

Labour's NEC votes to junk Clause Four

LABOUR's national executive has voted to junk Clause Four of the party's constitution in preparation for government, and the inevitable cutbacks and attacks on the working class Labour will have to make on behalf of the ruling class.

Tony Blair and company say they hope to create a 'modernised' party seeking a 'dynamic economy' based on 'thriving private sector' and a 'high-quality public sector'.

'Labour will no longer be anchored to the politics of class and the ownership of industry,' said Peter Riddell in 'The Times' on the day after the announcement of Labour Party leader Tony Blair's new proposed version of its aims and values, which was unveiled last Monday.

The final decision on the proposals is to be taken on 29 April at a special conference of the Labour Party, but it is widely expected that it will get through now that they have been accepted by the national executive committee.

Replace

What it is to replace, 'Clause Four', is a commitment — never carried out since it was written in 1918 — to take into common ownership the means of production, distribution and exchange'. It is on the basis of this, and the party's role in the trade union movement, that the

Labour has continued to command the allegiance of generations of working-class people.

One of the striking things in the process by which Blair hopes to cut the link between the Labour Party and the working class is the lack of fight by the Labour left.

On the NEC there were only three votes against Blair's wording, five abstentions and 21 in favour. The abstentions came from union delegates. Of the three against, Dennis Skinner mumbled about the fight not being necessary. Diane Abbott merely pointed out that there was no commitment to full employment. The third vote against came from the RMT transport union.

Tony Benn MP, not on the NEC, said: 'Labour's heart is

being cut out and handed to the City.'

National Union of Mineworkers' president Arthur Scargill said it made 'a mockery of Labour's 80-year-old socialist commitment'.

Ironically, the new statement declares: 'The Labour Party is a democratic socialist party.' The old constitution never even used the word 'socialism'.

But, in reality, the Labour Party, whether clothed in the old 'Clause Four' or in its new 'modern' guise, has never been socialist. The party has always accepted the capitalist system and has always wanted to find a place for 'reforms' within it, without fundamentally changing its character.

The Labour Party has played an important role in tying the working class in Britain to capitalism through these reforms. But these reforms were only possible on the basis of British imperialism.

As an advanced capitalist country with colonial possessions, the workers in Britain could get 'the crumbs from the master's table'. After World War II, as the colonies became formally independent, and because of working-class dissatisfaction in the advanced capitalist countries, a series of further reforms, such as the NHS and relative 'full employment' in Britain, became necessary for the ruling class.

Reformist parties such as Labour received increased strength in the working class from those parodies of 'socialism' controlled by the Stalinist bureaucracy in eastern Europe, China and the Soviet Union. Throughout the world the working class was controlled by the agreements reached by the allied powers — the US, Britain and the Soviet Union — at the end of the war.

But from the 1970s, imperialism and the degenerated (Soviet Union) and deformed (eastern

Europe, China) workers' states entered a period of increasing crisis.

The possibility of granting 'reforms' directed at sections of the working class in the advanced capitalist countries has quickly melted away. Since 1989, the Stalinist states have one by one collapsed and left chaos in which it is hard to build anything, including capitalism. In China the attempt to build capitalism is on the basis of the bureaucratic suppression of the working class.

Change

Because 'reforms' based on the privileged position of Britain in the world capitalist system are no longer possible, the Labour Party has to change.

This raises the question of what sort of party or organisation it is that the working class needs to represent its interests as a whole in Britain and internationally. Clearly it is not

Blair's Labour Party.

The question raised by Blair's campaign on Clause Four is a question that involves workers inside and outside the Labour Party.

The 'Labour left' has rarely given leadership to workers and socialists except to tie them more firmly to the rotten reformist party leadership.

In the coming months, workers and socialists are faced with some difficult decisions in their fight against Blair and the rest of the Labour Party leadership.

They will be required to make a stand for what they believe in. This will require a struggle to clarify what the interests of the working class are and what the struggle for socialism means, and what sort of working-class organisations are required to carry this out.

Workers Press will make every endeavour to carry out its responsibilities to be part of that struggle.

See pages 4&5.



Two Bosnians who are part of a trade union delegation touring Britain visited a nursery class at Windrush nursery, Thamesmead, south-east London, on Tuesday 7 March

Photo: Alan Clark

Public meeting

Japanese workers' movement

Sunday 26 March

4pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., London WC1 (tube: Holborn)

Speaker: He Go Chi, a union activist for almost 50 years.
Organised by Iranian Refugee Workers' Assoc.

Public meeting

Tuzla (Bosnia) trade union delegation

Monday 20 March
Newcastle

(Venue to be announced.)

For details contact Workers Aid for Bosnia on 071-582 5462)

Oppose capitalist NHS rations

'A RATIONAL health service is as important as a national service,' opined the 'left-of-centre' (in Labour leader Tony Blair's terms) 'Guardian' newspaper in its editorial column last Saturday.

This paper — one of Blair's main supporters on what used to be referred to as Fleet Street, or, more appropriately, by 'Private Eye', the Street of Shame — was joining with Tory Health Secretary Virginia Bottomley in hailing a court decision that a child near to death was not to be given chemotherapy on the NHS in a last-ditch attempt to save her life.

While those supporting the decision dressed it up as being in the child's interest, it was clear that the real debate turned on economic questions.

Chemotherapy is a gruesome treatment in which poisons are introduced into the body in the hope that they will kill the cancer before they kill the human being.

Such treatment is extremely painful and has detrimental side-effects, the most visible, but less serious, being the falling out of hair. The child in question has been given only a 10 to 20 per cent chance of survival by the private doctor who is treating her.

In the same week as this child was fighting for her life and her parents were fighting for the NHS against those who want to dismantle it and take the privatisation of the health service further, the Labour Party leadership continued down the path of support for privatisation.

Blair emphasised that even water is too strong for a Labour government to renationalise. And in the health service, Labour is unlikely to oppose tax breaks, medical insurance or the use of the NHS for private medicine (this was the view of the 'Daily Telegraph' on 13 March), nor scrap the 'internal market'.

'Under the new purchaser/provider structure, the NHS has become more explicit about what it will and will not provide,' said the 'Guardian' editorial. 'But this should be welcomed. Far better an open and overt rationing system, than the old covert and closed procedures.'

This rationale is close to that of the Blair leadership. And former chief scientist at the health department Sir Douglas Black is urging the NHS to follow US state Oregon's decision not to fund more than one in six medical procedures, which included treatment for AIDS.

* * * * *

WHILE trying to hide behind the 'let the child die in peace' argument, very quickly the 'truth will out'. Cambridge, the health authority involved, after offering a few words of sympathy to the family, said: 'We are public servants managing limited resources, guided by values which are not reducible to formulae but will always depend on human judgement.'

But, who 'limits' the resources? Is it because the 'tax base' is too small? Is it that people aren't prepared to pay more for the NHS and other public services? Will such resources have to be increasingly rationed in a 'rational' way? The 'Guardian' editorial was itself headed 'Open the ration book on health'.

In other words, while working people don't pay more tax, governments, Tory and Labour, will just have to keep slashing away at public spending.

These grim reapers must be opposed by the working class. These resources are not limited by taxation but by the insatiable greed of capital for profit. Health care is limited by the cost of drugs and medical equipment. The multinational drug companies scoop up huge profits.

Glaxo director Sir Paul Girolami earned a salary of £2,185,000 in 1993-94. Other payments by Glaxo on Girolami's behalf were an annual £696,000 pension contribution and a provision in its 1994 accounts of £2,270,000 for unfunded pension payments to him when he retires. All this money comes out of the company profits, so there's plenty more where that came from.

Every time a medical breakthrough is made the value of the drug companies' shares go shooting up on the stock exchange. The drug companies see the NHS as a wealth service acting on their behalf.

The 'rationalism' of profit must be opposed by the rationalism of human needs and human resources. We live in a society dominated by the needs of capital and not of human beings. It is all too easy to accept the arguments of the ration book. Those who are more 'valuable' to capital are favoured over the rest. The rich, such as Girolami, take first place in this through private medicine.

Capital's needs, which are opposed to those of the working class, create what Lenin called a spontaneous consciousness that includes these ideas of what services can be afforded by the 'nation'. Working-class fighters must oppose consciously at every step these ideas and these practices which work in the interests of the ruling class.

The working class must be consciously united to fight for its own interests against capitalist profit. The Labour Party leadership won't do this because it is tied to the ruling class and its parliamentary state.

The decision of the recent WRP congress to strive for the formation of a new workers' party is our response to resolving this problem. It won't be easy and we need your help! Work with us to find the way forward for the working class as a whole!

NMP's day of celebration

ON Saturday 25 March, Newham Monitoring Project (NMP) is organising a borough-wide anti-racist and anti-fascist day to celebrate the struggle against racism and fascism in Newham, east London.

This event will be staged at West Ham Town Hall, 29 The Broadway, Stratford E15, and will run from 2pm until late evening. It will include live music, sound systems, dance, poetry, drama, workshops, and numerous other events, and there will be a crèche.

The NMP is working for this event in conjunction with Newham council's housing department and strategic policy unit, Newham Council for Racial Equality, and Newham Tenants' and Residents' Federation, which is also supported by Newham Teachers' Association.

This year marks the NMP's 15th year of activity in helping victims of racist attacks and police harassment. This event is one of a number planned in 1995. The NMP has been actively combatting the growth of fascism in east London, and will be launching an exposé of fascist activity in the borough — 'The Enemy In Our Midst' — at the event.

Newham Monitoring Project
382 Katherine Road,
London E7 8NW

No Ivorian detentions or deportations!

THE home secretary, Michael Howard, has refused to give refugee status to asylum-seekers from the Ivory Coast. Home Office statistics reveal a 100 per cent refusal rate for 1994.

Britain has the worst record on detentions in Europe. At present over 700 asylum-seekers are held in British prisons and detention centres.

Sita Kamara (18 years old) and Anne-Marie Brou, both from the Ivory Coast, have been held in Campfield detention centre in Oxfordshire since they arrived in Britain seven months ago. Both have been on hunger-strike since 8 February 1995, to protest against the home secretary's decision to deny them their right to liberty. Both are concerned about the arbitrary detention of asylum-seekers.

During their 35-year reign of terror Houphouët Boigny and Konan Bédié (the current president) have been responsible for the assassination of political opponents, ethnic massacres, the recent attempted kidnapping of a Muslim leader, secret detentions, various methods of

torture (including electric shock treatment) and the death of students.

Two Amnesty International reports in 1994 condemned the Ivorian government for human rights violations and the lack of freedom of expression and association.

Yet the British government refuses to recognise the problems in the country, and continues to issue deportation orders to asylum-seekers from the Ivory Coast.

