

Employment rights under attack in Europe

EU OFFERS NO PROTECTION TO WORKERS

FALSE hopes have been dashed that full participation in the European Union is the way for trade unionists to fight the attacks of the Tory government.

The enemy is the employing class and the states that represent its interests. The EU is another body that represents the interests of a section of big business.

Now — following Britain — France, Germany and other European governments are seeking to scupper a European Commission directive from 1977 that's meant to ensure that workers do not suffer loss of pay or conditions if their jobs are transferred to a new employer in a company takeover.

This Acquired Rights directive has been used to protect, to a certain extent, workers under attack from the Tories' privatisation drives.

Worst

When council workers' jobs were put out to compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) and taken out of council control, these directives ameliorated the worst excesses of the attack on pay and conditions.

Workers still had their conditions scrapped and their pay driven down, but it could have been much worse for large numbers of workers.

scope of worker protection beyond what they are prepared to tolerate.

For example, last year, judges decided that Christel Schmidt, a solitary cleaner at a German bank, should be counted as a protected undertaking when her job, along with her bucket and mop, was given to an outside contractor. It is often such low-paid jobs traditionally done by women that are under attack.

In Germany building workers are suffering competition from workers pre-

pared to work for less. Some of these cheaper building workers come from Britain (see back page). Such competition is bound to increase with the freer movement of workers in the European Union.

Solidarity

The need for international solidarity of workers must be opposed to the national interests of EU employers, which will exploit the worse-paid to drive down wages.

British trade union leaders have made great play in recent years of the perception that workers' rights in Britain could be brought up to the standards of other EU countries. This was particularly after the British government rejected the 'social chapter' of the Maastricht treaty, which seemed to offer some rights to workers.

'What is odd about this affair is the silence of the trade unions,' said John Carvel in the 'Guardian' (25 March).

'It appears that the British TUC does not want a slanging match with employment secretary, Michael Portillo, for fear that its European comrades might react badly against another hysterical British sideshow.'

'The continental union organisations — long accustomed to non-adversarial negotiation with the [European] Commission, governments and employers — are content for the time being to work behind the scenes.'

BY MIKE COOKE

Naturally the British ministers and employers seeking to carve out profits from the tatters of previously free social services didn't like it!

On 21 February, the current French presidency of the EU submitted plans for a confidential working party composed of officials from employment ministries to 'amend' such directives.

What's down the line is the removal of protection for workers across Europe from the advancing wave of 'market testing', which is a step on the road to privatisation of services and loss of employment rights.

But now other member states of the EU also want a slice of the privatisation cake and are irritated at European Court judgements that seem to extend the



Bosnian trade unionists from Tuzla received a great send off as they finished their tour of Britain. At a social event in London for the delegates, Bill Speirs (centre, right), the deputy general secretary of the Scottish TUC, presented Fikreta Sijercic (left) with a cheque for 10,000 Deutschmarks (£4,000), watched by Bob Myers (centre, left), secretary of Workers Aid for Bosnia, and Faruk Ibrahimovic, who translated for the delegates during their tour. See p.4&5

Photo: Marg Nicol

Hounslow march against redundancy threat to 50 school-meals workers

Monday 3 April

Assemble 11.30am

Thornbury Playing Fields

March through Hounslow High Street to

1pm Rally at Civic Centre

Trade union aid for Bosnia!

THREE trade unionists from Tuzla in Bosnia have just completed a month's tour — one week in France and three weeks in Britain. Their purpose: a European trade union aid convoy in July this year taking much-needed supplies and equipment to besieged Bosnia.

Fikreta Sijercic and Ivica Segat from the Tuzla trade union committee and Resad Husagic, secretary of the Kreka miners' union, received a tremendous welcome and enormous support everywhere they went. Trade union committees are now being formed to organise the July convoy. Many workers have already said they will take part.

This tour achieved this big step forward in the rebuilding of workers' solidarity between the 'East' and the 'West'. The Tuzla trade unionists' tour was the outcome of a campaign that began in June 1993 when Workers Aid for Bosnia was founded and, on a proposal from a Serbian member of Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International, resolved to take a workers' convoy to the mining town of Tuzla.

Workers Aid has now organised eight convoys — all based on the aim of rebuilding workers' internationalism. The majority of those in the convoy teams have been young and unemployed. They took the first convoy from the Timex picket line in Dundee on a route through workers' districts in towns throughout Britain. Thousands of workers and young people turned out with money and food aid. The campaign won wide support among trade union members, but British trade union organisations did not participate with trucks and personnel.

■ The TUC general council has given outright support to the Tory government policy of so-called peace initiatives, which means the division of Bosnia;

■ Many political trade unionists, confused by the breakup of the Stalinist bureaucracy, having believed that there had been 'really existing socialism' in former Yugoslavia, thought the Serbian aggressors represented a united Yugoslavia and 'socialism';

■ Under pressure from their members to support Workers Aid for Bosnia, some trade unions made donations to charities rather than support the initiative for workers' solidarity — they said they could not take sides.

Nevertheless the groundswell of support encouraged by Workers Aid for Bosnia kept putting the issue of Bosnia and workers' internationalism on the trade union agenda. The Engineers and Managers Association sent humanitarian aid, but the Scottish TUC took a step forward, directing money to the working class — the Tuzla miners, even though it also would not take sides.

* * * * *

DESIRE to build internationalism was seen from the start when the GPMU printers' union 1993 annual conference overwhelmingly carried an emergency resolution supporting Workers Aid for Bosnia. Hungarian and Slovakian miners' unions joined the first Workers Aid convoy in a direct act of workers' internationalism. And in April 1994 Slovenian miners organised jointly with Workers Aid to take aid.

When the first convoy left for mainland Europe from the 1993 TUC conference in Brighton, convoy members leafleted delegates to thank all trade unionists for their support and to say that if the TUC itself had mobilised, then instead of 12 Workers Aid for Bosnia trucks there could have been a thousands-strong convoy carrying aid and campaigning against racism.

In Zagreb, Croatia, the convoy campaigned for permission to use the shortest 'northern' route to Tuzla. Trade unions all over Europe faxed United Nations Protection Force chief General Cot to support Workers Aid's demand. The Croatian Confederation of Autonomous Unions allowed the campaign to use its offices and organised a press conference.

Once Workers Aid convoys started reaching their destination it was clear that the people of Tuzla were leading the fight against racism and fascism in the war. They explain this and they act on this.

And despite the fact that the Kreka miners' leaders and the Tuzla trade union committee are entirely devoted to the awful problems of the war they were eager to discuss. They wanted to know about life in 'the West'.

They were truly amazed to hear of unemployment, homelessness, mine closures, the devastating results of privatisation, racism. One question they raised was the need for free trade unions with the basic right to organise independently of the state and the right to strike — like trade unions in the rest of Europe. They then learned of the anti-trade union laws in Britain and other countries.

The mainly young and unemployed members of the Workers Aid for Bosnia convoy teams have proved that the working class can and must rebuild its internationalism. They gave the Tuzla trade unionists confidence to take their fight for multicultural life against racism and fascism into the rest of Europe.

Now it is up to trade unions to unite experienced workers and young, unemployed people in the July European-wide trade union convoy for workers' internationalism, against racism and for socialism.

Letters

Blair has spat on workers

IT SEEMS that there is a desperation within the WRP to find a reason to campaign to defend Clause Four.

For Cliff Slaughter to put the defence of Clause Four on a par with the battles in Bosnia, South Africa and Angola is little short of a disgrace. These are life-and-death struggles where people are fighting for the survival of their homelands, ways of life and their very existence. Clause Four does not even come close to this.

The coming about of Clause Four was as a direct consequence of the Russian Revolution. But having Clause Four did not, has not and will not make the Labour Party into a revolutionary party.

