

GMB backs aid for Bosnia

ONE of Britain's biggest unions, the GMB general union, with 850,000 members, has pledged its backing for the Bosnian people's resistance against racist partition and 'ethnic cleansing'.

The GMB has sent a message of solidarity to trade unionists in Tuzla, Bosnia's northern working-class stronghold, paying tribute to the courage of its workers and students fighting for 'the right of people to live and work together'.

A resolution pledging the union to send food and medical aid, moved by a shop steward in Asda stores, was passed unanimously by delegates at the GMB's conference.

Urging the TUC to organise aid, the resolution said the GMB would establish links with Bosnian trade unions. The union will also support the right of asylum for war refugees, especially to enable families to be reunited.

Some 72 young people were killed, and hundreds injured, when Serb nationalists in the surrounding hills shelled a cafe area in Tuzla on Thursday evening, 25 May.

Ignored

Tonight, parents of Tuzla are collecting parts of their children's bodies on the streets', mayor Selim Beslagic said, in a message ignored by the British media.

A mining area with a strong

BY COLIN PENDLETON

working-class tradition, Tuzla has steadfastly resisted the voices of reaction within, as well as the fascist murderers without. Serb workers remain in the town, and among its defenders, giving the lie to those who slanderously equate the Bosnian people with their enemies.

Five Serbs were among those killed in the nationalist shelling.

One of the injured told the 'Guardian's' John Mullin: 'The people who did this say they are Serbs. I am a Serb, and I have nothing in common with them. I love Bosnia and I love Tuzla, and I want to live in a place with Muslims and Croats' ('Guardian', 12 June).

This is what Bosnian workers are fighting for, and this is what we support.

Besides coal mines, the Tuzla area has salt mines and chemical

plants. The word Tuzla, in Turkish, means 'salt'.

The GMB, with many members in Britain's salt and chemical industries, wants to invite trade unionists from Tuzla's salt and chemical industries to visit Britain and meet workers here.

It is looking into ways of assisting the Tuzla industry to obtain badly-needed spare parts. Following the visit to Britain and France, by three Tuzla trade union delegates in March, trade unionists are working to send a big aid convoy to the Bosnian town in July.

Delegates at the Communication Workers Union conference recently raised £2,000. A GMB conference delegate has joined those volunteering to drive on the convoy.

A spokesperson for Workers Aid for Bosnia said: 'The GMB's decision is a big step forward for workers in both countries.'

Protest won't stop deaths



A 500-strong protest marched from Clapham past the place where Brian Douglas received a fatal beating from police and made speeches outside the police station where they were based. Photo and story: Bronwen Handyside

Another attack on the unions

BY THE EDITOR

LABOUR leader Tony Blair's determination to scrap the sponsorship of Labour MPs by the trade unions marks a further step in the direction of breaking the historic links between the unions and the Labour Party.

If successful, Blair would bring to an end a practice that goes back to the 1860s when for the first time union nominees fought parliamentary elections.

Blair wants the money that presently benefits constituency parties to go directly to party headquarters at Walworth Road so that he and a small group of right-wing leaders can decide how it is used.

At the moment, of the 272 Labour MPs, 191 are union sponsored, including Blair himself who is supported by the Transport and General Workers' Union.

Why is Blair pressing ahead with these 'reforms'? He is saying that a Labour government will accept only completely tame unions, unions that proclaim themselves 'non-political', organisations tied directly to the needs of the state and big business.

Pitched

He knows that a Labour government, immediately it is elected, will be pitched into big battles with millions of ordinary people who have suffered mightily at the hands of the Tory government for a decade and a half.

Many still hope that Labour in government will do something to ease their suffering. But Blair knows that the crisis of British and world capitalism makes this impossible.

Further cuts in welfare benefits, further attacks on homeowners, on the sick and the elderly, will be the order of the day under any government, Labour or coalition, that he heads.

That is why Blair and the Labour machine have pulled out all the stops to try and ensure the victory of Jack Dromey as general secretary of the transport workers' union.

In the 'Guardian' last week (12 June) Ken Livingstone (who, surprise, surprise, suddenly declares his 'optimism' about prospects under a Blair government!) spoke of 'the hard faced young apparatchicks who meet in the office of Peter Mandelson to organise the campaign to sack Bill Morris as leader of the TGWU'.

And what sort of trade unionism does Dromey stand for? An article written by Dromey and appearing in the 'Sun' as part of the ruling class's campaign to get him elected makes this clear:

'All of us — unions and bosses — have a common interest in winning business and jobs for Britain.' And, Dromey adds, we need, 'better firms, more efficient offices — it needs us all to work together. Let's sweep away outdated class distinctions.'

This is what Dromey, Blair and Co. mean by 'new' 'non-political' trade unionism: unions tied directly to the needs of the employers and the capitalist state. This is the only trade unionism that the ruling class will be able to allow in the future.

Of course such unions are in no way 'non-political'. They are unions organised and led according to the direct political needs of the ruling class. Hence the sup-

port of the 'Sun' and the 'Guardian' for Dromey and Blair.

In response to this crisis there are those, many calling themselves 'revolutionary' or even 'Trotskyist', who simply chant 'preserve the links'. They want the link between the unions and the Labour party to be kept in place, whatever Labour proposes about the unions.

Clear

But Blair has made it clear that the major elements of the Tory government's anti-union laws will be kept in place under any government he leads. In particular the legislation on the need for strike ballots and the banning of mass picketing would be retained.

How can trade unionists support such a government? The trade unions must demand that all legislation against the unions be scrapped. And if a Labour government refuses to carry out such a repeal the unions must use their political and economic strength against such a government.

The time has come when trade unionists are being forced to consider the historical relationship between the unions and the Labour Party.

Can they any longer financially back a party that openly declares that it will retain and operate oppressive laws against the unions?

Why should the political levy that millions of workers pay every week continue to swell the coffers of Walworth Road?

Blair's insistence that the unions should no longer help finance Labour MPs and constituencies underlines the need for the widest-ranging discussion in the Labour movement on these issues.

National Workers Aid for Bosnia steering committee meeting

Saturday 25 June, 1.30pm

Highfields Community Centre, Leicester

Tel: 0171-582 5462

Yorkshire Miners Gala, Wakefield Saturday 17 June 1995

March from Wakefield town hall to Thornes park (assemble at Margaret Street, moving off to the town hall at 10.20 am; march sets off from town hall at 10.30). Rally starts in Thornes park at 12noon, chaired by NUM Vice President Frank Cave. Speakers will be: Wakefield's mayor — and NUM member — councillor Norman Hartshorne, who will give civic welcome, Halifax MP Alice Mahon, and NUM President Arthur Scargill. Rally followed by afternoon of traditional gala activities, with events and entertainment for all.



Workers Press

Bosnia: SWP takes sides with Tories

'THE FIGHTING in Bosnia has been portrayed from the start as a struggle between "good guys" and "bad guys"', 'Socialist Worker' complained recently ('Don't take sides', 3 June). 'But there is no "good" side in this terrible war,' it declared.

This isn't just a war between 'guys'. Thousands of women and even children have been raped or killed by Serb-nationalist thugs. Maybe 'Socialist Worker' has forgotten?

