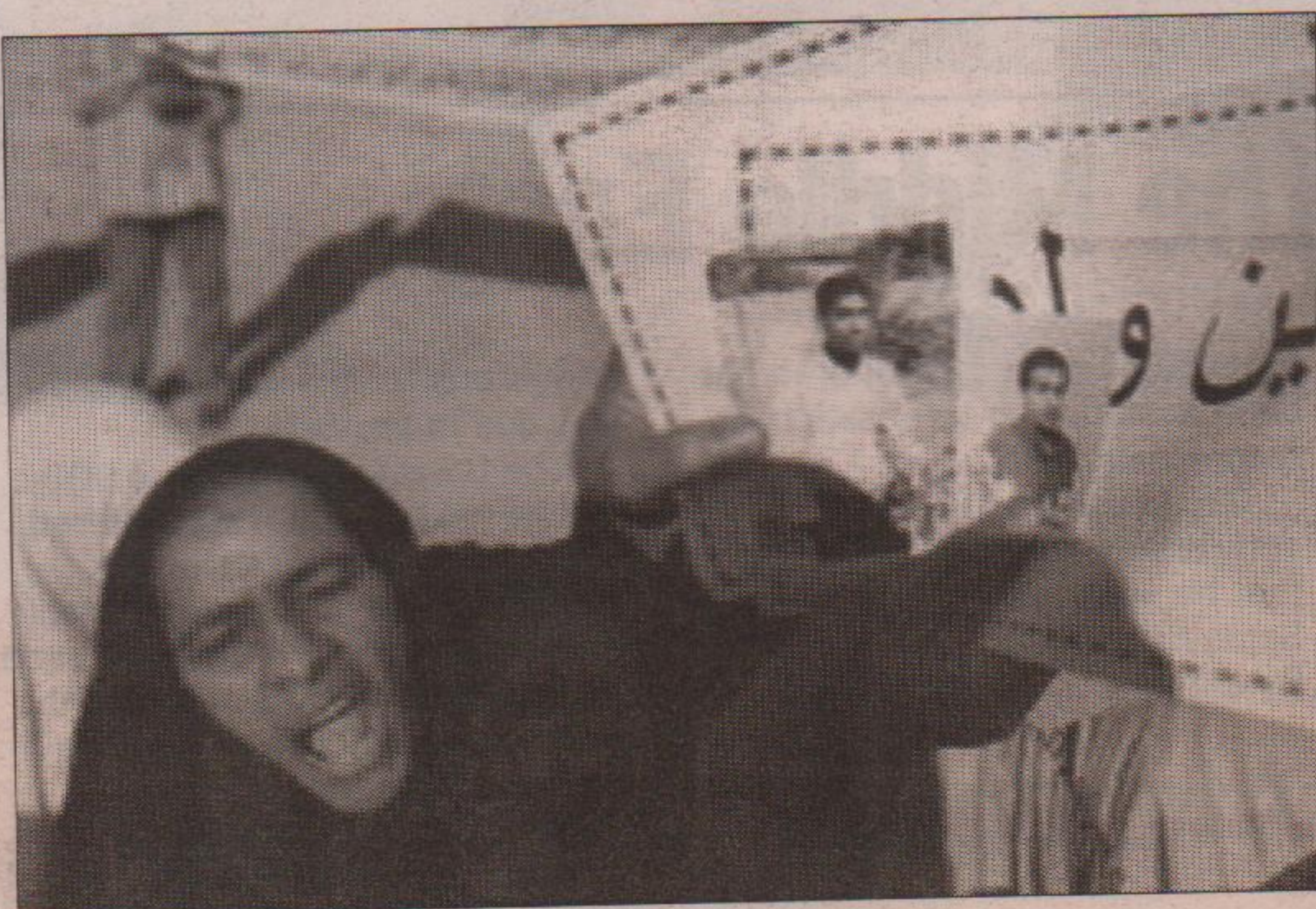
Operation Steel Curtain is presently battering the main Sunni population centres. Reports of its ferocity, like this one from journalist Sabah Ali, have filtered through.

“Water, electricity, phones, roads were all cut. The city was besieged before the bombing began on 5 October, 2005 and went on for 18 days. Many houses were demolished; many families left to the refugee camps, many people were arrested.” (from [www.iraqoccupation-focus.org.uk](http://www.iraqoccupation-focus.org.uk))

The Sunni Iraqi Council for National Dialogue has pointed out that the offensive has displaced more than 200,000 refugees into the desert. They have no food or water and many of them are dying. None of these people will be able to vote in the forthcoming elections.