It is sheer nonsense to make out that by campaigning to defend Clause Four we lift the consciousness of workers. We have more chance of achieving this by pointing out to workers that Labour's ditching of Clause Four is symptomatic of the disintegration of any pretence the Labourites have of socialism. This is the real way we will break workers away from the reformist Labour Party.

The ditching of Clause Four emphasises the case that as the Tories move to the right the Labour Party follows them. In a speech about council-house tenants on 22 March Tony Blair said: 'We will be tougher on evicting council-house tenants.' A Tory backbencher's reaction to this was 'this is the kind of speech we should be hearing from the government'.

We should be preparing workers for the fight against a Labour government, which will be just as hard as against a Tory government, not kidding them on about Clause Four.

Cliff Slaughter wants to have it all ways. He says: 'if even to defend the gains of the past, which every day become more precious, the working class has to break out of its traditional narrow national parliamentary and defensive trade unionist politics.'

I absolutely agree with him; but by its actions on Clause Four the WRP is trying to lead the British working class back down this road.

The WRP is sewing the seeds of illusion in the minds of workers that, by keeping Clause Four in place, at some later stage the Labour Party can be forced into using it. Instead, the WRP should be pointing out that once Clause Four has been dumped all such illusions in Labour will have gone.

It will mean there is no home for the so-called left-wingers who allegedly joined the Labour Party to fight for socialism in

Britain, to fight for public ownership. What will Arthur Scargill and his ilk do? Could they stay in a party that no longer had any pretence of nationalisation? What will they say to their members?

It is time to cut away all the pretence. If Labour forms the next government it will not be much better than the Tories.

Gone are the days when the labour movement could put pressure on the Labour Party to force through reforms. The getting rid of Clause Four proves this. Stop deluding workers into believing that the salvation of Clause Four is their salvation — it is not true. Without Clause Four the Labour Party has been stripped bare and the trade union leaders along with it.

I say to the British working class: all pretence is gone, the Labour Party as a so-called socialist party is dead. It is time to organise into a Marxist international revolutionary party in order to take on the ruling class

tion. Borovi's comments were flawed on three main points: irrelevance, political unfairness and confusion.

Irrelevant because when Pilling is dealing with current events and theory in order to assess the peculiarities of the present stage of capitalism, Borovi is only able to grasp reality through concepts formulated some 80 years ago in a given context.

Of course I am not saying at all that Marxists should throw overboard all that has gone before. I am simply warning comrades to use concepts such as ultra-imperialism with great care if they are not to be deceived by their own fancies.

Politically unfair because ultra-imperialism was formulated by Karl Kautsky during the imperialist butchery of World War I. Kautsky's talk then of a possible and peaceful co-operation between various rival imperialist powers had nothing to do with a genuine

It is Borovi's right to disagree with this view, but it is not his right to say that the conclusion of the analysis consists in saying that there will be more peace and stability.

This is what the discussion should be about and not about hinting sideways that Pilling follows the same old tracks as reformist betrayers.

Richard Farnetti
Montmorency, France

A question on the purpose

CHARLIE POTTINS is right. Gerry Healy [The WRP's former leader, expelled in 1985] would not have approved of the journal 'Revolutionary History'. But Healy would, I think, feel a proprietorial glow of pride if he could read Charlie's 'Inside Left' column, which frequently manages to cram much twisting and misrepresentation into a small space.

His paragraph (18 March) on my piece in 'Workers Liberty' manages:

A. To suggest a link between the political demise of Gerry Healy and the beginning of 'Revolutionary History'; and,

B. To radically falsify what I wrote about the welfare state.

I jeered at people who so lack a sense of proportion that they find a campaign to defend this welfare state funny, because they are alienated by its bureaucratic character.

An equivalent would be to refuse to defend Clause Four because of its origin as a reformist tool designed in 1918 to head off all development of a communist movement.

There is no hint of what I actually wrote in Charlie's account; instead he makes me seem to deny that the welfare state is bureaucratic! It's not possible that he could honestly believe that is what I was saying.

Charlie does things like that all the time, and not only about 'Socialist Organiser'. Why? What's the point? I know the motive where 'Socialist Organiser' is concerned — but what's the point?

The encouraging thing is that Workers Press sometimes carries protests and corrections. The discouraging thing is that Workers Press tolerates Charlie instead of packing him back to the de-Healyisation centre for a long rest. I am reminded of a well-known bit of verse:

*For how can you compete,
Being honour-bred, with one
Who, were it proved he lies
Were neither shamed in his own
Nor in his neighbour's eyes?*

Sean Matgama
South London



What will Scargill do after Labour ditches Clause Four?

— and this includes Blair and the rest of the parliamentary Labour Party.

Blair and the rest of them have spat on Clause Four and in so doing have spat on the working class. They have to be gotten rid of but not to be replaced with others of their kind but a revolutionary leadership.

Dave Smith
Sheffield

Explosive and convulsive

I FOUND surprising Janos Borovi's remarks ('Letters', 21 January) on Geoff Pilling's article (17 December) about the current stage of capitalist development, namely globalisa-

political disagreement that can normally arise between comrades. It was a theoretical cover-up to mask an utter capitulation before Kautsky's own national bourgeoisie.

Any serious reader of Geoff's text can see that putting Kautsky and Pilling on the same level is nearly a slander.

Confusing because Borovi does not think dialectically. For him there is either co-operation between rival imperialist powers — as in Kautsky's 'theory' — or all-out confrontation.

He gives as an example the trade war between Japan and the US. Borovi simply does not understand that one of the distinctive features of the globalisation process is precisely the combination of these two antagonistic elements. This, far from bringing more peace and stability, is making the system all the more explosive and convulsive.

INDEX BOOKCENTRES
Central London
28 Charlotte Street
London W11HJ
0171-636 3532

Brixton
10-12 Atlantic Road
London SW9 8HY
0171-242 6342
Fast order service

Coming soon

SUNDAY 30 APRIL: GMB May Day '95 free family festival on Clapham Common, 12 noon to 8pm. Speakers and live bands.

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.

Advertise in Workers Press

Make sure everyone knows about the events you and your organisation have planned, or your publications, your meetings, or something you wanted to sell.

Send money with two typed copies of what you want to say, by first post on Monday.

- £2 per column inch
- £5 per 3 column inches
- £25 for one-eighth page display
- £60 for half page display
- £120 for full page display

Send to Advertising Dept, Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.



BOOKCELLAR
Secondhand basement bookstore

POLITICS FICTION ARTS MEDIA
WOMEN'S STUDIES FILM
ARCHITECTURE EDUCATION



OPEN 11AM - 6PM MON. TO SAT.
BELOW HOUSMANS BOOKSHOP

5 CALEDONIAN ROAD KINGS CROSS
LONDON N1 9DX
• TEL: 071 837 4473 •

Success of Bosnian tour draws out attackers

BY GEORGE ANGUS

THE tour last month by trade union delegates from Tuzla in Bosnia met with a great response from the workers' movement (see pages 4&5).

The Workers Aid for Bosnia campaign helped organise the tour and a sure sign of its success in building international solidarity with the multi-ethnic Bosnian working class is the attacks it is drawing out.

Workers Aid is gaining more and more ground in the trade unions; it is rocking the boat, and as the woodwork creaks out come the creeps.

One group that disagrees with any attempt to build support for the Bosnians is the International Communist Party, which accuses Workers Aid of arms smuggling, carrying strategic satellite equipment for the Bosnian government, operating the convoys 'on the basis of commercial contracts paid for by European arms dealers', and carrying out a covert operation on behalf of imperialists.

The ICP also says 'there are, perhaps, a few well-intentioned and naive people' involved in the gun-running.

Racism

The ICP's line hides the racism of its attitude to eastern Europe behind delirious rhetoric. The ICP sees visions of mas-

ked Muslim fundamentalist hordes sweeping across Europe brandishing mobile telephones. This leads it to lie prostrate before Serbia's president Slobodan Milosevic, doing nothing to oppose his plans for a Greater Serbia.