Michael Howard wants to force KODJO ALEXIS, SOUMATTORO ISMAILA, OULAI CHANTAL, KOUAME PAAH, FRANCIS SOSTHENE, BRAOUA DICKSON FRANCIS, SOKO ST CLAIR, GBALOU GBALOU THOMAS, KIKET SOLMAN, FIE ARMAND, and many others back to the Ivory Coast, where they face death, torture or imprisonment. His callous disregard for the lives of these asylum-seekers is obvious.

We can stop all detentions and deportations but we need your help morally, financially and physically.

Support for the campaign is growing. We already have the support of individual MPs but we need more, along with trade unions, political and human rights organisations, and individuals, to increase the pressure on Michael Howard.

We are confident that with your help and support we can embarrass the home secretary into giving way on all deportation and detention cases.

Affiliate to our campaign now and take our model resolutions and petitions into your union or organisation.

No deportations! No detentions!

Tim Parkin
Ivorian Relief Action Group
c/o Greenwich Council
Racial Equality, 115 Powis St,
London SE18 6JL

Maire O'Shea

THE Irish in Britain Representation Group (IBRG) would like to record its sadness at the death in Dublin of Dr Maire O'Shea on 6 March.

We extend our sympathy to her family and friends, and pay tribute to her dedication to better health care for working people, her struggle for human and civil rights for the Irish community and English working people, and her lifelong work for Irish self-determination.

Maire qualified as a doctor in Dublin, and arrived in Britain in the 1950s. She moved around England before retiring to Dublin.

She was active in a wide range of organisations including the Anti-Partition League, the Anti-Internment League and, during the 1980s, the IBRG.

She was a member of the IBRG Ard Choiste for several years, including three years as Uachtaran.

A founder member of the West Midlands Prevention of Terrorism Act Welfare Association, she offered trade union support to the miners during their great strike, led the campaign against strip-searching in Britain, was keynote speaker at the first Conference on Mental Health and the Irish Community in 1987, and helped set up the first Irish Mental Health Forum.

In the 1980s she was involved in challenging the convictions of the Birmingham Six. In January 1985, whilst attempting to establish an inquiry in Birmingham into their convictions, she was herself arrested under the racist Prevention of Terrorism Act. Maire led her own campaign to challenge the conspiracy charges against her.

In the first widespread campaign in the Irish community since the 1973 Belfast 10 campaign, Maire spoke across Britain exposing the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the use of conspiracy charges.

MI5 agent Pat Daly was involved in her case. His role in infiltrating Irish organisations was revealed during the McMonigle/Heffernan trial last year.

Her campaign awakened the community, and paved the way for the Guildford Four/Birmingham Six campaigns. Her spirited fight enabled the Irish community to fight back against miscarriages of justice and the PTA.

Her courageous stands on Irish self-determination and civil liberties were an inspiration to our community, and she enriched the community with her hard work and perseverance against the odds to restore dignity to our people under the yoke of the PTA.

Today the burden in our community is a little lighter because of brave women like Maire O'Shea.

We owe it to her to continue her vision of a free and united Ireland and a free Irish community in Britain.

Irish In Britain
Representation Group

Realising mass movement

CLIFF SLAUGHTER's phrase (4 March), 'if Marxists begin now to prepare and organise politically those workers and other socialists who come forward in the diverse struggles', sounds magnificent, but will really-existing Marxists be able to do that, or will they cling to their own little group or sect.

Maybe they think that's just what the WRP will do too.

Today the protest movement is around environmental issues and humans' inhumanity to animals.

We should join them and ask them to join with us in the greater struggle against humans' inhumanity to humans and for a just and equitable society that has been called socialism for 200 years.

I'm looking forward to Cliff's further contribution where he will have the opportunity to spell out how a mass movement for a British socialist party can come to fruition.

At the moment it is only the property of a few of us, no better illustrated than in the report on the London trades council meeting on full employment in the same issue of Workers Press. We were treated to what the most important people said, but the point of view of the WRP was not mentioned.

Where are your comrades? They always seem to be non-existent at meetings. Like Stalin's comment on the Pope — 'how many battalions has he got?' — leaders without an army are in no position to think they can put theory into practice.

John P. Mathieson
Glenrothes, Fife

Question of discussion

CLARIFICATION, discussions, and polemics on the nature of globalisation of capitalism and today's imperialist states seem important to me. In this spirit I wrote a letter of contribution to Geoff's article and I'll try to contribute to this discussion in the future too.

Comrade Geoff felt the necessity to conclude his letter to Workers Press (4 March) by saying: 'What has the method employed by comrade Borovi to do with that of Marxism and with science in general?'

I may ask: What has this kind of 'question' to do with fraternal discussion among members of the same Marxist party?

János Borovi
Paris

Horse's mouth

TOM COWAN (Workers Press, 4 March) asks me to back up my 'emphatic' assertion that two unofficial dockers' leaders, Harry Constable and Bert Aylward, joined 'the Healy group in the 1950s.

My source for the statement was Harry Constable. I am happy to take his word for it.

Keith Sinclair
Hull

Coming soon

SATURDAY 25 MARCH: Demonstration in support of sacked TGWU bus drivers. 10am, Central Park, Chelmsford.

SUNDAY 26 MARCH: Public meeting on Japanese workers' movement, organised by Iranian Refugee Workers' Association. Speaker: He Go Chi, a union activist for almost 50 years. 4pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London WC1.

SATURDAY 1 APRIL: Groundswell: a day for independent unemployed activists to get together and sort it out. East Oxford Community Centre, Princes Street, Oxford. Organised by Oxford Unemployed Workers' & Claimants' Union. Tel: 0865 723750. Fax: 0865 724317.

SATURDAY 27 MAY: African Liberation Day march, 'Not just charity but complete liberation'. Organised by the African Liberation Support Campaign. 1pm, Kennington Park, London SE11. Rally at Trafalgar Sq. Details: 071-924 9033.

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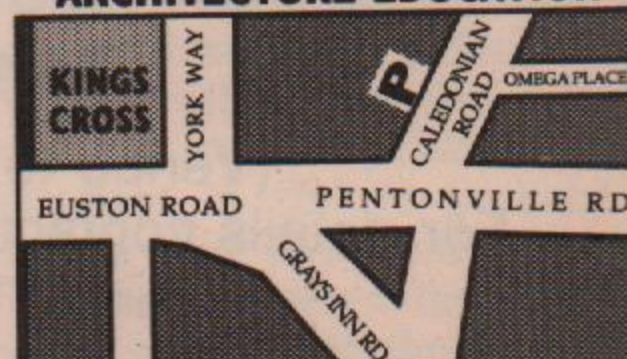
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Exchanges upheaval shows illusion of common currency

BY OUR ECONOMICS EDITOR

interest rates.

Particularly significant is that France was among those in trouble, for the franc, with the Deutschmark, is at the heart of the European exchange rate mechanism and plans for a single European currency.

French unemployment — running at more than one in eight, and that is on official figures — is bound to rise further.

The immediate reason for the turmoil on the money mar-

kets was the strength of the Deutschmark and the flight from the US dollar. There was near-panic buying of the Japanese yen, as speculators rushed to get out of dollars.

Damage

Fear mounts in Tokyo that the appreciating yen could severely damage Japanese exports and stop any economic recovery from its current recession dead in its tracks.

tion dead in its tracks.

The main reason for the dollar's crisis is Mexico. Nobody believes the Mexican 'stabilisation' plan — despite its draconian cuts in state spending and attacks on the poor — will do anything to deal with the underlying problems.

The crisis in Europe is international in origin. This international crisis continually disrupts even the best-laid plans for European monetary union.

NAAFI declares derecognition war on union

WHILE the government prepares a national beano to celebrate the end of World War II, one of Britain's best-known military institutions is threatening to end a relationship born during the darkest days of the war.

The NAAFI, official trading organisation for the forces, has announced that it intends to derecognise the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW), which has enjoyed negotiating rights with the organisation since 1941.

But USDAW's national officer, Terry Savage, said the union still represents the bulk of employees in NAAFI shops and among clerical staff, and is by far the biggest single union representing non-managerial staff within the business.

'We don't accept NAAFI management claims that we no longer represent the interests of their workers and see it as a cynical and crude excuse to force through unhindered restructuring of the business which will inevitably involve job losses,' said Savage.

'It is par for the course among pseudo-governmental organisations to find some limp excuse for derecognising the union before imposing vicious new conditions and job cuts on their employee's. Restructuring is just a polite word for harder work, lower pay and job insecurity.'

USDAW and management are to discuss the derecognition proposal at a meeting on 22 March. 'We shall fight them all the way,' said Savage.

Represents

NAAFI's employee relations manager, David Richardson, claimed in a letter to the union that it no longer represents 'a significant part of the workforce in any part of the business'.

Richardson said 'fundamental changes' had been recommended by consultants and, as a result of the need to restructure the business, the relationship with the trade unions was being reviewed.

Rifkind shields US spy base

BY COLIN PENDLETON

Defence secretary Malcolm Rifkind last week issued a gagging order to stop questions being asked in court about what is said to be the world's biggest US spy base, Menwith Hill in Yorkshire.

Peace campaigner Lindis Percy, facing a High Court injunction from the Ministry of Defence (MoD) ordering her not to trespass on its land, intended to argue that although officially owned by the MoD, Menwith Hill is run by the US National Security Agency (NSA).

But Rifkind's 'public interest' immunity certificate meant her lawyer could not question officials on this.

Another peace campaigner, Helen John, was jailed for six months on 22 February for 'criminal damage' at the base.

She had broken 13 windows in the headquarters building where station head Dr N. Addison Ball has his office. No one was in the building at the time. Helen has been in the peace movement since she marched from Wales to Greenham Common in 1981.

Menwith Hill is regarded as the hub of US secret electronic intelligence gathering, from which NSA can secretly listen in to all telecommunications in the northern hemisphere.

Advanced computers located in a heavily fortified operations building can scan and sort up to 4 million words per minute. The international communications of certain individuals are on a

special 'watch list'. The intelligence gathered is relayed back to NSA headquarters at Fort Meade, Maryland.

During the Iran-Iraq war and the Gulf war, the spies at Menwith Hill won special awards. Language specialists inside the base indicate that the Middle East, eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union remain priority targets for eavesdropping.

But since the cold war ended the NSA has turned increasingly to spying on the US's business competitors, as well as on trade unions and 'friendly Western governments'.

Articles in the American press have boasted of the commercial advantages gained thanks to good intelligence, and France recently asked six US diplomats to leave.

Dishes

Although Menwith Hill's 21 'billiard ball' radomes and satellite dishes are visible from miles away, it does not figure on Ordnance Survey maps. Opponents say the US base is linked by cable to nearby Hunters Stones Tower, a British Telecom microwave tower and switching centre.

More than 1,000 US personnel are stationed at Menwith Hill and the base is expanding. Some staff from Britain's Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) are working there.