Its use of the impersonal passive, of a verb without a subject, is a kind of verbal evasion we've come to recognise. Portrayed by whom? Who has portrayed the war in Bosnia this way?

And to whom have they been unfair, the nationalist Serbs? Do they mean the Tories, and the media they control?

ON THE morning after 72 young people were killed by Serb nationalists shelling a cafe area in Tuzla, BBC Radio Four's Today programme interviewed a Serb-nationalist mouthpiece in London defending the slaughter.

There are people from Tuzla in London, but the BBC didn't want to know. BBC 'Newsnight' refused to interview a Bosnian, opting instead for its own idea of 'balance' — a discussion between a Serbian government representative and a spokesperson for the Serb nationalists in Bosnia!

The Bosnian Serb response of bombing Tuzla and other civilian areas was dreadful, acknowledged 'Socialist Worker' ('Troops no answer to war in Bosnia', 3 June). 'But Western action against the Serbs can only lead to renewed war... Driving Serbs from the territory they now hold will mean more massacres, more detention camps, more victims. It could also bring Serbia back into the war and lead Russia to intervene on the side of the Bosnian Serbs.'

This appeared as the 'Daily Telegraph' was claiming that 'pro-Muslim factions in Washington' were 'promoting the Muslim cause in Bosnia even at the risk of all-out war' ('Allies suspect US hawks of increasing risk of war' ('Daily Telegraph', 2 June).

'The CIA is accused [note that impersonal passive again!] of "blatantly distorting" intelligence summaries to further Muslim interests and US military advisory links with the Bosnian government are said to be much stronger than has been publicly disclosed.'

Accused by whom? The Tory paper went on to cite 'authoritative diplomatic sources in Europe', and 'scepticism in London and Paris over whether any US troops will be sent into Bosnia'. It finally came almost clear: 'Some ministers fear that elements in the US administration are threatening any hopes of compromise in Bosnia by covertly promoting Muslim interests — without informing their European allies — to force the Bosnian Serbs to give up territory they have seized.'

TORY ministers — far from bursting for war against the Serb nationalists, as 'Socialist Worker' implied — were using their influence in the media to oppose any action such as lifting the arms embargo, which might help Bosnians regain their homeland. 'Socialist Worker' found itself on the same side as Malcolm Rifkind, David Owen and Douglas Hurd!

It was 'Lord Owen of Split' who fostered the partition plans carving up Bosnia, thus encouraging 'ethnic cleansing'. It was Hurd who insisted that allowing Bosnians arms to defend themselves would only 'create a level killing field'. It is Tory-controlled media, like the BBC, which has persistently equated the 'warring sides' in Bosnia, and referred to those fighting for Bosnia's independence as 'the Muslims'. It is Tory MPs who have repeatedly slandered Bosnians as 'all savages intent on killing each other'.

Had 'Socialist Worker' fallen into this trap in a funk, thinking British intervention was imminent? It has persistently tried to ignore the crimes committed against the Bosnian people. Suddenly, with 'our boys' under threat, their Bosnia coverage increased dramatically — full-page articles, on 3 and 10 June — even if the content was crap. Having dismissed Tuzla's suffering in one sentence on 3 June, 'Socialist Worker' did not mention this working-class stronghold again in its 10 June feature 'What socialists say about Bosnia'.

This consisted of phoney questions and answers, such as 'Aren't the Serb leaders fascists who should be deposed by the West? Isn't doing nothing the same as appeasing Hitler?' The question is framed as though the only choice is between asking our rulers to do something, or 'doing nothing'. The same false logic which led pre-war Labour leaders to either back 'collective security' or applaud Neville Chamberlain. The 'logic' of political cowards.

'SOCIALIST WORKER's' 'answer' was that Milosevic was 'not a fascist' and was now trying to 'rein in' the fascists, that Croatia's Tudjman 'is the same', and that Chetnik leader Karadzic is 'no different from the countless savage dictators' who rule elsewhere 'with the blessing of Western governments'. This will come as a great comfort to people in Bosnia!

'Ordinary people suffer on every side', says the caption to a picture of two children. Just like some UN generals, 'Socialist Worker' lyingly pretends that 'all are guilty'; given the chance Muslim fighters have shown they are just as capable of committing atrocities'. It says Serb Chetniks 'see themselves as fighting for their homes', having been driven from their land by 'ethnic cleansing'. No evidence is offered.

That Bosnia remains a multi-national, multi-party state, in whose army Serbs and Croats are fighting alongside Muslims is ignored by 'Socialist Worker'. All it can tell us, quoting a 'Guardian' article, is that President Izetbegovic has used 'the language of sectarianism'.

The answer, according to 'Socialist Worker' (3 June), lies with 'ordinary Serbs, Croats and Muslims seeing that they have more in common with one another than with their rulers'. It also says 'working class British troops' have no interest in 'going to war against working class Bosnian Serbs', though it omits to advise British workers to 'revolt', as it says Serbs, Muslims and Croats should!

On 10 June 'Socialist Worker' repeats: 'Sooner or later growing numbers of Serbs, Croats and Muslims will realise the only way out of this hell is for them to unite and fight the butchers and the wealthy on every side.'

IN TUZLA, and in other working-class areas, Serb, Croat and Muslim workers are united, and fighting to remain so against nationalist aggression. Leaving aside 'Socialist Worker's' lying equation of responsibility for this war, what has it done to establish contact with these workers, to find out what they think, or to help them?

Workers Aid for Bosnia has sent eight convoys of food and medical supplies to Tuzla. The initiative came from a Serb worker, a Trotskyist supporter of the Workers International. In March this year three trade unionists from Tuzla toured Britain, speaking to trade unionists and students. In July, a trade union-backed convoy is leaving for Tuzla with aid.

'Socialist Worker' has not reported any of this. Why not? What's the use of intoning 'Never Again', and shrugging it off with indifference when fascism is happening again? What's the use of pious cant about 'ordinary people' suffering, and needing to 'unite', while ignoring what working people are doing to unite in action? What's the use of a 'socialist' paper that takes sides with the Tories? What's the use of 'Socialist Worker'?

Letters

Appeal for Bosnia

YOU HAVE surely learnt of the new massacres perpetrated by Radovan Karadzic's Chetniks extreme Serb nationalists, who have bombed the 'safe areas' of Bosnia, and killed — in Tuzla alone — more than 70 innocent young women and men, and wounded more than 200!

This already tragic number is unfortunately not final, because the number of deaths rises hour by hour.

The cataclysm that has been felt by Bosnia-Herzegovina is rapidly gaining in intensity. The massacre of innocent population continues.

This neo-fascism has been encouraged by the indifference, cynicism and amoral neutrality of the international community.

Until now, all the calls for help we have made to be allowed to defend ourselves have fallen on the deaf ears of the modern world, which has let itself be deluded by its own illusions of freedom and human rights.

The independent intellectuals' association, the '99 Circle' of Sarajevo addresses all in the name of the abandoned and innocent inhabitants of Tuzla, Sarajevo, Bihac, Gorzade, Zepa, Srebrenica, Banja Luka and other

towns of Bosnia and Herzegovina — victims of those monstrous crimes against humanity, which are still not punished.