Also during the tour an article in 'Scotland on Sunday' by Jackie Kemp accused Workers Aid of being drug-crazed tinned-fruit exporters with little idea of what's actually going on.

This despite it being clear that Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic and Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic bear the main responsibility for the atrocities committed in the Balkans conflict.

Serbia has the fourth largest army in Europe. The only way the Serbian military elite could maintain itself in power in the

former Yugoslavia was through a repressive regime, supported by the West.

A group of ex-patriot Serb Chetniks and their followers disrupted the tour's public meeting in Leicester, accusing the Bosnians of being mass murderers, rapists, killers, fundamentalists, and yelling that Workers Aid supported all this and — showing great perception — that it was a political organisation.

The Chetnik ex-pats and their heavily built and deeply misguided supporters are led by people who left Yugoslavia rather quickly after World War II to escape Tito's partisans. It is clear these people were never socialists; it is also clear they take the International Communist Party's line.

There is much internal oppo-

sition in Serbia to Milosevic but it was not represented at the Leicester meeting. The leading proponents of the Chetnik ideology, and of its genocidal policies, are the psychiatrist Jovan Raskovic and his student Radovan Karadzic, who have succeeded in rousing their wards to a murderous frenzy.

The frustration vented in Leicester is understandable considering the Chetniks' lack of success in subduing Tuzla. These forces have bombarded towns from mountain tops, and pillaged and looted where they have met little resistance.

Jackie Kemp's article is fairly typical of the media's view of the Balkans conflict, characterising it as a civil war — as does the 'Morning Star' — and slandering anyone who disagrees.

The notion that the conflict is

a civil war is, in essence, the position of President Bush's advisers, Lawrence Eagleburger and Brent Scowcroft, at the outset of the fighting. Eagleburger, a former ambassador to Belgrade, and Scowcroft were part of the 'Belgrade mafia' and have long-standing diplomatic, personal and business ties with Belgrade.

Despite US recognition of both the Croatian and Bosnian republics, the Serbian offensive was portrayed by Scowcroft as a civil war.

This was eagerly taken up by the imperialist powers, and it laid the basis for the arms embargo and gave the UN the opportunity to hide behind disaster relief to avoid confronting the issue of Serbian aggression. The subservient media will not rock the boat.



Facing down the Tories... about 12,000 demonstrators from around Britain marched to Hyde Park, London, last Saturday to protest against the education cuts
Photo: Alan Clark

Build African Liberation Day march

THE African Liberation Support Campaign is asking for trade union support for its demonstration in London on 27 May, which is raising the slogan 'Africa: not just charity but complete liberation'. Trade unionists are asked to obtain their branches' support for the resolution below

This branch believes that:

Although they have achieved political independence African states have not achieved economic independence from the dominant world powers. The policies of such countries as Britain, the US and France have prevented, both economically and politically, the African states from achieving the full potential of their liberation struggles.

These dominant world powers, or imperialist states, have through the use of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund been able to either shape the development of the African economies for their own needs or, in more extreme cases, bring these countries to rack and ruin.

To maintain their own interests in Africa, these Western governments have supported and armed dictatorial regimes that have terrorised workers, students, and political and trade union activists.

This branch notes:

The African Liberation Support Campaign (ALISC) is holding a

march to celebrate African Liberation Day so as to highlight the role that the British government plays in the brutalisation and mass starvation of African people such as in Rwanda, Somalia and South Sudan.

Number 10 Downing Street will be served with a memorandum stating its connivance in the perpetuation of this tyranny.

Under the slogan of 'Africa: not just charity but complete liberation', ALISC will highlight how:

Internally the British government uses the racist immigration laws and the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act to terrorise people of African and Asian descent and other migrant communities. It does this not only by refusing entry but also by harassing them when they are in Britain, including the use of deportations and murder, such as in the case of Joy Gardner, Joseph Nnalue, Omase Lumumba and Kwanele Siziba.

These laws, carried out by the state authorities such as the police, also contribute to the criminalisation of people of African and Asian descent who live

in Britain, including those born here.

Externally Britain, to safeguard its exploitation of the resources of Africa, backs up, via arms sales and diplomacy, some of the worse regimes in Africa in their suppression of any political opposition, for example in Nigeria and Uganda. This generates the refugees that come to this country, where they are subjected to detention in such places as Campsfield [a detention centre for asylum-seekers in Oxfordshire].

This branch resolves to:

Support the African Liberation Day march on 27 May.

Sponsor the march at £25 (or more) per organisation and/or make a donation plus offer the march material support.

Support the Amnesty Campaign for Refugees and Unregistered Migrants (ACRUM).

Calls on the regional and national bodies of this trade union to likewise support this resolution.

Details:

Cheques or postal orders should be made payable to 'ALISC' and sent to African Liberation Day co-ordinator, ALISC, PO Box 256, London SE11 5TH.

All are welcome to come to the planning meetings, to be held every two weeks — phone for details of meeting place.

For more information or discussion, phone 0171-924 9033.

ALISC will be happy to send a speaker on request.

African Liberation Day march

'Not just charity but complete liberation'

Assemble at 1pm

Kennington Park, London SE11.

To Trafalgar Square for rally.

Support grows for Hounslow school-meals strike

WORKERS defending school meals are getting massive public support for their campaign in Hounslow, west London.

Fifty school-meals workers are threatened with redundancy in 1995-96, more than 20 per cent of the entire service. Workers who remain in the service face much worse conditions.

Messages

An official one-day strike and a march and rally are to be held by the public-service union, Unison, on Monday 3 April. Dozens of schools have sent messages of support to the union. A number of Unison branches in London are also supportive.

Unison manual group secretary Iain Raymond said: 'We haven't even had the day of action yet and we are receiving massive support from governing bodies, teachers, teacher trade unions, parents, pupils and other groups from within the community.'

Protested

Many schools have protested to Hounslow council leader John Chatt.

The management, with the support of Labour councillors, is trying to use the Tory anti-union laws to head off the action, but staff are still making preparations.

'The action we plan is per-

fectly legitimate,' said Raymond.

'We are concerned at the lengths that the employer has gone to in an attempt to discredit our action.'

EU votes to keep cheap labour

MICHAEL PORTILLO, the employment secretary, was spared an embarrassing defeat in Brussels last week when European Union social affairs ministers voted against a directive to improve the rights of workers posted abroad by their companies.

The directive would have resulted in companies having to

pay the local wage rate, and also to pay for social provisions for their employees.

Portillo had opposed the directive, saying it put at risk the jobs of many of the estimated 200,000 Britons working abroad, by pricing them out of the market. In fact the vote will mean the system of cheap labour continues in the EU.

WORKERS PRESS IS THE PAPER OF THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

Please send me information about the WRP

Name date

Address

Trade union (if any) Age (if under 21)

Send to: PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB

Inside left

Though cowards inch...

LAST, having boldly inscribed the rigour of the market' on his banner, Labour's dynamic, vision-leader Tony Blair has indicated a line of march on which he intends to lead the party. On estates where services have broken down, streets without jobs or hope, Labour's message can ring loud and clear!

No more talk about scaling the commanding heights of the economy, no false raisings of expectations; the first targets to aim for are parents whose children play in front of their neighbours' windows, and tenants who annoy their neighbours.

At last! It may not promise much to those whose kids have been sent home from school for lack of teachers, nor those whose anti-social 'neighbours' are firms polluting air, land and streams with their waste. But having confined to my neighbours more than once about their raucous snoring and depositing toffee papers and sticky drink cartons in the lift, I feel confident now that we have a Labour leader who understands the problems.

Just because Tony Blair shows a sense of community, and moderate ideas, by sending his son across London to a snob Catholic school, it is no reason to knock him. He may show little inkling of what has to be done with local council, but if our estate gets saddled with a tenants' management committee, as is the case, along with compulsory competitive tendering, I'd vote for Blair to be forced to personally clean out the lifts.