Bradford West Labour MP Max Madden has asked whether the British and US governments are using Menwith Hill to get

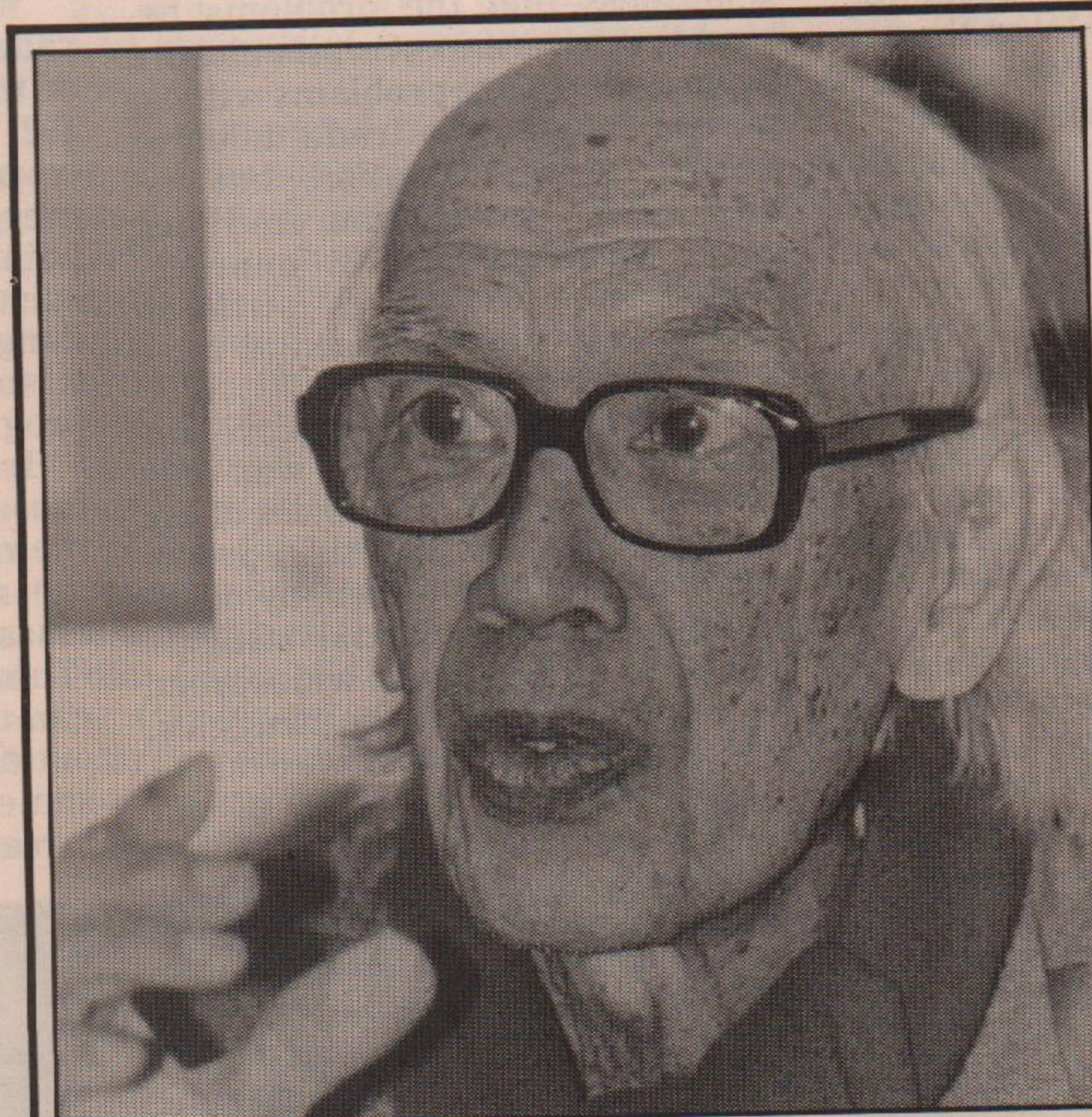
round laws restricting telephone tapping. In common with other MPs he has not been allowed to visit the US base.

Women peace campaigners camped outside the base, on the A59 seven miles west of Harrogate, plan a 'blockade' of Menwith Hill on 22 May.

They ask for messages of

support to Helen John, Low Newton Women's Prison, Braside, Durham, DH1 5SD.

And they urge supporters to write to their MPs to ask why visits to the base are not allowed. They also suggest writing to British Telecom and Mercury to ask about the eavesdropping.



Ngo Van, a Vietnamese worker and Trotskyist, spoke of the revolutionary struggle in his country at a London meeting on 6 March. Van was imprisoned by the French colonialists in the 1930s and by the Vietminh in the 1940s. His book, 'Revolutionaries They Could Not Break', costs £11.95 plus p&p from Index Books (see p.2) Photo: Alan Clark

Bronwen Handyside reports

Two nations

Condition of the working classes in England — 1995

SEVEN out of ten people jailed for poll-tax arrears come from the very poorest section of our society — those who live on state benefits or who have no income at all — according to a survey of 143 cases reported in 'Legal Action', monthly journal of the Legal Action Group.

One-third of the poll-tax debtors sampled were either physically or mentally ill, or disabled.

You don't have to buy those Dickens novels any more — it's all back, in real life!

'The oldest person to go to prison was 72 years old,' says the report.

'He has a heart condition and has had treatment for malnutrition.

'He was sent to jail for 28 days by Peterlee magistrates in August 1994 and served 15 days before being released on bail. He lived in a nursing home, and

received a resident's allowance of £12 a week.'

One-third of the 143 defaulters were sentenced to more than 30 days' imprisonment. Among these were: a 20-year-old man who had no income while awaiting a claim for income support (he served 14 days in a young offenders' centre); a woman who was seriously mentally ill; and a woman who had been both ill and homeless and was on sickness benefit of £46 a week.

According to the report, of the 146 cases, 18 per cent had no income, 20 per cent were ill or disabled, some very ill (with heart trouble, curvature of the spine and cancer) and one was pregnant.'

The longest sentence was the maximum of 90 days. The longest period served was 66 days. Seven people spent more than 20 days in prison. Among them was a mother of three whose youngest child was only five years old. She was a part-time cleaner earning £42 a week; she spent 25 days in prison.

There were 13 under-21s in the sample and in every case magistrates had failed to apply the special provisions for the

committal to prison of people in this age group.

Six people in the sample were over 60. The oldest person was 80. She was sentenced to 28 days — luckily this was quashed at judicial review.

Ten people were physically disabled, including: a cancer patient who suffered from severe physical and mental handicaps following childhood meningitis; a man who had serious problems in walking, and for whom the court convened in a ground-floor room as he could not climb stairs; an epileptic 74-year-old man; and an 80-year-old woman who was incontinent and wheelchair bound.

Five people suffered from mental disability. They included a 60-year-old woman living with her carer-daughter and whose sole income was invalidity benefit; and another woman who was asthmatic and mentally handicapped and who spent ten days in prison before being released on bail following the intervention of Betty Boothroyd MP (now speaker of the House of Commons).

Twenty-seven of the sample were seriously ill, suffering from angina, arthritis, asthma, epilepsy and tumours. Eight people were mentally ill.

Eight were living with a disabled spouse or with disabled parents and 19 were dependent on other people because of the degree of their mental or physical disability or illness. There

were eight single parents of young children.

Out of the 146 in the report, a grand total of 11 are wage-earners, mostly low or very low earners. Mrs S., who spent a week in jail, earns £60 a week as a home help.

More than 90 per cent of judicial reviews of cases involving poll-tax default found that the decision to imprison was unlawful. Unfortunately those wrongly jailed have to be mentally and physically able to arrange for a judicial review.

Electricity — out of control

NOW ponder a little on a recent decision of the High Court. This said that Norweb, one of the privatised regional electricity companies, was acting legally when it secretly reset a man's meter to run at three times the normal speed, in order to collect money the company incorrectly thought the man owed to it.

A court last year had found the Manchester-based company guilty of unlawful harassment, and had ordered it to pay David Dixon £1,000 compensation.

The electricity bill involved another property, and another David Dixon. It took three weeks for David Dixon Number 1 to convince Norweb they had the wrong man. In the meantime, he was paying £11.08 a week for electricity, out of his £33 unemployment benefit.

'I had to choose between feeding the meter and feeding myself,' said David Dixon Number 1. 'Often I could not afford to eat.'

But this was tough luck, according to the recent High Court ruling, which held that the Norweb did not have a contract with Mr Dixon, only a duty to supply him with electricity. And to rip him off, presumably.

Labour's promise to Mr Dixon

AFTER the Scottish Labour Party voted at its annual conference to call for the privatised public utilities to be taken back into public ownership, a 'senior Labour Party source' told the 'Independent on Sunday':

'The Scottish party is perfectly entitled to express its opinion, but those opinions are not national policy and it will be up to the national party conference and the national executive.'

'We don't have any plans to renationalise electricity, water or British Telecom because we don't think the benefits of renationalisation are justified by the large sums involved.'

The Scottish Labour conference also voted for the abolition of Clause Four. So Labour pledged itself to a 'dynamic' private sector — and a 'continuing commitment' to public ownership.

Mr Dixon (and the rest of us) had better start laying in supplies.

If you have any material for this column, please send it to me at Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.

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Inside left

Tracks in time

TGV train travelling at 296 metres an hour across northern France was derailed in December when a hole opened up beneath the track. Fortunately nobody was hurt. The hole was a World War I trench that had been backfilled. The 'Geographical' magazine (February) said engineers Ove Arup have been asked to trace aerial photographs of the former British motor north of Lille.

More often it's the history of a place rather than the geology that affects building considerations,' a company spokesperson said. 'Maybe this answers Essex reader Edant (Letter, 11 March)? Trains are running again across northern France. With proper attention to history, they have successfully re-established continuity! In George Orwell's 'Nineteen Eighty-Four', history is myth, re-written to suit each realignment of ruling world powers. In the same author's 'Animal Farm', the honest workhorse's stubborn honesty won't let him keep up with each change in 'line' dictated by Napoleon. Property is a valuable collective memory of the working class. Labour's self-styled 'modernists' want to erase the history re-written in Clause Four.

Fascism and Stalinism destroyed millions of people and sought to erase or rewrite history. Trotskyist Fourth International suffered especially bloody marauding.

In Russia today the militants of Workers International to Reconstruct the Fourth International are mostly young comrades. Their attempt to re-establish continuity with the past struggle of Trotsky's Opposition, and of Bolshevism, is a vital matter of restoring consciousness in the working class for a great aim.

This is an international task. No revolutionary party can ignore history; but it is the property of the working class as a whole, not of sects. Sectarian opportunists resist historical inquiry. They discourage discussion between generations; what counts, for them, is the week's slogan.

The journal 'Revolutionary History', launched a few years after the Workers Revolutionary Party led former leader Gerry Healy, brings together comrades from different political tendencies in honest pursuit of our history. How Healy would have hated it! But others are too keen, either. In 'Workers Party' (March), Sean Matgamna complains about 'the mushrooming of socialist journals and study groups, concerned not immediately with the class struggle . . .'