We are calling and asking all who reject the barbarism and inhuman acts that Bosnia and the whole population are subject to, to raise their voices, to defend our lives, to defend the most fundamental human rights.

Let yourself be guided by your own conscience and use all means at your disposal — protests, commemorations, letters, demonstrations, and even observations of a dignified minute's silence!

Do not remain indifferent in the face of our tragedy! Don't be an accessory to the crimes we are the victims of!

This could be our last appeal, because here our life is hanging by a thread. This might be the last chance you have to help us!

We have not lost all hope! We still believe in human conscience, human morality and human rights!

We remind you of the thoughtful message from the Jewish Talmud: 'He who saves one life, it's as if he has saved the whole of humanity!'

The 99 Circle
Sarajevo

We are subscribing to this appeal and ask everybody of good will

to publish it, in the hope that it will move the leaders of the Great Powers, in particular the new French government, whose decisions are of such importance for the future of the inhabitants of Sarajevo and of Tuzla, Bihac, Srebrenica, Gorazde, Zepa...

Francis Jeanson
Sarajevo association
Véronique Nahoun-Grappe
Vukovar-Sarajevo Committee
Bernard Faivre d'Arcier,
Francois Tanguy,
Emmanuel Wallon
Sarajevo, cultural patron of
Europe association
Patrick Varin
Bosnia movement
Claire Lévy-Vroelant

Proclamation of the Tuzla Citizens Forum

THE murder of our children, of our friend's children, of our neighbours and friends by the Chetnik fascists, is a crime in front of which we are breathless, where nothing has sense, where it is only through tears that we can say to ourselves and to the world what we have to say.

Because what can we say to this society that at the end of the 20th century can complacently

watch the slaughtering of young Tuzla people?

What can we say to the UN and to the European Union which put on the same level humanism and morality with that of evil, in the shape of the Serbian fascists?

What can we say to that force which has the international mission to protect Bosnian citizens and which allowed the Serbian fascists to satisfy all their perverted and sadistic passions?

The international community, in tolerating those crimes, has put itself on the same side as the murderers, and has made itself accomplice to those atrocities.

It is impossible for us to forgive the Chetniks' crimes — but it is also impossible, in front of the judgement of history, to forgive all those who have tolerated it, when they had the legal and moral obligation to stop it.

What more can be said to this society? What can we say to the parents, sisters, brothers and to the friends of all those young people slaughtered by the cruel shelling of Tuzla?

This society has nothing more to say to us — our pain and our tears say everything.

Sehic Vehid
Tuzla Citizens Forum president
GP Nada Maldina
Zeljko Ricka
Vice presidents

Advance Notice

THE FUTURE OF MARXISM

A Series of 10 Lectures. Every THURSDAY at 7.30pm, Small Hall, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (Holborn) starting Thursday 5 October. Sponsored by Index Books and Porcupine Press. There will be an extensive bookstall at each lecture.

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The lectures are part of the preparation for a forthcoming conference, The Future of Marxism, sponsored by the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International, to be held in London. Details will be announced soon and will be available at the lectures.

A second series of lectures is being planned for Spring 1996. The historian Raymond Challinor, the translator and Yugoslav specialist Quintin Hoare, and Hillel Ticktin, editor of the journal Critique will be among those giving lectures. Full details of this second programme will be available in October.

Workers Press

The Lecturers

Terry Brotherstone: Teaches history at the University of Aberdeen. Author of *Covenant, Charter and Party: Traditions of Revolt and Protest in Modern Scottish History*. Has co-edited (with Paul Dukes) *The Trotsky Reappraisal* and (with Geoff Pilling) *History, Economic History and the Future of Marxism* (forthcoming). Has also published several articles on the Scottish revolutionary Marxist, John Maclean. Current interests include the impact of 1956 on 'British communism'; the future of 'labour history'; and the Scottish origins of Marxism.

Steve Drury: A geologist teaching earth sciences at the Open University. Interests include use of satellite images in geological mapping and the search for physical resources and the early history of the earth. Author of *A Guide to Remote Sensing, Interpreting Images of the Earth*, currently writing a course for the Open University: *Earth and Life: the Co-evolution of the Planet and Its Life*. Has visited Eritrea several times in connection with research on its geological evolution.

Keith Gibbard: Teaches in the economics department at Manchester Metropolitan University. Specialises in Marxist and classical political economy. Has just completed a chapter on the decline of British capitalism for a forthcoming book, *The Condition of Britain*, Pluto Press, November 1995, and a chapter on the Regulation School for a Festschrift in memory of Tom Kemp, *History, Economic History and the Future of Marxism*.

Bill Hunter: Prominent member of the Trotskyist movement in Britain for over 50 years. A former shop steward in the engineering industry, he has recently written a book on unofficial movements among dockers, *They Knew Why They Fought: Unofficial Struggles and Leadership on the Docks, 1945-1989*. The first volume of his autobiography, *A Lifelong Apprenticeship* is about to be published by Porcupine.

Kofi Klu: Leading member of the African Liberation Solidarity Campaign. Originally from Ghana he spent several years as a student in Moscow where he studied law and economics.

John Lea: Teaches sociology in Middlesex University. He has contributed to several books and written a number of articles on crime. Has co-edited (with Geoff Pilling) a book on Frederick Engels and is currently completing a book, *Crime and Modernity* and is working on a book dealing with capitalism and organised crime.

Branka Magas: Journalist and author specialising in the ex-Yugoslavia. Author of *The Destruction of Yugoslavia, Tracking the Break-up, 1980-1992*, she is a prominent member of the Alliance to Defend Bosnia-Herzegovina.

István Mészáros: Internationally renowned Marxist scholar, formerly Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sussex. Author of countless books and articles which include *Marx's Theory of Alienation, The Necessity for Social Control, Philosophy, Ideology and Social Science: Essays in Negation and Affirmation, and The Power of Ideology*. He is completing a major work *Beyond Capital: Towards a Theory of Transition*, to be published by Merlin towards the end of 1995.

Geoff Pilling: Teaches political economy at Middlesex University. Has written books and articles on Marxist political economy and the history of economics, including *The Crisis of Keynesian Economics: A Marxist View*, and *Marxist Capital Philosophy and Political Economy*. Has co-edited (with John Lea) a book to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the publication of Engels's *Condition of the Working Class in England* which will be published by Pluto in November, 1995. His *A Peculiar Capitalism, or Peculiarly Capitalist?* will appear as a chapter in a forthcoming book in memory of Tom Kemp to be published by Porcupine Press. Member of the editorial committee of Workers Press.

Cliff Slaughter: A leading member of the Trotskyist movement since his break with the Communist Party of Great Britain following the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956. Has written numerous articles in the Trotskyist press. Formerly taught sociology in the Universities of Leeds and Bradford. Author of several books including *Marxism, Ideology and Literature, State, Power and Bureaucracy: A Marxist Critique of Sociological Theories* (with A.J. Dragstedt), *Marxism and the Class Struggle*

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NUT bows to Blair

TGWU
news

BY MIKE COOKE

TEACHERS' leaders are prepared to sacrifice the principle of opposition to Grant Maintained schools to the wishes of Labour, bowing to its leader Tony Blair who has recently opted to send his son to the privileged Brompton Oratory Grant Maintained school.