Continuity (continued)

THIS paper's recent story from a 'geographical' magazine, about a train that came off the rails in northern France, didn't impress me. Under P. Edant of Colchester. 'Despite even French trains running on rails,' he/she writes, 'one still cannot re-establish a continuity. The meaning of the words do not allow

One meaning of the word 'continuity', given in my 'Concise Oxford Dictionary' is 'state of being continuous'. Which is surely what a railway line has to be? When the rails have gaps to allow for expansion, and prevent buckling, they're not continuous to maintain continuity — how's that for dialectics?

If the rails are prised too far apart, the quantitative becomes qualitative, and continuity — of the track (and of train services) is interrupted. Until it is re-established, it's not restored.

P. Edant might object that, while you can go back along the track to restore it, one cannot go back in time — leaving aside H.G. Wells, Dr Who, and others — to restore the original services. Likewise, taking the common usage of 'continuity' — one can re-establish it in a film or video-tape even though the events depicted were interrupted — it is in most films the continuity required is logical, not actual).

But Terry Brotherstone's reference to which P. Edant objected, 'the re-establishing a continuity of working class internationalism'. The comrades in Russia are endeavouring to re-establish the continuity of Trotskyism in the working class. How else do we distinguish this from someone seeking a different tradition, or attempting to start from scratch, and 'reinvent the wheel'?

The arbiter of how words can be used is not me, nor the dictionary, but whether they enable us to communicate things about the world.

Charlie Pottins (or if you like, P.Easant!)



Tuzla trade union delegates Resad Hesagic (left) and Ivica Segat



Tim Gopsill (left), editor of the NUJ journal, and Faruk Ibrahimovic, translator for the tour

Great for B trade dele BUILD FOR

WHAT a terrific send off for the three delegates from the Tuzla district trade union council, north-east Bosnia, who toured Britain during March. On 21 March, the eve of their return home, the three delegates — Fikreta Sijercic, Ivica Segat and Resad Husagic — and the Workers Aid for Bosnia campaign were hosts at a farewell social evening.

With kind permission of John Foster, general secretary of the National Union of Journalists, well over 120 people packed into a social at the NUJ's headquarters in London.

The tour took the three Bosnians and their interpreter, Faruk Ibrahimovic, to meet trade unionists and Labour councillors in Sussex, London, East Anglia, Wales, the Midlands, the North West, the North East and Scotland. Then they re-



send off Bosnian union delegates JULY CONVOY!



Tuzla trade union delegate Fikreta Sijercic (left) with Dot Gibson, member of first two Workers Aid convoys

ned to London to meet old friends and
ke new ones.

The social allowed everybody to talk
everybody else:

Workers Aid convoy leaders George
gus, Paddy McCloy and Lisa Mead
re there, and so was Sally Masson, a
se from Brighton who was a member
Workers Aid's convoy in August last
ar;

Printworker Bozena Langley, who
uccessfully moved a resolution in sup-
t of Workers Aid at the Graphical,
dia and Paper Union conference in
3, and joined the second convoy that
ched Tuzla;

Veteran convoy driver Andy McFar-
e, who also drove the Bosnian delega-
a during their tour of Britain;

ndjiana Harper of the Bosnia and

Herzegovina Infor mation Centre, origin-
ally from Tuzla;

Many Bosnian refugees, including
Esad Jordamovic, who joined the parti-
sans at the age of 16, and Almir Baralic,
who first put Workers Aid in touch with
the Kreka (Tuzla) miners;

Tim Gopsill, editor of the NUJ journal,
and Kyran Connolly, deputy president of
the NUJ;

Chris Long, president of the Com-
munication Workers' Union, came with a
member of the union's executive com-
mittee;

Bill Spiers, deputy general secretary
of the Scottish TUC, who travelled to
London specially to present 10,000 Deuts-
chmark (£4,000) to the Kreka (Tuzla)
miners;

A member of the International Com-

mittee of the National Union of
Teachers;

John Peters, secretary of the Bexley
Trades Council;

Printworker Alan Clark who repre-
sented the Greater London branch of the
GPMU;

Mark Byrom from Liverpool who
joined a convoy to Tuzla and made a
video film;

Sejfudin Tokic, member of the Bos-
nian parliament for the Bosnian Union of
Social Democrats;

Phil Edwards, secretary of the Tower
Hamlets trades council, and Martin
Westwood, executive committee mem-
ber, brought their banner proudly pro-
claiming against racism;

Local government worker Liz Leices-
ter, chair of Camden, north London,

branch of public service union UNISON;

Jill Oxley, National Union of
Teachers, who is owed special thanks for
providing the buffet; and many more...

During their tour the Tuzla trade un-
ionists won great support for their July
European Trade Union Convoy for inter-
national workers' solidarity. Their
tenacity to defend their multicultural life
and fight against the division of their
country was saluted by all present.

Following short speeches and presen-
tations, the whole gathering stood in
silence in memory of those who have
died in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

All those who wish to participate in
any way in the campaign for the July
European Trade Union Convoy, or would
like more information, should contact
Faruk Ibrahimovic on: 0171-582 5462.



Left: Support from the Communication Workers' Union, from left: Ivica Segat, Fikreta Sijercic, CWU executive member, CWU president Chris Long, and Resad Husagic
Above: Mr Sejfudia Tokic, member of Bosnian parliament

All pictures on these pages are by Marg Nicol

Morals and the Bank of England

PERSONAL COLUMN

OFTEN quoted but seldom heeded are those well-known words of Macaulay: 'We know no spectacle so ridiculous as the British public in one of its periodical fits of morality.'

This adage has been flogged to death in comments on the downfall of Rupert Pennant-Rea, who until recently was taking home £180,000 a year as deputy governor of the Bank of England.

If we substitute for that amorphous word 'public' the more precise concept 'bourgeois press' — for it was the British press, not the British public, that brought down Pennant-Rea — then the spectacle is not merely ridiculous. I for one find it sickening.

Not that I particularly wish to defend Pennant-Rea. But, considering the foul deeds that banks and their bosses habitually get up to, and always have got up to, it's ironic that what cooked this gentleman's goose was a sexual peccadillo.

To be sure, he signed his inamorata into his place of work under a false name and copulated with her in the governor's dressing-room. (Can anyone explain, by the way, why the governor of the Bank of England has his own private dressing-room on the premises?)

But even if we add *lèse-majesté* to the charge-sheet, Pennant-Rea's offences are but a fly-speck compared to the mountain of stinking filth that we find when we examine the early history of the Bank of England.

Many of its directors and governors made their fortunes largely out of the buying and selling of black slaves. One such was Humphry Morice, MP, who was a director of the bank from 1716 and later served as its deputy governor (1725-26) and governor (1727-29).

Morice was the fortunate owner of six slave-ships, four of them charmingly named after female members of his family: 'Anne', 'Katherine', 'Sarah', and 'Judith'.

After his sudden death in 1731 he was found to have had his hand deep in the Bank of England's till. He had discounted fictitious bills to the tune of over £29,000 (an enormous sum in those days), had embezzled trust funds left to his daughters by an uncle, and was said to have taken poison when his crimes came to light.

Other high officials of the Bank made their pile out of slave-produced sugar, either directly or by lending money to other plantation-owners.

Thus Sir Richard Neave, the Bank's director for 48 years and its deputy governor (1781-83) and governor (1783-85), was chairman of the Society of West India Merchants. His daughter married Beeston Long junior, son of Neave's predecessor as chairman of the West India merchants; Long in turn succeeded to that office — and served as director (1784-1820) and governor (1804-06) of the Bank of England.