He doesn't history about class struggle does he mean, not just contented with the immediate struggle? He lumps together 'Critique', 'Pepper', 'New Interventions', 'Revolutionary History'. Perhaps their 'crime' is to occupy space sought by 'Workers Party'? Two 'Workers Liberty' editors have served on the editorial board of 'Revolutionary History'. Presumably they don't agree with Matgamna that 'they are helping to shape a whole sub-culture in the central Marxist commitment to the class struggle and to political work for socialism is

Someone at a 'Critique' conference suggested the 'welfare state' is 'bureaucratic'. Matgamna is angered. But workers in public places have confronted management doing the Tories' bidding. Are people defending the welfare state not to be told this? That is a history lesson from today's struggles.

Don't lay down the line without drawing the maps!

Charlie Pottins

The main decision at the WRP's recent congress on 10-11 February was that the party was now to strive for the formation of a new workers' party. We publish here the third and final extract from the written report submitted to the congress by WRP secretary CLIFF SLAUGHTER. For earlier extracts see Workers Press 25 February and 11 March

OUR political lives, and those of the generation before us, have been dominated by a relationship of class forces in which capitalism was able temporarily, albeit for a relatively long period, to contain the revolutionary developments, which are inevitable in this capitalism's period of decay.

Capitalism was able to do this because of the rise to power of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, the first country of socialist revolution.

Stalinism is no more. But Stalinism's domination has resulted in large-scale destruction of working-class consciousness.

The structural crisis of capitalism is now revealed in mass unemployment and large areas of social and political breakdown.

But capitalism's globalisation and its relative expansion brought tremendous pressure — economic, political and military — on the economy and society of 'socialism in one country', the Soviet Union.

Together with the resistance to Stalinism of the working class in the USSR and eastern Europe, this brought the collapse of the main pillar of continued capitalist rule in the world since the 1920s, Stalinism.

The contradictions of capitalism, now breaking through with renewed force, have two central features which we still have not taken sufficiently seriously:

1. Every struggle today tends to take on immediately or very quickly an international character.

2. We have to face a new situation which came into existence only in the last few years — any reform or trade union struggle cannot progress unless it goes beyond the immediate questions it confronts.

Even to maintain existing standards, let alone make gains, now requires a radical, revolutionary change in the organisation and consciousness of the working class.

forces who fight them with the development of the class as a whole, the class movement.

To elaborate and work on such a strategy and task of the working-class revolutionary party, a party consisting of the continual coming together of the Marxists with the leading workers in all these fights.

Turn in situation

WE ARE not meeting, with these prospects in front of us, at a time of a great upsurge of the class struggle in Britain. But the 1992-93 movement in defence of the miners was a sign of a turn in the situation.

The willingness of hundreds of thousands to come on to the streets was a sure sign that millions felt that the same basic threats faced them as faced the miners. This was a spontaneous, embryonic consciousness that the problems behind the government's pits-closure programme were problems with no partial solution, no trade union or merely protest solution, but demanded a class solution. And this, don't forget, after an unprecedented one-year miners' strike in 1984-85 that was supposed to have been defeated.

We in the WRP therefore decided in 1992-93 that this was only the first wave of a new series of big struggles, and that political preparation for the next waves, by participation in every partial struggle and by working on the widespread feeling for unity of these struggles, was at the centre of our work.

That was the meaning of our work in the miners' support groups and in the Community and Union Action Campaign, its steering committee and its conferences. We should discuss the significance of the difference between our approach to that movement and that of the so-called 'left groups'.

We had learned to go into the various movements not as they did,

'Without a strategy to unite the separate sectional and national-scale struggles, the barbaric alternative to socialism will loom larger every day. That strategy can come only through the building of a party, the International.'

This is because capital finds itself forced to claw back past gains, even those which served it in controlling the working class.

In every major country, state attacks on the trades unions, the basic defence organisations of the working class, are the rule. These are problems forcing upon the working class the necessity to reconstruct its class movement.

How is our development as a party related to these necessities? Every partial struggle will be fruitless, and even be defeated, unless we start to create a different relation between these struggles and the fight for socialism.

That relation is not simply: the workers fight on each and every issue, and we in the WRP carry forward the 'big' fight, for Marxism, for the revolution. We don't overcome that false division, either, only by making sure that each one of our party members is at the front of the fight in every partial struggle — even though that is absolutely necessary.

There has to be a strategy linking the partial struggles and the

in order to preach or lecture to them, or to advertise ourselves, or to poach a few recruits, or to prove that we had a position quite distinct from all others.

We looked for ways to bring forward the self-organisation of the working class, and we concentrated on uniting the various separate struggles on social issues and against the police and other agencies of the state.

We did not say only that by uniting the separate struggles there was more chance of winning some victories. We said that there is a real unity underlying the many attacks and the many struggles, that the working class needs to confront the historical situation from which these attacks stem, and that it can confront it only as a class, against the ruling class.

That is why we said that what was more and more on everyone's lips — 'unite the struggles!' — means politics, that is class against class, and for that, a political organisation of the class is necessary; and such an organisation is a party. But for the working class to

Towards a new New t new t

get such a party means fighting against all those who lay claim to already being such a party.

In November 1992 the WRP first raised the question of the need for the widest possible discussion, throughout the workers' movement, of what kind of party the working class needs.

When Lenin said to the comrades of the newly formed parties of the Communist International in 1921 that it was necessary for the revolutionary party 'to some extent merge with the masses', was he being a liquidationist? Wouldn't such 'merging' bring with it the danger of contamination with centrism, of a dilution of revolutionary programme and principles?

In 1995, can we 'merge' with those who have come forward in the various struggles (let alone with the masses or with the working class itself) without such a dilution? (Think about this question as well: can the WRP live any longer without discovering how that it will 'to some extent merge' with these forces?)

Don't forget it was the working class that Lenin was talking about when he said 'to some extent merge', not a minority of it in struggle at a particular time. So can we relate to the movement of the working class as it comes the impending struggles except through the more advanced workers, youth and intellectuals who are thrown into struggle, who come forward and are driven to strive for and comprehend the necessity of revolutionary solutions in these initial stages?

Marx, like Lenin no liquidationist, also once (1868) commented on the necessity of taking the chance of ending a sectarian existence and 'merging' with the working-class movement. His rethinking is worth careful study and reflection in the light of our present tasks.

Marx was against those who, instead of looking among the genuine elements of the class movement for the real basis of their agitation, wanted to prescribe the course to be followed by this movement according to a certain



The 1992-93 movement in defence of Britain's miners was a sign of a turn in the p

workers' party times, tasks

we overcome today's living contradiction between, on the one hand, a working class forced into new struggles, without the nightmare of the Stalinist apparatus yet severely damaged by half a century and more of Stalinism, and, on the other hand, a Marxist movement (us) also damaged by Stalinism and needing as a matter of life and death to go beyond and overcome our own one-sided development (in the long-drawn-out crisis of the Fourth International)?

I began this report by referring to the many comrades who have fought their way through the most nightmarish experiences at the hands of counter-revolutionary Stalinism (see Workers Press, 11 March). Their experience is not exceptional, and the understanding of it is crucial.

Welding into party

THE question confronting this congress goes much wider than the class struggle in Britain alone. It is this: are we to be among the conscious agents of the welding together into one party all those workers and all those Marxists who, after their experiences in struggle — often bitter and destructive — now begin to see, as we begin to see, that there must be a renewal, at a higher level, of the theory and strategy of permanent revolution?

This renewal must negate and overcome the politics of the whole last period in which Stalinism worked to destroy proletarian internationalism. The understanding of this need is now becoming open to many more people than are in our party. Stalinism's destructive, counter-revolutionary work we surely now understand more concretely than we ever did before, because of Bosnia, Angola, Namibia, South Africa, Russia, Cambodia, China, etc.

Can we not come together in one party with all those who must fight — and are fighting — to understand that this return to the permanent

revolution is identical with that reckoning with Stalinism that they, and the whole working-class movement, must now make? This is the way out of the long nightmare.

I propose that this is the starting-point, the Marxist, internationalist starting-point, of this congress.

Once we see it in the framework of permanent revolution and the new situation of Stalinism's collapse, then all reservations, such as 'What will happen to the Workers International and the WRP's membership of it if we form a new party?', fall to the ground. To take such a step forward is the work of reconstruction of the Fourth International and of the working-class movement for which the Workers International was set up in 1990.

The working class needs to reconstruct its internationalism, and it can do this not in the abstract, in the mind, but only in and through the struggles forced upon it by the international and historical-structural crisis of capitalism.

Without a strategy to unite the separate sectional and national-scale struggles, the barbaric alternative to socialism will loom larger every day. That strategy can come only through the building of a party, the International.

We are convinced that it is on the basis of the programme of the Fourth International that all the fruits of the continuous struggle of the working class on the economic, the political, and the theoretical fronts can be called up and carried forward. Those who are now coming out of the Stalinist-dominated past, in one country after another, are called upon to turn to the task of reconstructing the working-class movement and its internationalism.

There is no 'new world order'. We are not one of the various sects which try to define or find examples of some such 'new world order'; on the contrary, we must find the way to be the focus, the facilitators of unity for all those who find themselves compelled to

understand that there can be no order.

The unevenness, contradictoriness and explosiveness of the global capitalist system go beyond any order. That was why Stalinism (and the 'old world order') collapsed and was replaced not by peaceful and democratic restoration of capitalism and order, but by what we see in Yugoslavia, Chechnya, Russia and China. Just as in the national-liberation struggles in Africa, Asia and Latin America, there is no 'democratic' solution, only the need to find the road to socialist revolution.

In the 1950s and 1960s the structural crisis of world capitalism was beginning to erupt, and the Stalinist bureaucracy's desperate attempt to stabilise its place in the world system — 'peaceful coexistence', 'peaceful competition between the two systems', 'really existing socialism' alongside imperialism, 'the struggle between the two camps' — was being battered on all sides as the struggles unfolded with tremendous force.

This was revealed in east Germany in 1953, Hungary/Poland and the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party (CPSU) in 1956, and then Cuba, China, the Sino-Soviet split, Czechoslovakia, Vietnam, 1968 in France, Angola, Mozambique.

The process of disintegration of

'Today the control of the working class through reformism is no longer possible.'

the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR began to reveal itself, with openly restorationist and 'conservative' or 'hardline' wings emerging in the CPSU and the state apparatus. In Britain came the 1972 and 1974 struggles, then the unprecedented 1984-85 miners' strike. The revolutionary onslaught of the South African masses in the 1980s was to make the country ungovernable, and finally came the spectacular collapses in eastern Europe and Tiananmen Square.

Those who remembered the ideology of the 1950s asked themselves: is this the new world of an 'industrial society' announced by the sociologists and economists, without a working class, without class conflict, with 'development', 'take off' and 'growth', with functional unity and consensus? Where were the snows of yesteryear?!