News of the moves to change National Union of Teachers' policy follows hot on the heels of a ballot result which defeated hopes that teachers would take strike action to oppose the threatened increases in class sizes through funding cuts.

The 1,000 Grant Maintained, or 'opted out', schools are part of the Tory government's drive to privatise education and create privileged sectors for the 'Middle England' that Blair wants to make his own. 'Opted out' schools are funded separately from local education authorities (LEAs).

GM schools receive better funding than other state schools, with transitional grants, more favourable capital allowances and the funds released by not requiring specialist LEA support, said the 'Guardian' (13 June).

The NUT leadership justifies dropping opposition on the basis

of a survey of members in 'opted out' schools. When schools opted out many teachers who opposed the move would leave and find work in schools that were funded by LEAs.

Funnily enough, the survey was carried out for the NUT by the firm Coopers and Lybrand — the same company that the government employed to study the implications of Local Management of Schools.

Not surprisingly the survey found that among NUT members in GM schools 'they are popular and effective in releasing extra resources for teaching and equipment' ('Guardian', 3 June).

Better

[I]n primary schools teachers had more time to teach and prepare lessons, while in secondary schools they had better equipment.

The NUT bureaucracy having set up a survey to give the required result, general secretary Doug McAvoy expressed amazement when they got what they wanted. The survey result would 'come as a shock to both the members and the executive of the NUT', he said.

McAvoy maintained that GM schools would be OK if only

Labour would increase funding for LEA schools, bringing them in line with the 'opted out' variety. When asked politely Labour will say: no chance!

This survey and the ballot on class-size strike action reflect the gowing tendency of the NUT bureaucracy to concentrate its powers in the 'leader', general secretary Doug McAvoy.

In the ballot only a third of the members voted: 66,000 against strike action and 16,000 for.

The 'information' sent out to members in three national mailouts about the issue all argued against action — saying it would alienate parents and others and, finally, that a yes vote was virtually against the law as the dispute was not with the government! Bringing in the law at the last stage to ensure victory for the bureaucracy shows how uncertain it is of its ability to deliver the results it wants.

The union bureaucracy used between £100,000 and £200,000 to send out its propaganda to stop the strike call from the NUT's annual delegate conference at Easter. This money to stop the strike, in opposition to the conference's and, therefore, the union's own policy, came out of the strike fund!

In the old days, the rightwing

in the union used to attack the left, but now the rightwing is having to attack the union itself, Waltham Forest NUT secretary Ron Haycock told Workers Press. Haycock moved the motion at the conference calling for the strike ballot.

Attacked

McAvoy has attacked the union and ignored the executive. While the executive wouldn't support strike action on class sizes, it also didn't oppose it: a neutral position.

Bradford NUT secretary and executive member Ian Murch confirmed to BBC radio news (13 June) that the executive was not part of the moves by the NUT leadership to end opposition to GM schools. According to Murch the issue has not even been discussed on the executive.

Haycock said to Workers Press: 'McAvoy and Co. want to change the union structure and rule on the basis of surveys and plebiscites, in effect a Bonapartist dictatorship. They need arbitrary powers to stay on top. McAvoy wants to build a wall to protect himself, but the tide's coming in.'

The union bureaucracy spent hundreds of thousands of pounds to undermine conference policy.

But the objective facts in the classroom remain the same, and despite winning in the strike ballot, the leadership has no policy to offer to deal with those facts.'

This year, underfunding means that 14,000 teaching posts have gone, when the school population is still increasing. Last year, Waltham Forest commissioned three new primary school and said they needed more. The situation is worse in other areas.

'And while this year the base education budget was adjusted to take account of the increase in pupil numbers, it has been frozen for next year. The crisis in education will get worse when this bulge passes from the primary to the secondary sector.'

'We must appeal to parents and trade unionists and say that our leaders have failed us. They have got to come and help save education. We need more solidarity.'

The rising tide of dissatisfaction has been held back by hopes in a coming Labour government. The trade union bureaucracy has set its face against challenging the Tories and it will do the same with Labour.

'But too much has been promised to workers from a Labour government: in health, education and the privatised industries.'

Militant denounce Dromey

MILITANT Labour members in the Transport and General Workers' Union in London and Liverpool have issued a leaflet to make it clear they are not supporting Labour leader Tony Blair's mar the right-wing candidate Jack Dromey, in the election for general secretary.

This was necessary because a group of ex-Militant supporters in Liverpool have been campaigning for Dromey.

The leaflet issued by the TGWU members in the North West says that Dromey's election would a 'backward step for the T&G' and that his failure to commit himself to a figure for a minimum wage shows he cannot be trusted to support union policy.

The leaflet — signed by Lesley Mahmood, who stood for Militant in Walton when Eric Heffer died, and Richard Knight — calls for every T&G member to vote for Bill Morris in the leadership ballot which closed on 16 June.

Sheffield Library strikers lobby union conference

BY DOT GIBSON

SHEFFIELD library strikers were in good spirits at a lobby of the public service union UNISON's annual conference in Brighton on 12 June.

Lesley Coldwell, from the Greenhill library, said the strike remained solid.

'One or two non-union workers and stand-by relief workers have been used by Sheffield council to open an odd one or two, but the rest are closed', she said.

Lesley expalined: 'All we are doing is defending national conditions for the right to Saturday pay. Management talks about "consolidation" of our wages.'

'What they mean is that if we agree to do away with our overtime payments for working on Saturdays and therefore cut our wages by £50-£60 a month, they will consolidate our wages with an extra £20.'

'But it is the principle of the thing Saturday work is working unsocial hours and we are entitled to overtime. The vast majority of library staff are part-time women, and this "consolidation" would mean a wage cut of around 7 per cent.'

'What I can't understand is that it is a Labour council that is pushing Tory values. All we want them to do is to fight for us!

'Keith Crawshaw, Sheffield libraries director, had the cheek to stand on the steps of the Central library and tell us that he is worth every penny of his £50,000 annual salary. We want to know why we aren't worth what we earn.'

Twenty-eight librarians travelled to their union's conference in Brighton in the second week of their strike. The action took place after a meeting when a show of hands clearly indicated the feeling of these workers. In the official ballot 72 per cent voted in favour.

Lesley said: 'We feel that we have a special responsibility. Two years ago we took a wage cut and every council in the country followed with the same action.'

Support

'If we lose this fight the same thing will happen again. We are sending representatives around the country to explain and win support for our strike.'

'Some people say we are being whipped up by political activists — this is not true. I don't agree with, and probably will never join the Socialist Workers Party, but without their help we could not have managed to do so much.'

'We strikers believe in our cause and welcome such support and assistance.'

Donations and messages to: Sheffield UNISON 2, 175 Arundel Gate, Sheffield S1 2LQ.

RMT march against low pay



MUCH APPLAUSE greeted Tony Benn's speech after a march in London last weekend against low pay called by RMT railworkers.