Another of the Bank's directors financed the purchase of estates for the Pinney family, which made a huge fortune out of sugar production on the island of Nevis, and whose head John Pinney wrote in 1764:

'It is as impossible for a Man to make Sugar without the assistance of Negroes, as to make Bricks without Straw.'

Thomas Raikes, director (1776-1810), deputy governor (1795-97) and governor (1797-99) of the Bank, had family connections with the rich Jamaican plantation-owner Nathaniel Bayly.

William Manning, father of Cardinal Henry Manning, amassed a 'handsome fortune' from sugar estates on St Kitts, and served as director

(1790-1831) and governor (1812-14) of the Bank.

Not surprisingly, one historian of the Bank, Sir John Clapham, tells us that the 'sugar and slave men' were favoured customers: on 1 January 1800, [a]t the head of the merchants, with £581,000 of bills under discount on that day, came the great West India Interest — the sugar and slave men. Because of the "extraordinary situation of their trade" in war time, they had recently been given specially favourable terms.

Not that the Bank of England was the only British bank whose early history is closely connected with the triangular trade. Ten prominent Liverpool slave-merchants helped to found ten of the 14 important local banks listed after 1750.

One such bank, Leyland and Bullin, was launched in 1807 by two wealthy local slave-merchants who judged it prudent to diversify their money-making activities on the eve of the abolition of the slave trade. Leyland and Bullin was absorbed by the North and South Wales Bank in 1901, and that in turn by the Midland in 1908.

The library at Friends' House in London holds evidence showing that in 1756 Alexander and David Barclay were among the 84 Quaker slave-traders.

And another prominent London banker, by the name of Sir Francis Baring, is said to have made his first money out of dealing in slaves at the tender age of 16. When he died he was worth £1,000,000.

Now, what I find sickening is that this shameful history of the pursuit of wealth through the buying and selling of human beings, and through their merciless exploitation in the sugar plantations, seems to be completely forgotten.

It sickens me that those who comment on the morals of Rupert Pennant-Rea neither know nor care that the institution from which he was forced to resign was founded and took shape in the closest possible association with a hideous immorality that, even after 200 years, so signally dwarfs his banal piece of self-indulgence.

Knowing our enemy

THE Newham Monitoring Project has a well-deserved reputation for courageous and energetic campaigning against racist violence, and for the accuracy and excellent presentation of its printed material.

Its booklet 'Newham: The Forging of a Black Community' was outstanding for setting local black history firmly in the context of the history of the east London working class as a whole.

Now the Project has published a pamphlet that is no less important: 'The Enemy in Our Midst: exposing racism and fascism in Newham' (£1).

This is a well-aimed blow at the British National Party, which it describes as 'a party of criminals' and 'a small band of street thugs'.

In a piece of 'outing' that commendably turns the tables on the notorious 'Combat 18' outfit, it prints the names and addresses of eight leading local BNP members, one of whom, Nicky Cooper, is a member of 'Combat 18' and has been convicted of a vicious attack on a group of Asian children in Mile End.

William Manning, father of Cardinal Henry Manning, amassed a 'handsome fortune' from sugar estates on St Kitts, and served as director

Peter Fryer

Dockworkers' history

'Move to militants' union did not strengthen workers in struggle'

TOM COWAN again criticises the book by Bill Hunter, 'They Knew Why They Fought', a history of unofficial struggles and leadership in dockworkers' struggles, 1945-89. And, below, KEITH SINCLAIR replies to the criticisms

FOLLOWING the correspondence on the history of the dockers' struggles I have received from E. Rogers (a member of the 'Revolutionary History' editorial board) a document that sheds more light on that history.

The document is a lecture, given by John Archer on 24 May 1990 to WRP members, entitled 'The Trotskyists and the Merseyside Docks Strikes 1954-55'.

I have been under the illusion that the mass exodus from the White Union (Transport and General Workers' Union) to the Blues (National Amalgamated Stevedores' and Dockers' Union) was a spontaneous reaction of Hull dockers to a dispute on 16 August 1954 against their intolerable conditions. There was no support forthcoming from the TGWU officials.

Bill Hunter writes: 'As a result of this strike all the frustrations and seething discontent felt by the dockers suddenly came to a head' ('They Knew Why They Fought', p34). This was Hull's agreement with the Birkenhead dockers that Hull break with the White Union and join the Blue Union of stevedores and dockers. But matters are not that simple.

We must here understand that at this point Birkenhead dockers were still in the White Union — yet they advised Hull to join the Blue!

Exodus

To complicate this situation further we read in Hunter's book (pp. 34-5) that a couple of days later Hull sent a leaflet to Merseyside dockers calling on them to join the exodus to the Blue Union! Obviously Hull was manoeuvred into appearing to take the initiative in the breakaway.

The Communist Party, which controlled the London and Liverpool docks committees, opposed leaving the TGWU. It was campaign-

N.A.S. & D.
Mersey Broadsheet

News of the 'Blues'

Official Organ of the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers Union

No. 20

May 14th, 1955

PRICE 1d.

STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION NEARS CLIMAX

REPRESENTATIVES from Birkenhead, Liverpool, Hull, Manchester and London attended the National Delegate Conference last week-end and having considered the reports from the various ports decided that efforts by the Committee to obtain recognition on Local and National Group Committees, by peaceful negotiation were not likely to succeed.

The Delegate Conference decided the time has now arrived to take effective action on the question of recognition. Brothers, the struggle to achieve recognition is now nearing the climax. I ask to your solid and unwavering support @ the weeks ahead. I am completely confident that the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers will be put to the test, which in the opinion of the delegates, is the only way matters

Dick Barret

Only surviving copy of the Blue Union's broadsheet from the period of the recognition struggle in northern ports, 1954-55

ing within the White Union to lift the ban and allow Communists to hold office. Naturally they were against bleeding the union dry of its best militants who they could use in the internal struggle for democratic rights.

Archer's statement on this is very interesting: 'The question of Stalinism did not long remain an academic one.'

'A report attributed to Bob Pennington says that there was a meeting in 1953 in Manchester where Healy, Ratner and Pennington met three unofficial dockers' leaders, McShane, Johnson and Brandon... They agreed on a campaign for a mass shift from the "White Union" to the "Blue Union", and to reject the perspective of "reform" of the "White Union".'

Two points arise here. One is that the Healy group decided and planned in 1953 to campaign for leaving the TGWU. In 1954 the Birkenhead committee, which was under Trotskyist influence, persuaded the Hull dockers' committee to take the initiative in leaving the White Union. Birkenhead made it appear it was responding to a call from Hull and the rank and file to leave the White Union.

Typically for an organisation buried within the Labour Party — where open leadership of workers in struggle would mean expulsion — Healy and Co., acting in a secret and bureaucratic manner, manoeuvred dockers into a breakaway struggle.

Secondly, to what extent was

... matters are not that simple!

TOM COWAN's latest contribution (above) on the history of the dockers' struggles touches on some of the most fundamental issues in understanding the role of the Trotskyists in the move to the National Amalgamated Stevedores' and Dockers' Union — the 'Blue Union' — in the northern ports in the mid-1950s.

There have been several analyses put forward to explain the decision of the Hull dockers to join the Blue Union in the autumn of 1954.

In Hull militant (ex-)dockers emphasise the spontaneous nature of the revolt against appalling conditions and the hatred felt towards local Transport and General Workers' Union docks officials such as Jim Parnell. Cowan states 'Healy and Co. ... manoeuvred dockers into a breakaway struggle'.

Bill Hunter gives the following account: the Hull docks came out on strike in August 1954, the Birkenhead committee crossed the Pennines to convince the Hull strike committee of the need to join the Blue Union, the Hull dockers agreed, and Birkenhead followed in due course. However, as Cowan writes, matters were not that simple.

Events in Hull in August 1954 are central to an understanding of what actually took place. Albert Hart, the strike leader, has recently provided important recollections of the strike. Hart was one of the gang sent to unload the 'Seaboard Enterprise'; their refusal started the strike and the northern move to the Blue Union.