Today, with imperialism now deprived of its Stalinist bulwark, the control of the working class through reformism is no longer possible. For this reason, the defence of Clause Four cannot mean a return to the dispensing of reforms as a mechanism of control, as the liberal and Keynesian journalists, aided by ex-Stalinists like Martin Jacques (the former editor of 'Marxism Today') are advising the Labour left.

On the contrary, it is a situation in which long ago the necessity for the ruling class to break the unions and abolish the legal right to strike was clear in every advanced country.

The new period in which we fight is not only that of the collapse of Stalinism but also of the resurgence of all the contradictions of capitalism on the global scale and without the possibility of 'national' solutions anywhere. Here is the basis of permanent revolution.

The working class in its partial, sectional struggles has to fight its way through to political, class solutions, solutions that feed into an international struggle and strategy.

Any advance in our politics must be part of the struggle to reconstruct the working-class movement, and must be at the same time a step forward on the working class's path to political, class solutions, gathering the forces necessary for that.

eternaire recipe. And he concluded:
'You yourself have experienced your own person the opposition between the movement of a sect and the movement of a class. The sect sees the justification of its existence and its point of honour in what it has in common with the class movement but in the particular shibboleth which distinguishes it from the movement. . . . [A] new stage of development had now been reached, and the moment was ripe for the sectarian movement to merge in the class movement and make an end of all sectarianism. As for the true content of the sect it would, as was the case with all previous working-class sects, be carried on with the general movement as an element enriching it. . . . [Y]ou left them the alternative of either joining you or opposing you.'
I maintain that for some time now we have in our political activities been actually engaging in this process of putting an end to the

'sect' aspect of our existence (i.e., our separation from the working-class movement as a whole, something imposed on us by decades of Stalinist domination of the international movement), allowing our 'true content' to be 'carried on with the general movement as an element enriching it'.

It means putting an end, for all to see, to what we have in common with 'the groups'. Let us complete the process! This is part of what I have for some time now tried to emphasise as the main question confronting the working class and of course confronting us, the Trotskyists, that is, to recognise fully the new situation created by the fall of Stalinism.

It means understanding that we are obliged (and the working class absolutely needs this) to break out of the narrow circle into which the strength of Stalinism had forced us for most of our lives. The question is: can we grasp objective movements and conditions which permit us to do this?

I can put this another way: can



pects for the class struggle

Shibboleths — or struggle?

ANSWERING Nick Brown's friendly letter (11 March), I'd better begin by making clear what I failed to make clear in the piece he criticises.

The words 'those who write letters to Workers Press advocating that we all wash our hands of the Clause Four debate within the Labour Party' (25 February) didn't in fact refer to Nick's letters (5 November and 3 December 1994). Nor did I mean that the writers in question were calling for an end to the debate.

What I had in mind was those letters asserting that the debate on this question in the Labour Party is of no concern to revolutionary socialists; that we should stand aside from the movement in defence of Clause Four; that the outrage felt by large numbers of Labour voters and trade unionists at Blair's attack on Clause Four is for us irrelevant.

Thus D. Smith told us to 'stop wasting time calling for the defence of Clause Four' (21 January), while Jane Williams called the debate a 'storm in a teacup' designed to 'fragment revolutionaries', and instructed Workers Press that it ought to be 'building a united front in opposition to the popular front around Clause Four' (25 February).

Yes, I did suggest that those who take this position might 'ponder' a passage in the 'Communist Manifesto' (1848), in which Marx and Engels give their answer to the question: 'In what relation do the Communists stand to the proletarians as a whole?' (Whether comrades ponder it 'profitably' cannot of course be guaranteed.)

Now, as I hope Nick will accept, I'm not a quotation-monger. Raiding the Marxist classics for quotations to back the current 'line' was notoriously part of the discredited Stalinist method of constructing an argument.

Why then did I quote those words of Marx and Engels: 'The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole. They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement'?

Not because I thought that first sentence directly applicable to the present day — and certainly not because I think communists 'should have ignored the break-up of the previous internationals, the scramble by the so-called workers' parties to rally round their own bourgeoisie', and so forth — but because this quotation sheds a flood of light on the *method* of Marx and Engels.

Here at the very dawn of the modern scientific communist movement, in that movement's first published programmatic document, we find the sharpest possible renunciation of sectarianism.

And by sectarianism, as Marx was to put it 20 years later, he meant seeing the justification of a group's existence 'not in what it has in common with the class movement but in the particular shibboleth which distinguishes it from the movement'.

Marx and Engels spent their whole lives, their whole political careers, battling against sectarians who stood aloof from the living movement of the working class because they were afraid of compromising their revolutionary principles.

The sectarians came up with endless reasons for not plunging into the hurly-burly of the real movement of the working class. What was important to them was what marked them off from that movement.

Marx and Engels denounced their 'shibboleths', by which they meant the sort of ready-made formulas and slogans we have seen rather a lot of in the

PERSONAL COLUMN

Workers Press correspondence columns since Blair declared war on Clause Four.

Let me ask Nick to read once more that short, poignant letter to Workers Press from a member of the Labour Party in Stoke on Trent, Brenda Proctor, a letter that has drawn surprisingly little comment.

A Labour Party member for 24 years, she wrote that she was 'ashamed and disgusted' by that party's steady departure from the 'socialist principles which my parents and grandparents fought to achieve'; and she was 'committed to the fight to retain Clause Four' (21 January).

Now, what do we say to this comrade, and to the tens of thousands like her? Do we advise her to resign now from the Labour Party? Or should she and those who think like her stay in and fight?

Don't we have to ask ourselves which course is in the best long-term interests of the entire working class?

There is, as it happens, an interesting historical analogy, not identical in every detail (what analogy ever is?) but close enough to provoke thought. It was an episode in which I was personally involved, and I well remember what our thinking was.

In 1956-57, during the crisis in the British Communist Party, immeasurably deepened by the Hungarian revolution, the group that in May 1957 launched 'The Newsletter' was advising dissidents inside the CP not to resign but to 'stay in and fight'.

Our view was that the experience of a principled fight against a corrupt leadership would teach the dissidents many political lessons, and that those who fought would attract support.

And so it came to pass. We won an entire branch of the Young Communist League in Liverpool, and several hundred CP and YCL members elsewhere. And they came to us, not as demoralised individuals, but as political fighters, and many of them became foundation members of the Socialist Labour League in 1959.

The movement in defence of Clause Four is too important — and, frankly, the Brenda Proctors of this world are too important — for us to brush aside their struggle as a mere 'campaign for the constitution of a discredited party'.

As Paul Henderson remarked in the discussion, 'the best way to talk to them is from inside the campaign' (Letters, 28 January).

If we're really serious about a new party, we have to understand that it will not take shape through high-sounding declarations or ready-made formulas, but in the process of struggle.

And we have to be in the thick of that struggle.

A Sharpe cut

LAST week I mentioned the London borough of Newham's Local Studies Library as the only place where a copy of Nancie Sharpe's very rare 1930s 'Report on the Negro Population in London and Cardiff' can be consulted.

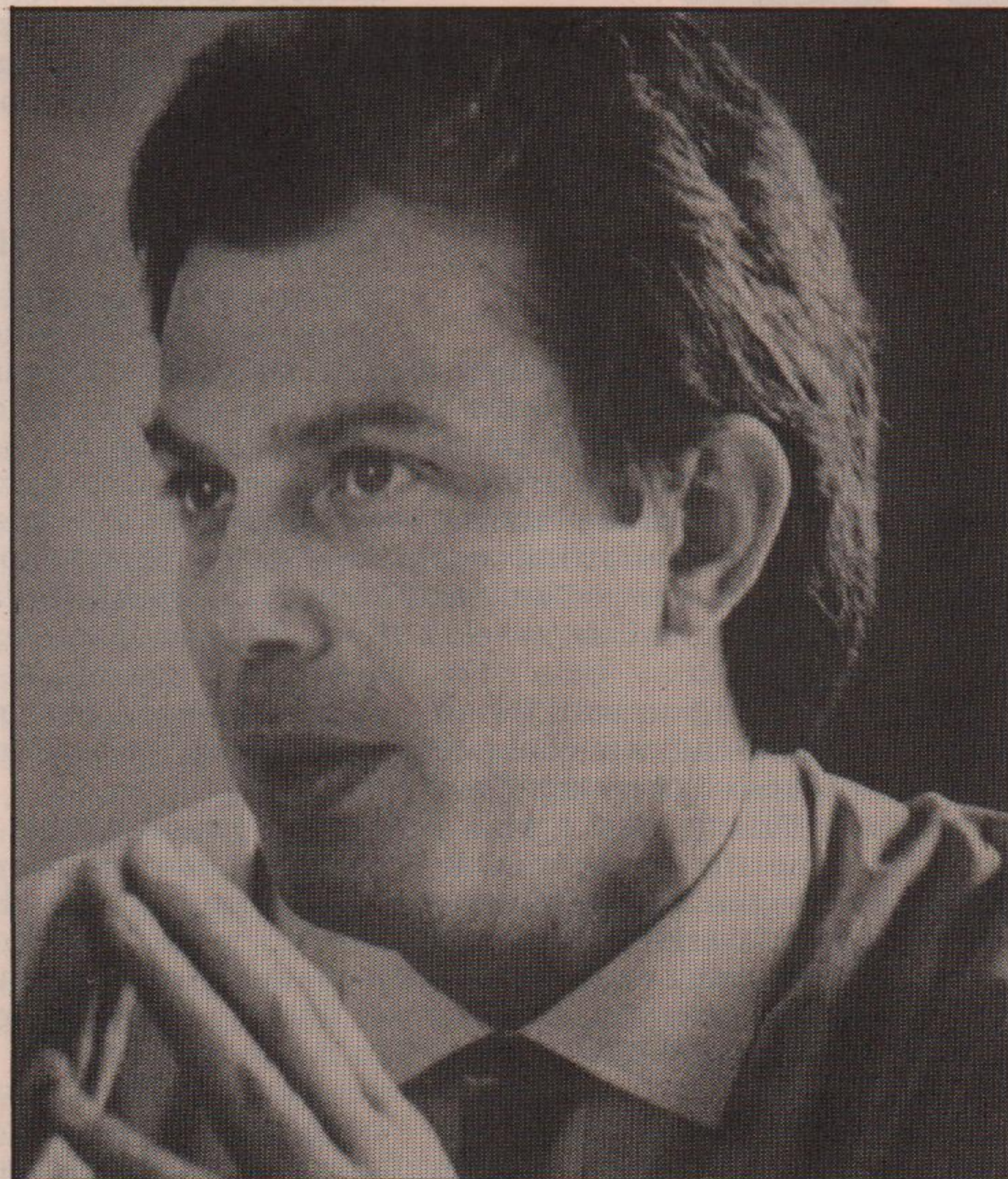
Now I learn that the local council, which is Labour-controlled, has decided to cut spending on its libraries by £32,000 and to sack the librarian who runs the Local Studies Library, Howard Block. This will mean a drastic reduction in the service this invaluable library provides.