Benn said action would have to be taken about low pay, and declared that it should be supported by the whole trade union movement and the Labour Party and its leadership. What Benn didn't say was that the likelihood of Labour and its leader Tony Blair doing this is zero.

Other speakers at the Friend's Meeting House, Euston, included Jimmy Knapp of the RMT and Ken Cameron, the firefighters' leader.

Photo and story: Alan Clark

London unions call for £7/hour

BY ROY THOMAS

A TARGET for a minimum wage of £7 an hour for a maximum of 36 hours a week, to produce a minimum weekly earning of £252, was agreed by the June meeting of the Greater London Association of Trades Councils. The £7 an hour would apply to all full-time and part-time workers.

The resolution pointed out that the Council of Europe low pay threshold of £221 a week for 37 and a half hours is equal to £5.86 an hour. The Low Pay Unit in Britain sets the minimum at £218.53 a week, equal to £5.53 per hour.

An attempt by a Labour Party supporter to replace the figure of £7 an hour with the £4.15 now up for discussion in the Labour Party and TUC failed to get a seconder.

The mover of the motion said that to earn £250 a week at £4.15 an hour would mean working 60 hours a week. Faced with high unemployment, and many out of work who have very little prospect of a full-time job at a wage they can live on in a civilised and healthy way, the delegate argued that it is time to fix a target for both maximum hours and minimum wages.

The Greater London Trades Councils were reminded that the first London May Day demonstration in 1890 was called around the slogan of a demand for a legal eight-hour day.

The passing of the resolution represents a big step forward in the fight to establish an alternative to the Blairite policy on wages, and must be taken up throughout the trade unions. Millions of workers will see £7 as a positive figure to fight for.

State controls on mentally ill

BY KEN SINGER

NEW RESTRICTIONS will soon apply to certain patients leaving a mental hospital. Care orders will tell people where they have to live, compel them to attend a certain day centre or pursue specific skills and interests.

These are the provisions of a government bill designed to control the movements of, and deny

freedom to, mentally ill people which has gone through the House of Lords and will soon go back to the Commons.

The bill in England is to be called the 'Aftercare under Supervision' bill and in Scotland is to be called 'Community Care Order'.

The law denies the patient the basic right to choose her or his own lifestyle.

If a patient refuses to comply with a community supervision or-

der, he or she would be compulsorily detained in hospital.

The care of the mentally ill is still barbaric and extremely backward. While under capitalism the treatment given to sane people is bad enough, the kind of constraints put upon mentally ill people would only lead to a deterioration in their condition.

Psychiatric hospitals are run under a military-type discipline and are no place to put a person in

a vulnerable state. People who work in the health service and are in the psychiatric part of the NHS, especially nurses, should challenge the authorities about this demise of civil liberties.

In a socialist society people in their communities would take care of the vulnerable as a humanitarian responsibility; under a capitalist system with a state set up to control the majority of the population, this is impossible.

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British section of the Workers International (to Rebuild the Fourth International)

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Inside left

Turn again, Livingstone!

OUR MP Ken Livingstone, who is widely admired one-time WRP secretary Gerry Healy, and says those who expelled him were 'agents', is looking forward to prospects with Tony Blair. Livingstone's bid for the Labour leadership flopped three years ago (he was backed by the 'Sun' 'Socialist Action', but only 13 votes). Now, writing in the 'Guardian', he observes:

Among Labour Party members and trade unionists there are genuine reservations and doubts about the 'Project', as it is called by the Blair-faced young apparatchniks who are in the office of Peter Mandelson to organise the campaign to sack Bill Morris as leader of the TGWU. . . .

Blair is the most right-wing leader Labour has ever had, Livingstone confirms; the Labour leader's comments on single parents and social issues 'are his true beliefs'; 'But I found nothing in the Blair order documents produced by Tony and his team that I disagreed with' ('The right face for the job', 'Guardian', 12 June).

Not a word about repealing anti-union legislation.

We've noted before that, given the chance to defend Clause Four on BBC 4's 'Any Questions', Livingstone was content to say Blair could deliver the unions by promising full employment (29 April). This could be done while leaving the means of production in capitalist hands, he didn't say.

Arguing 'root and branch reform of institutions and a dramatic shift of company profits from dividends to investment', Livingstone is 'optimistic about the prospects for the success of Blair's government'.

After 32 years serving under different Labour leaders on London borough councils, the GLC and LEA. By far the most successful and competent, honest, ideological right-wing Ashley Bramall.

Labour has had too many 'compromisers and wafflers', he concedes, better a 'competent' right-winger. . . .

Blair could yet deliver a Labour government of which socialists could be proud if he is prepared to take on the vested interests of the City. If he does this he will win a place in history. . . . He would rank with Churchill and Attlee as a truly great leader.

When wouldn't he be after a job, by any means?

Your face doesn't fit . . .

AMES Mr Mandelson's team, and disgruntled ex-'Militants' on the sidelines, backing for Jack Jones in the TGWU general secretary election came from the region's Northern Ireland region.

This recalls a row some years ago, after Bill Morris had become secretary. To help the union recruit women, smiling women union members had been photographed for a publicity leaflet.

They were upset when a copy of the leaflet was returned, to find that the faces of the women who happened to be in the picture were not in the picture, while a woman's face had been lightened. The women complained to Bill Morris, who took it up with the union's publicity department, and secured a batch of leaflets for the Northern Ireland region had been altered by request. Regional officer John Freeman survived the row, but not Charlie Droney.

Clause Four and the

On 29 April the Labour Party took the historic decision — demanded by leader Tony Blair and his advisers — to scrap Clause Four. WRP secretary CLIFF SLAUGHTER discusses its impact on the relations between the working class, that party and the trade unions — and the steps that need to be taken by socialists in the workers' movement

Defence from state attacks

NEARLY 100 years ago trade unionists in Britain were compelled to recognise that a political party was necessary to defend themselves — and the Labour Party was formed.

This party was not formed on a socialist programme and was in no way a revolutionary party. Its main purpose was to be a parliamentary party able to protect union organisation and funds from attack by the state — to defend the legal rights of the trade unions.

Today there exist in Britain — as in other capitalist countries — anti-union laws which severely limit the right to strike and to defend fellow workers and which empower the forces of law to confiscate union funds. Furthermore the strikes of miners, printworkers and others from 1984 onwards showed that the ruling class is prepared to use physical force on a massive scale, inflicting death and serious injury on workers defending their jobs and conditions.

And yet there is no political party to fight to defeat those laws, and to ensure the independence of the trade unions, the basic defence organisations of the working class. The Labour Party, founded and built in order to do this, does not and will not oppose or repeal the anti-union laws. A Labour government will use these laws against workers and their unions.

The Labour Party leadership seeks to have the working-class mass vote and, for the time being, to collect donations from the unions. But ultimately, it proposes to be completely outside any ties to the unions which subject it to any pressure or control by the working class. The abolition of Clause Four, on 'common ownership', seals this process of complete and open commitment of the Labour Party to capitalism.

This is the reality today — and a

very dangerous one at that. Political decisions are necessary. The workers and their unions need more than ever their own political party.