On Tuesday 17 August 1954, 4,000 Hull dockers went on strike, the aim being the aboli-

tion of 'hand-scuttling'. The 'Hull Daily Mail' of the next day carried the headline 'Dockers Break Away From Union'. The Birkenhead leaders did not arrive until the weekend.

However this does not mean we are dealing with a purely spontaneous move to the Blue Union. The idea of Hull dockers joining the Blue Union came from Jim Murphy, an ex-docker who was in regular correspondence with unofficial dockers' leaders such as Harry Constable. The strike committee met in Murphy's front room.

It was Murphy who first made contact with the Blue Union in London. Murphy and other Hull militants had developed links with Constable, Bill Johnson and others following the 1945 strike. Constable had first visited Hull docks in 1945.

In the first issue of the 'Birkenhead Port Workers Clarion' in 1951, Harry Constable explained that he would like to 'see the Blue Union strengthened'.

Consciously

The move to the Blue Union was therefore consciously worked for by Constable, Bill Johnson and others. The idea came from the militant dockers, not out of the head of Gerry Healy or any other Trotskyist leader.

Cowan states that 'Obviously Hull was manoeuvred into appearing to take the initiative in the breakaway'. The reality is that Hull voted to apply to join the Blue Union before Birkenhead leaders such as Bill Johnson arrived to address the Sunday mass meeting.

Cowan writes that the move

to the Blue Union 'certainly did not strengthen the workers in their struggles'.

However the immediate effect in Hull was a general increase in wage rates. This was accompanied by dockers flooding into NASDU branch meetings.

Albert Hart recalls union branch meetings of over 200 dockers meeting in Buckingham Street School in east Hull, and this was only one of seven branches in Hull. The TGWU flooded resources into the northern ports.

Later developments, including the failure of the key six-week recognition dispute, are dealt with in Bill Hunter's book.

The fact that recognition was not achieved does not mean that the strike's defeat was inevitable, nor that the move to the Blue Union was a 'bureaucratic manoeuvre' as Cowan suggests. Surely it is stretching credibility to describe a policy agreed by daily mass meetings of thousands as a 'bureaucratic manoeuvre'.

Cowan draws out the lessons he thinks should be learned from the whole experience. He

the breakaway in the best interests of the workers' struggle (remembering that the policy of Trotskyism has always been to democratise the unions and make them into fighting class bodies)?

Was it a bureaucratic manoeuvre to spite and outflank the Stalinists, as Archer suggests? Or was it to subject the workers' struggle to the need of the 'Club' to acquire some industrial punch to impress the Labour lefts of the day? Whichever the motive (and it is more than likely both), it certainly did not strengthen the workers in their struggles against the system, as later events proved.

Reaction

The lesson to be learned from the whole event is that a democratic union, if it becomes the point of attraction to masses of workers, cannot hope to survive against the united employers and union bureaucracy. The forces of reaction compelled the Blue Union leaders to expel the new recruits from its ranks and, later, to disband and merge with the TGWU.

The struggle for democratic unions, whether through breakaways or internal campaigns, has never been successful. The direct result of Healy's breakaway tactic was inter-union struggles and even non-unionism.

That is why the cross-union rank-and-file movement (such as existed in the docks), directly controlled by mass meetings, should have been recognised as the best form of combat organisation for uniting workers of all unions on a national basis.

We must learn these lessons — recognise the limitations and vulnerabilities of militant unions, and the urgent need for class-based organisations such as rank-and-file movements — if we are to win the next round of class struggles. Tom Cowan

says the struggle for democratic unions has never been successful, so cross-union rank-and-file movements are the way forward.

This dangerously plays down the daily fight for democracy in the unions. In my own union the left has had to defend the principle of annual conferences, to defend victimised militants and has constantly tried to improve the union rules.

Battle

That battle is an essential part of current activity for revolutionaries in unions. The fight for rank-and-file control of the unions is as important as emphasising the need for mass meetings to control strike votes.

When we look at the strength dockers had in the 1970s it was partly because the militants combined unofficial and official work.

One of the attractions of the Blue Union was that it had given official support to a number of disputes in London where the TGWU dockers had been forced to act unofficially.

Keith Sinclair

THEY KNEW WHY THEY FOUGHT
by Bill Hunter
Index Books, £7.95

'The historic struggle of the dockers' movement and the part played by workers from the Royal Docks are told in a fascinating new book' (Catherine Howard writing in the Newham 'Recorder').

Available by post from Index Books Centre, 28 Charlotte Street, London W1P 1HJ. Add 65p for mail orders

Tuzla's multicultural lessons

This article by MIRZA MUKIC, translated by Faruk Ibrahimovic, is a response to the seminar 'Is Europe possible without multicultural' held in Tuzla, northern Bosnia, on 4-5 November 1994. The conference was organised by the Verona Forum and the Tuzla Citizens' Forum

MANY Tuzlans could not understand what the seminar entitled 'Is Europe possible without multicultural' was about. For decades, even centuries, the people of this town have taken their multicultural society for granted. In Tuzla it is called 'the neighbourhood'.

Recently intellectuals, philosophers and journalists from Europe and elsewhere came to Tuzla to speak at the seminar 'Is Europe possible without multicultural'. It would seem from the lack of local response to the seminar, that the Tuzlan people did not understand this issue — either they were not concerned or they found the speeches monotonous.

But it was not that ordinary Tuzlans did not understand the meaning of multicultural. It was just that they could have understood the reason for the speeches more if the seminar had been about tolerance of others, understanding, respect, or a good neighbourhood.

There are plenty of examples of multicultural in Tuzla that nobody mentioned at the seminar. These would have been of great benefit to the people attending from Britain, Germany, Italy and France.

If an elderly Tuzlan from Konjicka Street (also known by the ancient name of Atik Mahala) had spoken, then some things would have become clearer to the intellectuals, philosophers and journalists; they would have been astonished, puzzled and maybe even a bit embarrassed.

Elite

What could an elderly Tuzlan tell the European elite about multicultural society?

Konjicka Street runs from the Skver river towards Tusanj. With your first steps you will see the yellow single-storey house of the Dusek family. Before World War II Karlo Dusek, a pastry-cook from Bohemia, came to Tuzla looking for a better life. He managed to live very well selling *cukreninas* in his shop at Korzo. Today his son, Cestimir Mirko Dusek, is a highly accomplished musician and conductor.

The second house on the same side of the street, where now there is the 'Kucica' restaurant, belonged to Mrs Vrabecka who was born in Vienna. She lived very quietly.

Opposite the 'Kucica' restaurant once lived the Tuco family, who were Croats. Over the years, the family left for other parts of the world, never to return.

The Tucos shared their yard with two Muslim families. In a neighbouring house lived Nua Ceta, the well-known Tuzla goldsmith and an Albanian Catholic. The life of this family

was influenced by their traditions and language. They kept themselves to themselves and did not disturb anybody.

The house at the beginning of the lane on one side is today occupied by the scouts' and mountaineers' organisation. This was the house of the Poletika family, who were of Russian origin; in another part of the building lived Haim Pinto, a painter and a Jew who fled to the US to escape fascism.

Haim Pinto changed his name to James, and ten years ago revisited Tuzla, donating to the town his collection of pictures. He died in Mexico, where he was dean of the academy of fine arts.

In another lane there lived the Hudinski family, who were Poles. In time they married into other families.

Retained

At the entrance to the same lane there is the house of the Sacir Saliho- vic family, Albanians who have retained their family name. This family includes very good pastry-cooks such as Husnija and Rasid.

The house in which Rasid made sweetmeats, such as *gourabiyeh*, lollipops and walnut loafs, is still there near the hill of Kicelj; but Husnija's house was demolished 'by order of the people' because of 'subsidence'. This order has been used to destroy things that remind the Tuzlans of their traditions or family homes.