Peter Fryer

Book Review

Thoroughly modern Tony

Review by George Angus



'Tony Blair, The Moderniser' offers no serious political analysis

IMAGINE getting up in the middle of the night and padding barefoot down the hall to the bathroom, and on the way, half asleep, you step into a bucketful of cold slugs.

Reading just the first page of 'Tony Blair The Moderniser' is a similar kind of experience.

It's horrible. Suspension of disbelief is often difficult for the first-time author to pull off, and Sopel manages no problem, but what makes this truly excruciating book even more hair-raisingly dreadful is that it is non-fiction. It's all 'true'.

Sopel writes in contemporary journalese, that is he takes a 'basket' of clichés puts them on the 'central plank' of a 'raft' of sycophantic banalities and sets sail on a shallow sea of tired platitudes to tell the story of the man they call Bambi, as they say.

The author's utterly uncritical style aside, what lowers 'The Moderniser' below the merely awful is the subject matter, the man who became the leader of the Labour Party simply defies belief.

Blair inspires the same queasy, sinking sensation that previously only Edwina Currie seemed capable of, one finds oneself repeating 'this man is leader of the Labour Party' in a futile effort to come to terms with this calamity.

Sopel begins his tome by treating us to some of the earth-shattering episodes that shaped the young Bambi's political conviction. For example the schoolboy moderniser becomes aware of social injustice when his school (Fettes College, Edinburgh) hockey team take on some kids from borstal (Rumbling Bridge, Clackmannanshire): 'Comparing notes, the borstal boys were aghast at how much stricter and more repressive the regime was at Fettes!'

Blair, with the hard edge of bitter experience, goes over the wire and leaves Stalag Fettes (where one of his former school chums whistfully remembers 'Blair as a model fag'), takes a year out in France and returns 'with the world weary air of first year freshmen who have taken a year out after school'.

Before the aghast reader can recover breath Mr Sopel plunges on; World weary Bambi gets sent down and does porridge in the educational equivalent of the Barlinnie Special Unit, Oxford University.

The author takes pains to show that although he 'went out' with loads and loads of really good looking women (i.e. he's not gay), hard rockin' Blair never ever smoked, snorted, dropped, drank, popped, sniffed, scored or even looked at drugs. Honest.

Upon leaving Oxford Blair moves to London where, possibly as a result of the philosophical imperative to join his

comrades in struggle, or possibly as a result of a severe blow to the head, he amazingly 'resolves immediately to become politically active' and lands a job with Andrew Mackay Irvine QC, a labour lawyer (this might explain why Blair didn't scamper off to join the Social Democratic Party: it could have curtailed the supply of juicy briefs handed out by Irvine).

Blair meets and marries Cherie 'the poll-tax predator' Booth, and through her father, the actor Tony Booth (the son-in-law in 'Till Death Us Do Part'), and his connections, is put forward as a Labour parliamentary candidate. And the

rest is rather dull and depressingly predictable history, though it is worth noting that a comedian launched his career.

The most telling remark in the entire book is reportedly made by one of Blair's 'closest confidants' with regard to Blair becoming leader of the Labour party: 'You have to understand that with Gordon [Brown], every muscle and sinew in his body has been developed so that one day he might become the leader of the Labour Party. Tony's never had that ambition. All he's ever been interested in is becoming Prime Minister.'

Sopel is also instructive on the grip that Peter Mandelson has on the Labour Party, which gives the book a certain unintentional ironic quality. Doe-eyed and feisty Bambi begins his career opposing party activists who are 'undemocratic' (i.e. who think the cheeky wee scamp is in the wrong party), and ends up with his innocent hero's success entirely dependent on the party's sinister media svengali.

Opportunist

This book offers no serious political analysis of Anthony Blair because it dare not. Blair comes across as a rather dim opportunist, with the confused political outlook that comes from attempting to synthesise the best elements of French designer silk ties, the culmination of centuries of German facial scrub and skin care research, and the fundamentals of English Gents Coiffure and manicure therapy.

'Tony Blair The Moderniser' is clearly part of Blair's pre-election propaganda — facile, vacuous, and in many other ways much like the image of Blair himself.

This cynical reformist's apology, hugely overpriced at £15.99, or as Sopel might say 'accurately targeted at the under £16 market', is a pathetic chronicle of the even more pathetic demise of the official Labour movement in Britain.

'Tony Blair The Moderniser' by Jon Sopel is published by Michael Joseph.

Lessons of NZ Labour Party split

FROM MICHAEL FAY
IN NEW ZEALAND

WHAT began as a break from the right-wing policies of the New Zealand 1984-90 Labour Party government has ended with a party, the Alliance, that has abandoned any pretence to reformism.

This party has put forward a programme of 12 ambiguous conditions for forming a coalition with other parties which are growing like mushrooms in anticipation of German-style MMP (mixed member proportional representation) due to start in July 1995.

At the end of the Muldoon National Party government and 'think big' Keynesian economics, the incoming 1984-90 Labour government, led by David Lange, expounded new-right objectives using foreign debt as the excuse.

Lange and the whole Labour cabinet — with the only dissent coming from Jim Anderton — began sell-offs, starting with the post office telephone services and railways, and pushed up state housing rents to 'market' levels.

Working-class Labour members started to attack Prime Minister Lange for his anti-working-class policies.

Meanwhile, public service union organiser Matt McCarten, later an Alliance organiser,

was fighting Richard Prebble MP at Auckland Central constituency to unseat him as candidate.

Anderton was receiving enormous support amongst the working-class unions and rank-and-filers. He then left Labour and formed the New Labour Party.

The union movement, led by Auckland Stalinist Bill Andersen and fellow Stalinist and Socialist Unity Party member Ken Douglas, remained loyal to Labour and its new-right policies.

Organiser

Jim Anderton's background was as a centrist in the Labour Party. He held the position of organiser.

He was also the owner of a small manufacturing firm making supermarket trolleys. He is a practising Catholic and has held a position as fund-raiser for the Church.

'Left' people from Labour, but mainly liberals joined the NLP, which started with reformist ideas like tariff barriers, renationalisation, etc.

Decay was immediate. Petty-bourgeois elements were favoured in all discussions. Socialist ideas were avoided.

'Left' trade unionists such as McCarten were taken up, and computerised projections and PR styles copied from the US. By 1990, polls showed NLP

support had fallen to 6 per cent. Anderton then formed the Alliance — later to become a single party — with:

- The 'Green' Party.
- Gilbert Miles, an MP who had defected from the National Party!

- The Maori-nationalist group Mana Matuhake which completely endorsed NLP positions on free health, education, pensions and benefits.

- The petty-bourgeois Democratic breakaway from Social Credit, an organisation descended from the 1930s' fascist movement of Major Douglas.

- The Liberal Party, which had been formed to accommodate breakaway National Party people such as Gilbert Miles.

Boost

McCarten and Anderton then cultivated the 'Green' group under Jeannette Fitsimmons. Matt McCarten, an excellent, energetic organiser, visibly wilted after two days with the Greens, who find it hard to agree on anything. The event was described as like 'trying to herd cats'.

Joining with the Greens gave an immediate poll boost from 6 per cent to a high of 30 per cent, but now back to 20 per cent.

Mana Matuhake leader Matt Rata lost three-quarters of a million dollars in gambling and quit as leader. He handed over the mantle of leadership to San-

dra Lee, a petty-bourgeois 'Green-ish Maori who lives on Waihake Island.

She went on to win elections on the basis of voter revulsion in the Auckland Central constituency, replacing there the political new-right thug Richard Prebble, who was responsible for the selling of the Bank of New Zealand and the post office and telephones.

In late 1991, the Alliance was formed as one party — probably on Anderton's and Fitsimmons' initiative.

The NLP, by far the largest and most-motivated group, appeared to have swallowed the small and minuscule parties such as the Liberals. But in reality the tail had swallowed the dog ideologically.

All working-class Alliance spokespeople have been purged.

Jim Anderton resigned in 1994 to be replaced by Sandra Lee. All working-class members of the Alliance have been pushed aside or have capitulated to a liberal petty-bourgeois position.

Workers have been relegated to the role of drawers of water and hewers of wood — that is fund-raising, mainly through bingo, which brings in large sums from poor areas.

Sandra Lee is employing a PR expert, to raise her poll rating. But the Alliance's poll ratings have fallen further so now Jim Anderton has rejoined as party organiser.

Defend independent unions in Nigeria

BY BOB ARCHER

CAMPAIGNERS are calling for British trade-union support for Nigerian oil workers' independent unions and the Nigerian Labour Congress union federation, which are being suppressed by their country's military regime.

Nigerian journalist Rotimi Johnson told a meeting organised by the African Liberation Support Campaign in south London on 10 March that the situation in the country is terrible and quite complex, but repression and attacks on newspapers are always present.

'Those of us who are trade-union orientated are sure the question of independent unions is decisive and affects the whole of society,' he said.

'The government has suppressed the executive of the Nigerian Labour Congress and imposed administrators on the NLC and the oil workers unions.

'It has imposed new leadership elections on them, with government security screening of all candidates.

'The government is making sure that no labour leader emerges who is a radical or even reformist, or who is in any way responsive to the demands of the working class.'

Swings

Johnson said that in many ways the Nigerian government is just buying time. 'There have been swings in the economic policy of the regime,' he said. 'It came into power with a national policy, but after six months it is collaborating with the World Bank.'

'The government has agreed to lease out, at first for ten years, the commanding heights of the economy to the multinationals.'

'We are coming back to pre-independence days — the devastation of the country.'

'The multinationals will in-

sist that the unions are derecognised. Damage to the environment will be ignored. Nigerian troops will be unleashed against workers.'

Johnson criticised Nigerian labour leaders for collaborating with the government in the past, although he pointed out that mass movements had sometimes forced them to put forwards workers' demands.

He called for 'activists outside the continent to support us'.

'The national question is also not one that can be taken lightly', Johnson said.

'It is clear that the regime is not going to bring in a transitional [that is, emergency] programme without provoking the national question.'

'Only the trade union movement can work for unity. It can degenerate into something like Rwanda.'

'It is important we get solidarity from trade unions and condemnations of shutting down newspapers and jailing people.'

'If there is a response from

outside it will make them think again.'

Glory Kilanko reported that the 'Concord' and the 'Guardian' were privately-owned independent newspapers which the government would no longer allow to exist because they expressed people's true feelings.

The government said they were inciting people, but they only said what was happening, she said.

Move

Kilanko said the government found it all the easier to move against the unions this time because they had done the same thing before, in 1987. 'As a first move they are trying to move the headquarters of the NLC from Lagos to Abuja where they

are in total control,' she said.