The great problems facing the working class — above all, mass structural unemployment, the destruction of educational and health provision, and the growing danger of world trade war and military conflict — cannot be solved within the capitalist order to which the Labour Party is irrevocably committed. Indeed, it is for that very reason that the trade unions have everywhere come under state attack.

The system can no longer afford independent trade unions. For the same reason, the system cannot afford to have, in the constitution of the main party which the working class votes for, a Clause which calls for a socialist solution — 'common ownership of the means of production'.

What has happened, with Clause Four and the determined campaign by Blair, following Kinnock, to separate the Labour Party as a parliamentary party — a 'national party of government' — from the trade unions, is not by any means entirely new.

Dangers unless socialists act

Trotsky warned, over 50 years ago, that the international working class must confront a danger:

Either the trade unions would tend more and more to be incorporated into the state and the great monopolies and trusts — today the multinational corporations — which it serves

Or the trade unions must cease to be purely defensive organisations and become organisations which play their part in the struggle to overthrow capitalism.

Today in Britain, this can be stated in clear everyday terms: the working class and its trade unions

will come under attack from the state, whichever party wins the next general election.

Today, the working class will be without any political leadership, any political party of its own, and will be in danger of major historic defeats, unless a significant number of workers, socialists, decide to act now to form an alternative party.

This alternative party must have the aim of socialism and working-class power. It must be a party which is not enslaved to the myth that politics means only parliamentary politics. And it must be a party which organises the self-activity of the working class at every level.

A matter for all workers

It would therefore be a grave error to think that the dispute about Clause Four was a matter for Labour Party activists and constituency meetings.

As Workers Press has argued from the start, the attack on Clause Four is a matter for the whole working class.

Blair is, at least, very clear on one thing: for him, and all the middle-class 'spin doctors', Labour careerists and ex-Stalinist liberals who support him, the working class does not need its own party. Indeed, for them, it no longer really exists as a class, it is simply a few million units of voting-fodder.

But the working class faces critical dangers if the attack on common ownership is allowed to succeed without a real fight. There must be the widest discussion and the most urgent reorganisation of the working-class movement politically, against the organised group of capitalist political agents led by Blair.

These words will be condemned as 'old-fashioned' and outdated, but they are precise definitions of the forces which are in contention and the issues which are at stake.

It cannot be said too often: Blair's attack on Clause Four has raised the great question: WHAT KIND OF PARTY DOES THE WORKING CLASS NEED? More important: the question must be answered!

Surely 100 years of history (and powerful history at that) has given one answer to the question:

The Labour Party, a parliamentary party tied to capitalism with socialist words in its constitution, has proved not to be the answer!

It has proved to be a party which nurtured in its bosom pro-capitalist leaders and careerists who abandon the working class. We have to start again; we have to reconstruct the working-class movement. And the Stalinist movement, so often thought to be the alternative to the Labour Party, has proved also to be treacherous, and has collapsed.

Long-running political battle

In the trade unions, a momentous political battle has in fact been going on for years. Ruling-class agencies, like MI5, MI6 and the CIA, have for many years been working in the trade unions in Britain and every other country.

The notorious infiltration of the National Union of Mineworkers before and during the miners' strike of 1984-85 was by no means the first example.

Not only the sinister state intelligence services were involved. A so-called 'democratic' union organisation (the 'Union of Democratic Mineworkers') was set up and financed, as the other arm of the operation to smash the NUM.

(When the miners in Russia and the Ukraine moved to set up their own independent unions after the collapse of the Stalinist regime, who should turn up on their Congress platform but Neil Greatorex, of the UDM!)

This international capitalist op-



The strikes of miners and others from 1984 onwards showed that the ruling class is prepared to use physical force on a massive scale, inflicting death

future of the trade unions

eration to smash real trade unionism has been going on at least since the end of World War II (1945). The CIA has operated through — and produced funds for — the so-called International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU).

Nobody was surprised this year when Bill Jordan — who together with Gavin Laird had led the right-wing takeover of the AEEU engineers' union — took up secretaryship of the ICFTU.

It is in the light of this history, and the Blair campaign to scrap Clause Four, that we should view the latest development in the Transport and General Workers' Union — until recently Britain's biggest union and now the second largest after the merger that formed the public service union UNISON.

'Fifth Column' in the TGWU

It was undoubtedly a cause of great concern to Blair, and to the ruling-class forces behind him, that the TGWU delegation at the 29 April special Labour Party conference that scrapped Clause Four voted against the Labour leader for the retention of the old clause — for common ownership!

Almost immediately afterwards it was announced that Jack Dromey was to stand for election as TGWU general secretary against Bill Morris. Blair and the right-wing forces behind Dromey decided on this course *despite* the fact that Morris had wanted to compromise with Blair, but had been outvoted by his executive and then by his 29 April conference delegates.

Everyone understands that Dromey is married to Harriet Harman MP, a close collaborator with Blair who will probably be responsible for 'employment' in the next Labour government.

Politically speaking, Dromey represents Blair and the future Labour government's 'Fifth Column' in the trade unions. If anyone doubted that the campaign to get rid of Clause Four concerned the whole working

class, then this decision to put up Dromey should surely convince them!

We can be sure, learning from this experience, that there will be a long-term political campaign inside the unions. A campaign *not only* to remove what Blair regards as the 'stigma' of trade union domination of the Labour Party, but to consolidate right-wing reaction in the unions — to assure compliance of the trade unions with the state under a Labour government, and *all* future governments, Tory, Labour or a 'National' coalition.

Reactionary aims

The first lesson to absorb is that the rightwing — the capitalist class itself and its contingents in the labour movement — is *organised politically* against the working class.

Its aims are so reactionary that it cannot tolerate even Bill Morris and his like, if they are unable to resist pressure from the ranks. They want a result in the TGWU like they got long ago in the electricians' union, the ETU, and, later, the engineers' union, the AEU.

And — while joining with Morris to resist the right-wing challenge of Dromey, Harman and Blair — we have to understand also that Morris's politics *cannot* defeat the forces behind Dromey. A struggle for independent socialist leadership is necessary in the TGWU and all unions, mobilising the ordinary rank-and-file and all its fighting capacity and organisational activity.

The miners', printers' and dockers' strikes showed the way to all the working-class movement: a way must be found to bring the working class as a class into united action to support any section in struggle. This means, above all, fighting to bring together in one party, cutting across union and sectional divisions, *all* those who understand now the necessity to unite and build a new leadership against the established trade union bureaucracy — against Blair and the 'New Clause Four' brigade.

A new political party has to be organised, and it is *urgent*. The alternative is to leave the working class politically disarmed in face of the capitalist offensive, under a Tory and then a Labour government.

That is why every trade unionist should support the initiative to call together all who will declare for 'trade unionists for a socialist party'.

How not to proceed

It is perhaps fitting to end with a lesson on how *not* to proceed after the 29 April removal of Clause Four: on 30 April I attended a London meeting of the Clause Four Defence Campaign, which was instructive, to put it mildly.

It began with an attempt by the chair and the organisers — from the sectarian 'Socialist Outlook' and 'Socialist Organiser' groups — to remove me from the meeting on the grounds that I am not a member of the Labour Party. This attempt failed, for the simple reason that I refused to leave and nobody moved to put me out.