In another lane nearby lived the Hajster family, who were probably of German origin, and in the house opposite there lived the Perkovics and Krekovics, who were Croats. Also here were families of Muslims, Serbs and Gypsies.

In another house, now gone, lived people who spoke a strange tongue; they were dark-skinned, cheerful and friendly. It was said they were Tzintzars, but this was just a rumour, since in this street it was considered impolite to check.

A little bit further towards Tusanj there is the villa 'Maria' where the Italian Vidjis family lived. They have left and today the house is in disrepair and uninhabitable.

And so the examples go on; in 300 or 400 metres there was Europe in all its richness, with different languages and cultures, flourishing, supplementing and enriching each other.

Atik Mahala gave to the world people of international repute as painters, musicians, sportspeople, and writers. But there also lived there idlers, ruffians, drunkards, and thieves.

All this should have been said to the elite who came from around Europe to the seminar.



Tuzla's people are fighting for their multicultural society: unloading a Workers Aid lorry (top); Bosnians demonstrate their desire for a united country in London

Build political consciousness in struggle

TERRY BROTHERSTONE comments on the Clause Four campaign and the need to develop political consciousness in the working class

I MUCH appreciate the care with which Paul B. Smith ('Letters', 25 March) read my recent account of the origin of Clause Four, section 4, of the Labour Party's constitution, as well as Cliff Slaughter's subsequent analysis of the politics of the current campaign to defend it. But I think he is wrong to try to set the two pieces against each other.

Critical

Smith asks for 'a critical assessment' of the 'anti-socialist' arguments that attended the birth of the clause, and wishes that Slaughter had 'used his knowledge of Marxism to criticise... [its] content...' in order to stimulate 'a debate on the

nature of a socialist society'. Such a debate might be illuminating.

But the point of recent articles in Workers Press (see 21 January on) on the Clause Four commitment to common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the defence campaign to which they sought to contribute, was and is different.

My intention (18 February) was to explain to readers the history of the period when the Clause Four-based Labour Party came into being.

I was criticised by 'P. Edant' (Letters, 11 March) for my allegedly loose use of the phrase 're-establishing continuity'. It might have been better to have written about the need to revive

in the working class the memory of its own past struggles as a class; and the consciousness of the revolutionary and internationalist content of movements which appear to have produced disappointing or even reactionary results.

Failed

One point a historically-minded critic of my piece might very legitimately have made is that it failed to draw attention to the franchise reform of 1918, which, for the first time, brought into being something like a mass working-class electorate (women were only given the vote on the same basis as men in 1928).

To put the matter so briefly that a pedant may wince, the British ruling class, conscious of the link between the war crisis and the potential for European revolution, was using its

time-honoured technique of staving off disaster with an 11th-hour concession.

Sidney and Beatrice Webb and Arthur Henderson set the 1918 Labour Party on a course that aimed to ensure that the horizons of the new electorate — many of whom were strikers and demonstrators — were limited to parliament.

They feared the consciousness of the class might develop along Russian revolutionary lines.

But so profound was the revolutionary potential of the crisis that Clause Four flowed from the pen of the most conservative of politicians almost without being noticed. It is no surprise that Sidney Webb, who drafted the clause, did not design a blueprint for socialism: what is important is that he produced a formula that many class-conscious workers could later latch onto as expressing

their socialist convictions.

Clause Four came to be a statement of compromise between the working class and its Labourite leaders.

This compromise was sustained by the concession of state welfare, improved living standards and, recently, a desperation to see some alternative to the Conservative's destruction of these things.

Learn

We can learn a lot about the working-class movement at the end of World War I from studying the state of mind of those who sought to contain it on behalf of capitalism. And we can use the same method to tighten our grasp on what is new in the present situation from the actions and utterances of Tony Blair.

Blair has at least once justified his seemingly irrelevant

campaign against Clause Four by pointing out that it was formulated in the era of the Russian Revolution.

Sustained by a demoralised layer of the intelligentsia, Labour's Christian leader believes the Bolshevik revolution has been consigned to dust. But for the working class it remains a seminal event in creating the world in which we live.

In Britain Clause Four, the Labour election gains of 1922, and the Labour government of 1924 must be discussed and understood in the context of the need to revive consciousness of this reality.

Without the creation anew of this historical and political consciousness in the midst of practical class struggles — in however contradictory a form they may arise — debates about the nature of socialism run the risk of being, at best, ineffectual.

US union leaders try to hide fight against bureaucracy

LEADERS of trade unions in the American Federation of Labour-Congress of Industrial Organisations (AFL-CIO) have tried to keep members in the dark about the fight against bureaucracy in the federation (Workers Press 11 March).

The US unions' official paper has tried to hide the way workers in Decatur, Illinois, where thousands are resisting lock-outs, have taken their fight into the unions.

Warning that the labour movement's press risks losing credibility by distorting or omitting important news, union journalist Harry Kelb points to the 6 March issue of 'AFL-CIO News':

'Reporting on the quarterly meeting of the AFL-CIO Executive Council in Bal Harbour on

re-election, they had enough votes to defeat him.'

The story was leaked by several council members who attended the meeting and has not been denied by Kirkland or his staff. It was widely publicised in the media.

Importance

'Surely, it was a story that was of great importance to trade unionists across the country, because for the first time in the history of the AFL-CIO, a group of influential council members were insisting on a change in leadership as an important step to revitalise the federation. Yet, the "AFL-CIO News" failed to

report the story,' says Kelb. 'Was the editor directed by Kirkland or his staff to ignore it? Was it a case of self-censorship? Would the editor have suffered reprisal, perhaps loss of his job, if he had insisted on running the story?'

'Nor was that the only gross omission committed by the official AFL-CIO newspaper in its March 6 issue.

'The editor knew that 70 Road warriors from Decatur, representing some 20,000 locked out or striking paper, auto and rubber workers from eight states, had spent 25 hours by bus and van to come to Bal Harbour to plead their case for financial support from the council.

'For three days, they were a

living presence at the hotel as, in their bright red T-shirts, they roamed the lobby and meeting rooms, buttonholing council members and scores of other labour leaders to explain their plight and hand out their literature.

'Yet not a word about this rank-and-file group appeared in the story the "AFL-CIO News" ran about the Decatur situation. Not even a mention that Kirkland had felt obliged to invite the Decatur local presidents of the three unions to sit in on the council meeting, a historic first.

'The 6 March issue had room for three photographs of Kirkland, but not one for this rank-

and-file group, which had travelled 1,300 miles in their desperate need for AFL-CIO financial support.

'I wonder how the men and women at Staley (locked out for 20 months), Caterpillar (on strike for eight months), and Bridgestone/Firestone (on strike for seven months) will feel when they pick up this issue of the "AFL-CIO News"?

'If the AFL-CIO and the editors of union publications want to regain their credibility with union members, they will have to be truthful and not manipulative. Union members should not have to rely on the commercial media for important labour news.'

BY VIC CHARLES

20-23 February, the editor chose not to mention the five-hour unprecedented session in which council members representing several of the largest international unions told AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland to his face that they wanted him to retire, and if he chose to run for

German builders' union accepts 3.8% pay rise

BY BOB ARCHER

GERMANY's building workers' union, IG Bau, last week accepted a 3.8 per cent wage increase for its 1.5 million members.

West German builders will get the increase plus a small lump sum on 1 April.

The 440,000 east German building workers will get the increase in instalments between now and 1997.

The original claim for 6.5 per cent was abandoned because failure to reach an agreement would have prejudiced talks on a guaranteed annual wage to

bridge building workers over winter lay-offs. A government bad-weather pay scheme for builders is to be dropped from the beginning of next year.

German building employers are complaining about cheap foreign labour flooding the local construction market.

Some German contractors claim they are being bankrupted by cheaper bids from Greece, Italy and Britain.