'The 41 industrial unions have protested and gone to court because only a delegate congress of the NLC has the right to do that.'

Kilanko reported that the military dictatorship had instructed the court not to take the case.

'Nigeria is a signatory to the UN International Labour Organisation convention', she said.

'Do they implement what the convention states?'

Kilanko was on her way home from a meeting at the World Summit on Poverty in Copenhagen. She had attended a meeting there which had called on the United Nations to end military dictatorships all over the world.

Kilanko said. 'We are saying: "you people are not implementing what the UN said".'

British trades unionists at the meeting promised to build on the resolution supporting the Nigerian unions passed at last year's Trades Union Congress.

Rights

ALISC is organising a demonstration in London on African Liberation Day, 27 May, linking the demand for liberation with support for the rights of refugees.

For details of the demonstration and a model resolution for trade union branches please contact:

Africa Liberation Day Co-ordinator, ALISC, Box 256, London SE11 5TH.

SUPPORT OUR STRUGGLE!

BY THE CAMPAIGN FOR INDEPENDENT UNIONISM

THE takeover in 1994 of the Nigerian Labour Congress trade union federation by the military dictatorship led by General Sani Abacha, and the imposition of a sole administrator, was a gross violation of the independence of the Nigerian trade union movement and showed contemptuous disregard for the conventions of the International Labour Organisation, to which Nigeria is a signatory.

The junta has set a precedent for undemocratic and anti-working-people governments throughout the world. For this reason, the international solidarity of labour, worker-oriented and democratically-minded organisations is vital to the struggle to uphold democracy in Nigeria and for the democratic right of trade union members to freely elect leaders.

In response to the military junta attack on the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) and the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staffs' Association (PENGASSAN), the Campaign for Independent Unionism (CIU) was set up in November 1994 to co-ordinate the efforts of trades unionists

and labour activists aimed at ending government intervention in trades unions and thus securing their independence.

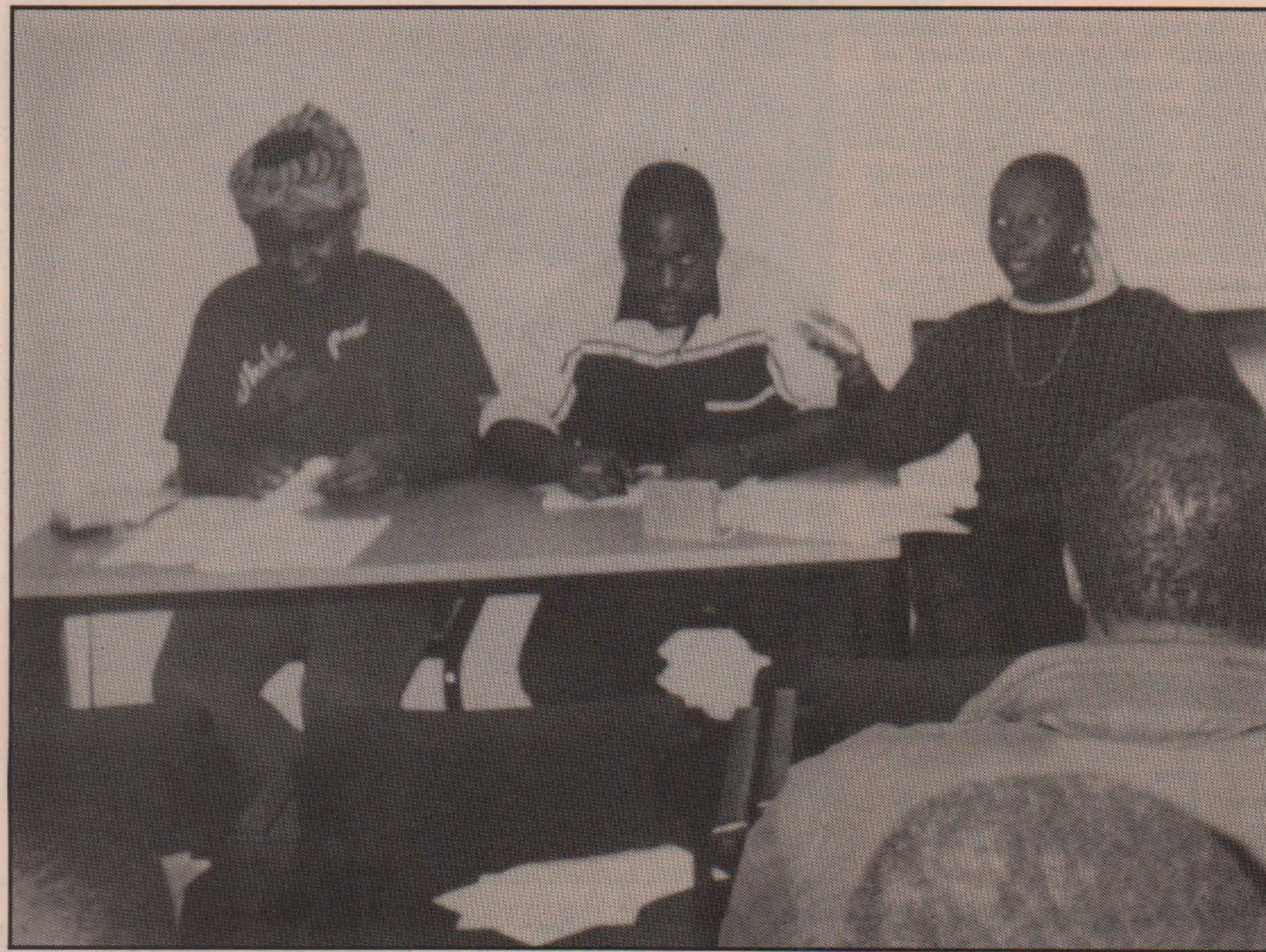
At present, the junta has declared its intention to conduct 'fresh' elections in the NLC, NUPENG and PENGASSAN, starting this month (March).

To encourage the emergence of union 'leaderships' under its complete control, the junta has also stated its intention to carry out security checks with a view to disqualifying those who are considered to be threats to 'national security'.

This is totally unacceptable to Nigerian workers and cannot be allowed. Unfortunately, not much of a fightback is expected from the bureaucratic, inconsistent and openly collaborationist leadership of the NLC which did not even raise a finger in response to its own dissolution. This task will be left to principled and committed trades unionists/labour activists at branch/state level.

But it is necessary to point out that the regime will not back down unless it realises that this is one battle it cannot win.

This is because the complete takeover of the trade union movement is vital to the successful implementation of its anti-democratic and anti-working-people political and economic programmes, which aim for the full commercialisation/privatisation of the electricity,



Calling for support for Nigerian trades unionists against the military junta are, left to right: Julie Southey, ALISC; Rotimi Johnson; and Glory Kilanko

postal, telephone, petroleum, and other state-owned companies.

It also includes leasing out to multinationals — for ten years at first — the nation's oil refineries, steel mills, petrochemical and fertiliser plants, sugar companies, paper mills and cement factories.

At the same time, by controlling the trades unions, the regime hopes to weaken opposition to its annulment of the 12 June 1993 elections and its own yet-to-be-announced 'transition' programme.

OUR DEMANDS

ONLY the labour movement has the greatest potential to unite the Nigerian working people in their struggle for democracy. With a well-coordinated campaign of mass union action and international solidarity the clampdown can be defeated.

The immediate restoration of the dissolved NUPENG, PENGASSAN and NLC executives.

Industrial unions and union branches to adopt a policy of non-recognition and non-

cooperation towards the sole administrators.

Labour movement solidarity actions and material support for NUPENG, PENGASSAN and other workers fighting for democracy.

NLC and industrial unions to adopt a clear fighting programme to defend the economic/political rights of workers and other oppressed layers.

Democratisation of the structures of NLC and industrial unions for rank-and-file participation in decision making and delegate conferences, etc.

Trade union officials to be accountable to rank-and-file members and be subject to immediate recall by members if found wanting.

An end to IMF/World Bank structural adjustment programmes, privatisation, retrenchment, commercialisation and other policies against the poor.

The release of all political detainees; president-elect M.K.O. Abiola, Ken Saro Wiwa and other Ogoni leaders, NUPENG leaders (Frank Kokori and Waribi Agamene), and other trades unionists and activists.

An immediate end to all political trials and witch-hunts and the withdrawal of troops from oil-producing communities.

An immediate end to military rule, a hand-over of power to the winner of the 1993 presidential election, a multi-party democracy and an independent mass workers' political party.

SUPPORT OUR STRUGGLE!

THE CIU hereby makes a national and international appeal to industrial unions, labour organisations, mass organisations, professional bodies, pressure groups and individual activists to support our struggle. We also need material support (cash, printing papers, films and plates, etc.). We ask for international solidarity as we fight to resist these attacks.

For more information contact the Nigeria-International Labour Solidarity Link, c/o African Liberation Support Campaign (ALISC), PO Box 256, London SE11 5TH. Tel: 081-202 6292.

Letter

Clause 4 is issue for whole working class

WHAT has particularly interested me in the debate in Workers Press on Clause Four of the Labour Party's constitution has been the concept that the clause is an issue for our class and the whole of society (28 January and others).

It is this concept of intervening in society as a whole that has led me to the problem of what revolutionaries do in their lives as a whole. Fairly obviously, we eat, drink, sleep; some live in families, others alone or in some form of collective or partnership.

However in my 25-years' experience of life on the 'English' left, I have constantly been struck by the compartmentalisation of existence by comrades. Revolutionary activity exists in one compartment or is dominant in the whole of one's life: it is never examined and analysed in its relationship to

daily struggle, daily living.

Anyone who has spent the weekend manically selling one or another of the myriad of 'left' papers will understand my argument.

The ruling class, with its 'ruling' ideas, does not practice this method of compartmentalisation — its ideas and practices permeate all aspects of life. One part of this process is to convince people that politics is for someone else, that politics should be 'kept out' of life and held in a snug box called 'the Commons' or 'the council chamber'.

Select

Revolutionaries, by practising 'weekend', 'evening' or even 'full-time' revolutionary activity, parody this ruling-class notion that politics is only for a select number with the time to

engage in the serious stuff of political life.

But if revolutionaries insisted on and fought for a politics in close relationship with life as a whole, then a genuine connection would begin between people as a whole and our ideas. The recent Workers Press editorial on football was an example of this (25 February), and the one on boxing (4 March) was another engagement with life.

Concretely we could look at the two major classes on these islands and propose the kind of life links I have just touched on. Pathetically weak and unstable 'market' theories now practically dominate middle-class professional life.

These theories and their practical results, for example 'internal markets', could be challenged by comrades who have every right to insist that their politics have professional

credibility and something to say on current issues of controversy and development within their profession.

Such interventions in the public services, offices, hospitals, and universities and colleges would actively assist in the process of giving confidence to whole sections of the middle class presently radicalising as they suffer recurrent bouts of insecurity on the market merry-go-round.