In other words, in practice, these sectarians believe that Clause Four and its defence are the concern only of Labour Party members. The chairman then explained that the previous day's victory of Blair on Clause Four was 'purely arithmetical'.

There were many speakers in the discussion who are leading members



Funeral of Harold Wilson, 6 June: Behind Blair's inane smile and honeyed phrases is the iron fist of destruction

of the sectarian groups ('Socialist Outlook', 'Socialist Organiser'). Not one of them challenged this ostrich-like verdict.

It was only Patrick Sikorski of the transport workers' union, the RMT, who insisted on the *historical* nature of the whole anti-Clause Four, anti-union, 'one-man-one-vote' attack from the right. Sikorski also insisted very firmly that to make exclusions from the necessary discussion was fatal.

The organisers proposed a conference in Birmingham to follow up the 'Defend Clause Four' campaign, but produced a draft programme of demands for the conference that made no mention of Clause Four!

The chair asked for amendments, but when one speaker proposed to amend the draft simply by adding 'reinstate Clause Four' the discussion was closed and the amendment not put!

This was not a procedural matter but a clear expression of the real line of the organisers. With all sorts of lame excuses like 'the Labour Party members are tired of the argument over Clause Four', they *accept* Blair's victory.

On this basis they mislead all those who thought they were in a fight for socialist principles against Blair, and with their programme of justice, equality and various reforms they propose to continue in Blair's 'new Labour Party' as before. Effectively their programme is 'implement the new Clause Four'. A classic example of how sectarians turn out to be 'shamefaced opportunists'.

In the discussion now begun in the working-class movement — on *what kind of party does the working class need?* — these sectarian groups are playing a reactionary role. It is a continuation of the conservatism of the 'Socialist Outlook' group in the 1992-93 struggle over pit closures, when they worked to restrict the movement to set 'structures', as they called them — they did the same in Workers Aid for Bosnia, in the end preferring a split and breakaway.

Other groups such as 'Socialist Organiser' and the Socialist Workers

Party refused any part in the solidarity movement for Bosnia, putting their nice clean noses in the air as 'pure internationalists', who could not possibly support a struggle for national independence.

The various ex-Communist Party groups and the so-called Revolutionary Communist Party considered it necessary to defend . . . the Milosevic regime in Serbia!

The 'theoretical' justification given for the opportunist line of the sectarians — some of them call themselves 'Trotskyists', which is enough to make Trotsky turn in his grave — was explained in the April issue of 'Liberty' by Sean Matgamna of 'Socialist Organiser'.

Matgamna reminded us that Lenin referred to the forming of the Labour Party in 1906 as 'the first faltering steps of the British working class' to political independence. And somehow Matgamna thinks that these words from the beginning of the century are a talisman for his own opportunism at the century's end!

He chooses to ignore the fact — explained at the beginning of the present article — that the working class today confronts a Labour Party whose leadership is, more rapidly and farther than ever before, going *away* from any possibility of political independence for the working class. To quote Lenin in order to conceal this historic change is, truly, opportunism of the worst kind.

Weakness of the ruling class

The ruling class, represented by Blair, proceeds not from strength but from weakness, crisis. Since 1906 it has been able to use the Labour Party and parliamentary politics to tie the working class, even most of the socialists in that class, to the national-parliamentary framework.

Because capitalism's crisis prevents any further 'management' of the economy through reforms, this

form of rule must change. The problems of society, above all the working class and its inevitable struggles, can no longer be contained in the old way.

Behind Blair's inane smile and honeyed phrases is the iron fist of destruction of democratic rights and elementary social welfare provision.

Opening for new party

The working class needs its own party, a new party — a party which bases its programme on this historical understanding.

The crisis of the ruling class, and the way it is compelled to ditch the old form of rule through the Labour Party and TUC reformists, at the same time makes an *opening* for socialist politics.

The ruling class cannot effect a smooth and rapid transition to new forms of rule. To do this they must undertake a whole series of attacks in which they can inflict major defeats on the working class. This they have not done!

But the essential central preparation to stop them — and in so doing reconstruct the working-class movement on new foundations — is to begin the work now for the formation of a new, socialist party.

There is no time to lose. We must begin now the widest discussion throughout the working-class movement on *what kind of party* the working class needs.

Trade unionists, those in struggle to defend the communities, those organising to fight racism, the unemployed and Labour Party members who are for a socialist party, have the responsibility to organise this discussion and work towards unity of all their struggles around this aim.

The WRP's work is directed to this end. Let us make the TUC and Labour Party conferences the focus of mass lobbies and demonstrations. We must put the fight for a new party at the centre of working-class politics.



and serious injury on workers

Return of the chain-gang

THERE's been surprisingly little comment on this side of the Atlantic about Alabama's recent decision to bring back the chain-gang for convicts.

British journalists seem to find this turning back of the clock 30 or 40 years too embarrassing for words, especially at a time when the directive from on high is clearly to play up American deeds of derring-do.

And it has to be admitted that a young pilot surviving for a few days on insects and rainwater, then dramatically rescued by 'crack' troops, makes better 'copy' for world imperialism's publicists than the grim sight of Alabama prisoners shuffling along, chained leg to leg, in those degrading medieval shackles.

For one thing, it enables President Clinton to say what magnificent armed forces he is commander-in-chief of, thus palliating to some extent the decidedly unimpressive humiliations of Vietnam and Somalia.

Is Clinton's place in that great myth called American history now assured? That seemed uppermost in his mind when, in a revealing aside to Hollywood, he forecast: 'This incredible odyssey... I'm sure some day will be a very great movie.'

With a fat part, no doubt, for some lucky actor playing the president.

BUT let's return to the Deep South, and the clank-clank of those 'cold iron shackles', as one protest song recorded by Lawrence Gellert in the 1930s called them.

Who says there's no such thing as progress? The bad old days may be back, but they're back on a new, higher level. For the Alabama chain-gangs are now integrated, with black and white prisoners chained together.

Even so, the chain-gang sym-



A chain-gang of Georgia convicts

bolises, as nothing else could possibly do, the wretchedness and hopelessness of life in the Deep South for the majority of those who lived there both before and after the US Civil War of 1861-65.

The chain-gang was — and is — a most potent reminder of slavery. In Georgia women and children as well as men were sentenced to road-mending on the chain-gang in the city streets, and Gertrude 'Ma' Rainey sang about it in her 'Chain Gang Blues' (1926):

*Many days of sorrow, many nights of woe
And a ball and chain, everywhere I go.
It was early this morning that I had my trial,
Ninety days on the county road, and the judge didn't even smile.*

Not merely the chains, but the biting whip in the hands of brutal guards; the savage dogs that hunted down those who managed to escape; the daily hell of working in the blazing sun from 'can' to 'can't', from first light to dusk; the meagre and often contaminated food; the striped institutional garb; everything about the chain-gang system spoke of a systematic attempt to crush the human spirit.

And that is its message today

PERSONAL COLUMN

when, in one state at least, it is central to the American right's barbaric penal policy.