A recent survey in Germany showed 87 per cent of ordinary people in favour of insisting foreign contractors should only be allowed into Germany if workers receive equal wages to German workers.

Chaos arrives in German resort

THE middle-class island resort of Sylt in Germany was plunged into chaos last weekend by young *Autonomen* alternative life-stylers.

The German state railway had sold group excursion tickets at about £1 a head to take day-trippers anywhere on the regional network. This led Sylt's hoteliers to protest that the scheme encouraged poor people to come to the island.

So the *Autonomen* called for a mass turnout and 200 protesters arrived in Sylt by train. They managed to keep about 100 police with dog handlers busy and did about 3,000 Deutschmark's worth of damage (£1,200). About 50 young people from Hamburg were arrested.

Jobs disappear for under-19s in Australia

AN AUSTRALIAN university report predicts that full-time employment for under-19s will disappear by the year 2001.

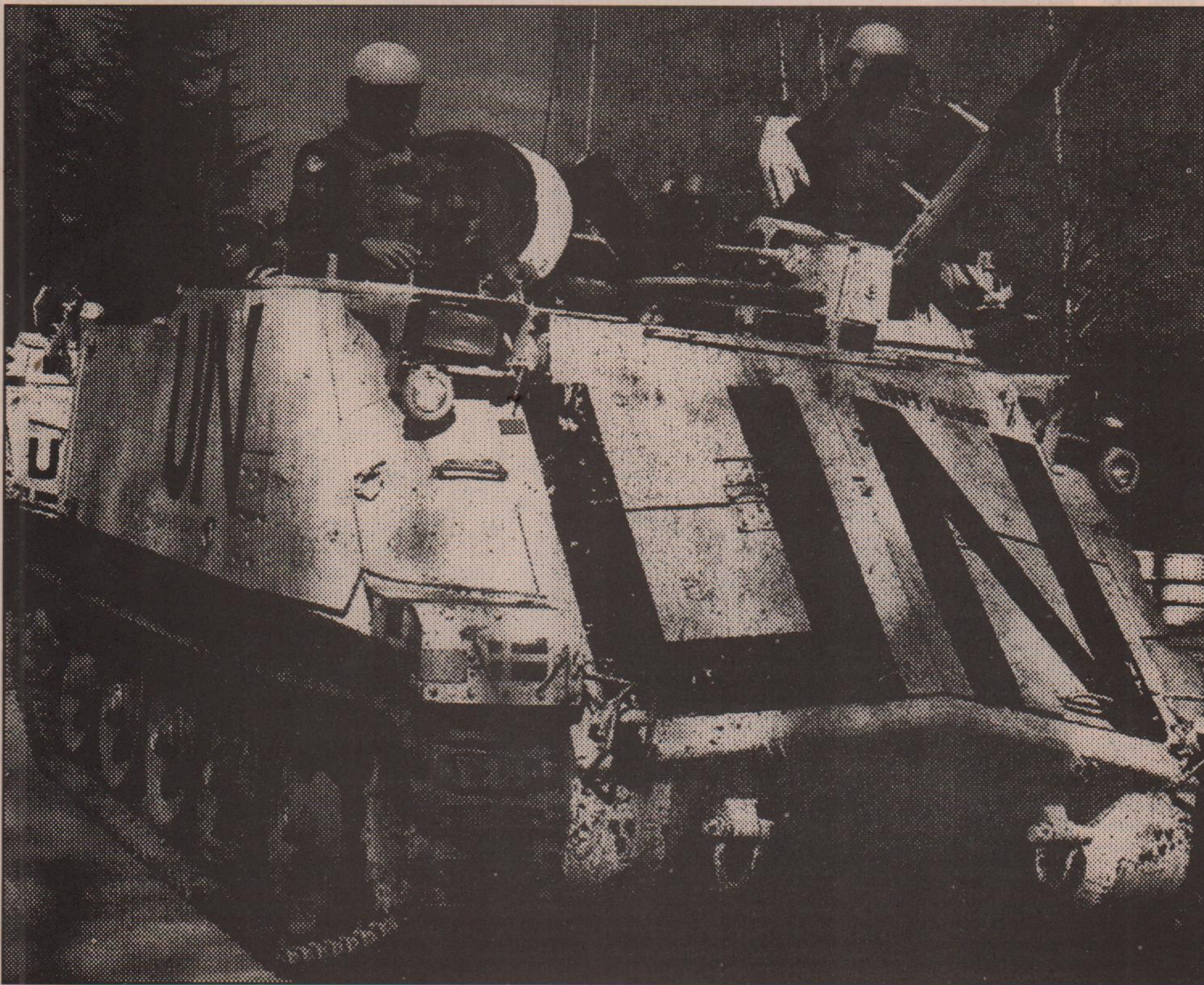
Its author, John Spierings of the University of Adelaide's Centre for Labour Studies, warns that 'a generation of Australians are being locked out of sustainable and meaningful work due to the disappearance of traditional employment'.

At present youth unemployment is at an average of 16 per cent in Australia. In some former industrial areas, hit by structural changes in the economy, the figure is 23 per cent.

The report also suggests that the trend will affect those under 25. This group already constitutes more than 40 per cent of Australia's unemployed. According to Spierings the number of full-time jobs for men aged 20-24 will drop by a further 16 per cent.

The report says that young people between 15 and 24 spend an average of 20 months finding a full-time job. This has been caused by a shift towards casual and part-time employment, especially in the service industries.

Spierings is also critical of the federal government's £3 billion 'Working Nation' employment package. Spierings claims that this targets the improvement of job skills and aptitude for work without expanding the pool of available jobs. This comes at a time of sharp decline in state and federal funding of public services and infrastructure.



The Bosnian army has been advancing this week against the Serb Chetniks around the towns of Travnik, central Bosnia, and Tuzla, north-east Bosnia, where these UN tanks were patrolling. Tuzla is fighting for its multicultural tradition (see page 7)

Guatemalan workers resist terror

FEARS are growing that a Guatemalan trade unionist may have been abducted because of his union activity in fighting a factory closure.

On 13 March, Alexander Yovani Gomez Virula left the offices of the Union Sindical de Trabajadores de Guatemala (UNSTRAGUA) in Guatemala City and set off home. He was last seen some 800 metres from his home.

Leader

Virula's family has been unable to find him in detention centres or hospitals.

Virula was a leader of the union at the RCA factory, a *maquiladora* or assembly-line

plant. Such operations have typically moved from the US in search of cheap labour.

In August 1994, the RCA factory closed down. The workers believed the owners closed the plant to destroy the union, and so they occupied it. They also accused the owners of failing to comply with their legal obligations to the workers in the event of closure.

The occupiers were subsequently evicted by a court order. Some 70 workers are continuing the struggle, demanding that their rights to work and to organise a trade union are recognised.

Those attempting to organise trade unions in Guatemala have been targets for murder

and 'disappearance' for some time. On 28 February, Debora Guzman Chupen, a shop steward at Ly L Modas, a clothing factory in Amatitlan, went missing in similar circumstances to those of Alexander Gomez. It was later revealed that she had been abducted.

Release

Following her release, she reported that she had been drugged and threatened with death. Her captors had questioned her about her husband's trade union activities.

Both she and her husband, Felix Gonzalez, a trade union leader at a textile factory, had received earlier threats.

Workers Press

SUBSCRIBE

to the socialist weekly that tells the truth

Please send me

- 10 issues for £5.60
- 50 issues for £27.60

INTERNATIONAL RATES: Europe and Near East, £7.70 for 10 issues, 50 for £38.50; Americas and India £12.70 for 10 issues, 50 for £63.50; Australia, Japan and E Asia 10 issues for £13.70, 50 for £68.50.

Name

Address.....

I enclose £..... for my subscription, and

an extra donation of £.....

Make cheques, POs payable to Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.