Will Hutton, the 'Guardian's' economics editor, is now playing to packed houses with a popular presentation of his book, 'The State We're In'. His Keynesian model appears to hold out hope for progressive sections of his class. Marxists should be doing the same — albeit with fewer resources and smaller groups — with their ideas.

It really is a battle for people

to feel the resonance of our ideas in their homes, so they turn out of them to adopt and own a collective approach to the resolution of their problems; from two-tier mortgages, failing public services, to the personal quality of their own lives.

Life

In working-class communities the argument remains the same — conscious Marxist intervention in all parts of life. Participating in social, sporting and community life — being there as Marxists.

Flexibly, with sensitivity, we have to promote our ideas as the real content of life. This is the guard against sectarian practice, phrase-mongering and sloganising. It is the antidote to the unbelievable arrogance of people such as Jane Williams who talk loftily of 'advanced work-

ers' (25 February).

This is a complex and difficult process — in a sense it is the battle to draw people into the struggle for knowledge — 'who are we, where have we come from, where are we going?'

Christians invite people to join them in a whole of life (and death) experience — insurance talk for the spiritual insurance business! Revolutionaries need not ape the church in the process of developing a feeling amongst people that revolutionary ideas have a bearing for their daily lives.

We are in the job of combining tasks and a vision; but for us the vision can happen practically, in daily life, in the struggle for socialism. Brecht was right: 'it is the simple thing, so hard to achieve.'

John Rees
Shirebrook

More letters, page 2.

Act now to raise support for convoy to Bosnia

THE success of the Europe-wide convoy to Tuzla, Bosnia, in July, being organised by the Tuzla district trade union council, needs British trade unionists to act now.

Emergency resolutions in support of the convoy must be put now to trades councils, if the May annual meeting of the association of trades councils is to back the convoy.

Three Bosnian trade unionists currently touring Britain are making vital steps in forging international working-class solidarity with their struggle, and are building for the convoy.

Over the last three weeks Resad Husagic, a miner from Tuzla, Fikreta Sijercic and Ivica Segal, of the Tuzla district trades council, have met many trade unionists, workers, councillors and MPs, and have won widespread support.

Agreed

Bolsover district council has already agreed to support the July convoy organised by the Tuzla union council (Workers Press, 4 March). Bolsover council has invited a speaker from Tuzla to a meeting later this month to discuss the situation in the Tuzla mines, where many miners are working without adequate safety equipment.

**BY BOB MYERS,
SECRETARY, WORKERS AID
FOR BOSNIA**

During the 1984-85 British miners' strike the miners of Tuzla donated one day's pay each week to the National Union of Mineworkers. Now, as Husagic has travelled around mining areas, he has met a groundswell of support.

Husagic was welcomed by Labour councillors at Ellington. Bolsover council had contacted the Coalfield Community Campaign (which was set up by the Labour Party during the miners' strike) to allow him to speak at their annual general meeting.

With the clear support of those two councils, this meeting, which represents most of the councils in mining and ex-mining areas, agreed to support

the convoy. Some councillors from Clay Cross also said that they would go on the convoy.

The delegation has met enormous support from miners and ex-miners. The NUM at Easington pit agreed to support the convoy, and so did the NUM at Tower colliery in Wales, which gave him £500.

At a march, at Ollerton in Nottinghamshire, on the tenth anniversary of the return to

work at the end of the 1984-85 strike, Husagic met former NUM general secretary Peter Heathfield and Henry Richardson, leader of Notts NUM. Richardson called for support for Tuzla. A statement read on Husagic's behalf was greeted with a standing ovation from those at the event.

The delegation of Bosnian trade unionists has met the international department of the

TUC, attended a public meeting organised for them by Cambridge trades council, met the international department of the National Union of Teachers and met Camden Union public-service workers.

A public meeting in London heard a message of support from Transport and General Workers' Union busworkers read out by Vaughan Thomas, who had taken part in the first

Workers Aid convoy in 1993. Liz Leicester, of Camden Union, and Bob Towers, of the white-collar APEX branch of the GMB general union, spoke of the fight to raise support for Bosnia in their unions.

The delegation has also met members of the Communication Workers' Union, and on Monday went to Crewe to see Rolls-Royce shop stewards and to the North-West TUC.

Brighton backs Tuzla

BY SEAN HEFFERON

ONE of the Bosnian trade unionists from the industrial town of Tuzla now touring Britain told a Brighton meeting, on 7 March, how Serbian aggression had destroyed almost everything in Bosnia. Tuzla was the exception; people in the town had suffered unbearable privations but had stopped the fascists from entering the area.

Fikreta Sijercic, president of Tuzla district trades council, said they had been able to resist because of the traditional solidarity of the region's multi-ethnic labour movement.

'Convoys from the Workers Aid campaign were precious because they had arrived at a time when conditions were exceptionally difficult, and other convoys were not getting through,' she said.

The enthusiastic public meeting was organised by Brighton and Hove trades council. About 70 people heard Jeff Jones, secretary of the trades council, say that British trade unionists had been horrified by developments in the former Yugoslavia.

But at the same time they had been cheered by the fierce resistance of Tuzla's trade unionists to the 'flag of nationalism', he said.

Resad Husagic, secretary of the Tuzla sector of the Bosnian miners' union, said that 12,000 local miners were working without pay, adequate food or safety equipment in order to keep the area supplied with coal, its only source of electricity.

Bozena Langley, secretary of Brighton Workers Aid, said the meeting was a success for the campaign to build international working-class solidarity against fascism.

Build international links with Bosnia

**BY AN INDUSTRIAL
CORRESPONDENT**

THE Multi Trades/Greater London branch of the printworkers' union, the GPMU, last week encouraged the building of international support for Bosnian workers.

Michael Britton, assistant secretary of the GPMU branch, gave his full support at a meeting for Ivica Segal and Resad Husagic, who are part of a delegation of Bosnian trade unionists from Tuzla.

'This tour by the Bosnians is the route to building international links with the organised workers' movement in Britain,' said Britton.

The meeting took place at the Southwark Trade Union Support Unit in Kennington, south-east London. Along with

members of the local GPMU branch, there were members of the post office union, the CUW, the Transport and Salaried Staff Association, the public-sector workers' union Unison, the Transport and General Workers' Union and the shop workers' union, USDAW.

'This forum is bringing the opportunity, at shop-floor level, to hear the voice of workers in struggle. It is our responsibility to build workers' links in the fight against fascism,' said Britton.

'The fight for working-class democracy can't be ignored. The isolation of Bosnia-Herzegovina has been broken by this historic visit.'

Britton will be recommending to his next branch meeting that they support the issues surrounding the tour, and that a motion goes to union committees to seek their support.



The convoy will take desperately needed supplies to Bosnia

Turkish police kill and assault protesters

AT LEAST 16 people were killed and more wounded when Turkish police opened fire from armoured cars on demonstrators protesting right-wing terror. Riot police chased people and dragged them from doorways.

Thousands of people in the working-class Istanbul district of Gazi Osman Pasha had taken to the streets, angered by gun attacks on four cafes where people had been watching football on television on Sunday evening.

Three people were killed and several injured in the attacks,

carried out from moving cars. Two groups, calling themselves the Turkish Revenge Brigade and Islamic Raiders, later claimed responsibility. The cafes and a bakery attacked were frequented by members of the liberal Muslim Alawi community, many of them Kurdish workers.

Demonstrators accused the police of connivance with the attackers, and said the state wanted to provoke violence between the Alawites and the more fundamentalist Sunni Muslims. Marchers chanted 'Down with fascism!' and 'We

don't want Sharia (Islamic law)'

During the night, local people put up barricades and lit bonfires, using stones and petrol bombs to retaliate against police and fascists. As the armoured cars moved in, three working-class areas were placed under curfew. Prime minister Tansu Ciller appealed for national unity, and promised to investigate the killings.

Many Alawites tend to support the parties of the left. In 1978 over 100 Alawites were murdered by Turkish fascists in the southern province of Khar-

ammarrash. In January a writer was killed in a bombing by fundamentalists in Istanbul, and last month during Ramadan a gang attacked non-fasting students in the university dining hall.

Religious parties condemning corruption have gained support among some poor people in recent years. More politically aware workers suspect the right is using religious fanaticism as a cover for provocations, seeking to sow divisions in the working class, and among the Kurdish people resisting Turkish rule.

CIA report blames Serb regime for 'ethnic cleansing'

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

A SECRET report leaked from the US's Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has concluded that 90 per cent of the atrocities and 'ethnic cleansing' in Bosnia was carried out by Serb forces, and that leading Serbian politicians were involved.

The CIA report came out as the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva, which has condemned the Serb nationalists (Chetniks) for their 'systematic policy of ethnic cleansing and genocidal acts', said persecution was continuing in the northern Bosnian region of Banja Luka.

The International Red Cross reported on 6 March that a dozen employees of the Muslim humanitarian organisation 'Mehamet' had been arrested in Banja Luka and nearby areas. Members of the Muslim and

Croat minorities in the region were being harassed and beaten by gangs.

About 500,000 Muslims and Croats lived in the Banja Luka region three years ago. Only about 40,000 remain. The others have been expelled or killed, victims of Chetnik ethnic cleansing.

The CIA report, completed early this year, was kept classified as the Clinton administration fell in with European Union efforts to enroll Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic as a 'peacemaker'.

Based on aerial photography, and what one senior official called 'an enormous amount of precise technical analysis', the report says that while war crimes were by no means committed exclusively by Serb forces, they were the only party involved in a systematic attempt to eliminate all traces of other ethnic groups from their territory.

Mark Mansfield, a spokesman for the CIA, said: 'We do not comment on classified reports.' But the 'New York Times', reporting that officials unhappy with the direction of US policy had leaked it, said it had been submitted to senior officials at the Pentagon, the state department, and the National Security Council.

Atrocities

Although disclaiming 'conclusive evidence' that Bosnian Serb or Serbian leaders had planned atrocities, the report says 'the systematic nature of the Serbian actions strongly suggests that Pale [the capital of the Bosnian Serb 'state'] and, perhaps, Belgrade exercised a carefully veiled role in the purposeful destruction and dispersal of non-Serb populations.'

The report also contains specific evidence that Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and

others knew of the concentration camps in which many Muslims and Croats who had been evicted from their homes in 1992 were 'processed'. The evidence includes instructions on admissions to the camps.

Evidence about atrocities in these camps was initially suppressed by Washington, because the Bush administration backed Milosevic's aim of forcibly holding Yugoslavia together.

Although a 1991 US state department report named Milosevic and Karadzic as suspected war criminals, they denied any responsibility for the killing, eviction, and imprisonment of Muslims in the 70 per cent of Bosnia they now hold.

In an interview last December, Karadzic attributed the departure of nearly three-quarters of a million Muslims from this territory to 'chaos and fear in the midst of an uncontrollable war.'

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