Demonstrators at the end of November outside Iraq's Ministry of Human Rights. Young boy carries poster reading “Where is my father?” while woman carries picture of her sons. Iraqi police are accused of arbitrarily arresting and torturing people



### PRISON ABUSE

Last month, more prisoner abuse was uncovered. The Ministry of the Interior had entrusted members of the notorious Badr Brigades to starve, beat and torture 173 prisoners. “I saw signs of physical abuse by brutal beating, one or two detainees were paralysed and some had their skin peeled off,” Hussein Kamal told CNN.

But if the occupation troops were surprised at what they found, their generals and commander-in-chief George Bush could not have been. Neither were Iraqis. Thousands, like writer Muhsin al-Khafaji, have been held for over a year without charge. Even in the supposedly insurgency free Kurdish provinces, prisons are overflowing, often with political opponents of the two main Kurdish parties.

Among the detainees are at least 122 women, held because they are “potential suicide bombers”.

But it is the US and Britain that remain the main jailers: they have the power – and regularly use it – to impose a lockdown on any part of the country. Human Rights Watch has recently given fresh details of torture being carried out at Mercury military base, near Fallujah.

Meanwhile, Spanish police revealed that at least 42 prisoners were secretly transported by the CIA out of Iraq via Mallorca. A global network of torture camps, stretching from Abu Ghraib in Iraq to Guantanamo Bay in Cuba to North Africa, is kept strictly out of reach even of United Nations inspectors.

And it is this that is fuelling the resistance to the US and British occupation.

### TROOPS OUT NOW

US and British troops have no progressive role to play in Iraq whatsoever. As the daily toll of Iraqi dead mounts, fewer people believe that the occupa-

tion is “preventing a bloodbath”. According to a British MoD poll of Iraqis in the south, where the resistance is supposed to be weaker, 82 per cent of the people want the foreign troops out now. In Britain and the US, most people believe the war was a mistake and occupation forces should withdraw. Even prominent Republican senators want an end to the occupation.

But the imperialist troops will not leave Iraq of their own accord. They must be forced out by a massive movement in Iraq and around the world.

The United Nations Security Council scandalously voted to extend the occupiers’ mandate for another 12 months. It is the task of antiwar campaigners around the world, but especially those of us living in the imperialist countries, to wage a war on the warmongers and hasten the expulsion of the troops.

## Stop the \$200 billion rip off

War on Want and other campaigning groups have revealed that American and British oil companies have negotiated lucrative contracts, giving them effective control of new oil fields for the next 25 to 40 years.

Production Sharing Agreements are being signed off before the election, in a rush to avoid any future government vetoing them. These contracts grant the multinationals typical profits of between 42 and 162 per cent, compared with the industry average of just 12 per cent.

They also include a clause that stops them from being cancelled or amended by future legislation.

These contracts could cost Iraq \$200 billion in lost revenues. In a war-torn and sanctions-ridden country that still has inadequate water and electricity supplies, and unemployment, this rip off will also cost thousands of lives.

As part of our programme to end the occupation, the anti-war movement needs to demand the cancellation of these contracts, reparations for the damage caused by war and sanctions, and aid without strings to develop the economy under Iraqi control.

## Get active, stay active, join Workers Power

Even the onset of war did not stop the global revolt against it.

Across the world the working class is coming together. Globalisation has forced workers and activists from different countries and continents to unite, work and fight together. There have been huge Social Forums of resistance in Europe at Florence and Paris, in Asia at Hyderabad and Mumbai, and in South America at Porto Alegre.

Together with the L5I, which is represented on the European Social Forum, Workers Power campaigns to bring these movements together into a New

World Party of Socialist Revolution – the Fifth International.

This is a momentous time, one of those times when the true nature of the world we live in suddenly becomes clear to millions. Capitalism is revealing itself to be a system of war, conquest and global inequality. By taking to the streets against war and capitalism, hundreds of thousands of people are showing that they have seen through the lies.

Take the next step and join Workers Power. Phone us on 020-7407 2907 or email us at [workerspower@btopenworld.com](mailto:workerspower@btopenworld.com)

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Print: Newsfax, London  
Production: Workers Power (labour donated)  
ISSN 0263-1121