Leadbelly's story

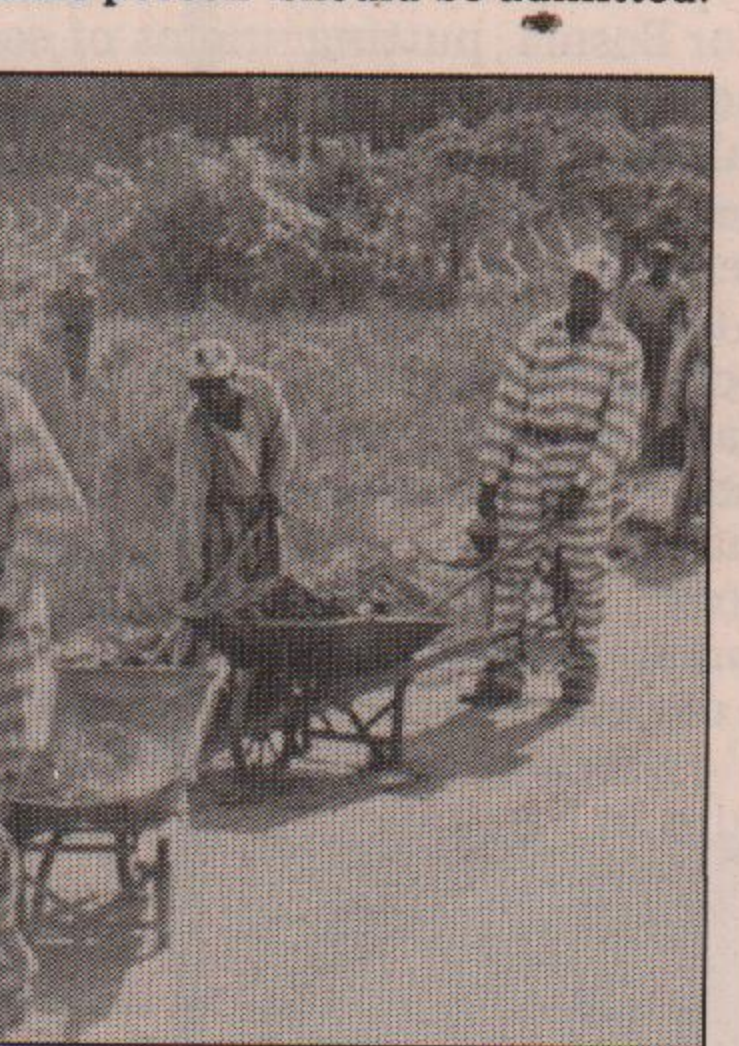
AS IT happens, I've just been reading a biography of a great African-American musician who had personal experience of the chain-gang in Texas and Louisiana penitentiaries.

Huddie Ledbetter, generally known as Leadbelly, spent 12 years in those hell-holes. He was freed, so legend has it, by singing his appeal to a state governor and getting support from John Lomax, who was going around recording traditional songs for the Library of Congress.

The full story, as told in 'The Life and Legend of Leadbelly' by Charles Wolfe and Kip Lornell (Secker & Warburg, 1993), is much more complex: Leadbelly wasn't freed overnight and in fact had more or less served out his time when his release was ordered.

The Wolfe-Lornell biography puts in the shade its only predecessor, 'The Midnight Special: The Legend of Leadbelly' (1971) by R.M. Garvin and E.G. Addeo, a sensationalist work of 'faction' by two science-fiction writers who were more interested in their subject's sex life than his music.

Wolfe and Lornell are good on the cynical attempts by the US Stalinists in the late 1930s to 'politicise' Leadbelly and cash in on his popularity; and on the reaction of an 'arrogant society woman' who, when Leadbelly turned up to perform at a 'swank wedding party', loudly proclaimed that 'no such disreputable person' should be admitted.



They give details of the deal which John Lomax and his son Alan concluded with Leadbelly, whereby the Lomaxes pocketed two-thirds of the profits from his concerts, leaving the artist himself with one-third.

By Lomax's normal standards, that was pretty generous. In 1940 he persuaded the Georgia blues singer Blind Willie McTell to record 14 songs for him in an Atlanta hotel room, and paid him the princely sum of one dollar plus his taxi fare.

Even that exceeded what the Mississippi blues singer Son House received in payment for the invaluable historic recordings he did for the Library of Congress a year or two later: one bottle of Coca-Cola — 'but it was good and cold', the singer said afterwards.

John Lomax's autobiography, 'Adventures of a Ballad Hunter' (New York, 1947), in which Leadbelly appears under the transparent pseudonym 'Iron Head', reveals the writer's deeply ingrained Deep South racism, cloaked in sentimental regard for a black friend he had as a boy.

Peter Fryer

Our regular reviewer TOM OWEN writes a commentary on the question of art raised by a recent letter to Workers Press, and discusses how Marxists view art, culture and politics

The question of art

ROGER HORROCKS (Letters, 15 April) raises some important issues which I would like to be debated at the broadest level.

He objects to a number of positions he believes I hold, and I hope I am not putting words into his mouth if I summarise his objections as follows:

First, from reading my reviews, especially the one on the film 'Interview with the Vampire' (25 February), he concludes: that I am dismissive of 'popular' culture and am only seriously interested in 'high art'; that I am dressing up as Marxist the former orthodoxy of University English literary criticism, methods and outlooks associated with F.R. Leavis; that, in short, my concerns are elitist.

Second, Roger is disturbed by the suggestion that working-class young people may be trapped temporarily in a spectacle of their own alienation. This suggests to him that I suffer from 'mind-boggling... fatalism', denying any possibility of creative autonomy in the period of capitalist decay.

The second issue appears to me the more crucial since it deals with the sum total of human culture and practice.

Capitalism has unleashed enormous productive and creative forces: large-scale socialisation of the productive forces, science, mass-communication systems and mass literacy.

But under the system of private ownership of these forces it has visited the planet with an unprecedented barbarism, with periodic destruction of the productive forces, including the working class, through fascism and war.

The characterisation of this period as one where there is a stark choice between barbarism and socialism is extended to all forms of cultural practice, whether this involves what we now for convenience regard as 'popular', 'folk', or 'high' culture.

Just how artists respond to the contradiction of the epoch is a highly complex issue which will certainly not be resolved by turning art into propaganda.

Marx's concern with art was first to define its human quality in relation to animal species, which only produce what they immediately need for themselves and their young.

They produce one-sidedly, whereas humans produce universally. They produce only under the dominion of immediate physical need, whereas humans produce when they are free from physical need.

Marx goes on to say that animals produce according to the standard of their species, but humans produce according to the standard of all species: man 'knows how to apply everywhere the inherent standard to the object. Man therefore also forms things in accordance with the laws of beauty'.

It is this concern to define the 'human essence', the ability to produce free from physical need, that lies at the heart of Marx's preoccupation with the great art of the past.

He asks, as Cliff Slaughter puts it, 'what was the significance for humanity' of this art 'which surpassed the differences between historical stages, having an absolute character in relation to those stages'.

In other words, what is absolute, an expression of that 'human essence' as opposed to that which is 'relative', constrained and circumscribed by physical, ideological, historical horizons.

This is why Marx wrote about Homer, Aeschylus, Shakespeare and Balzac, not the 'vital' popular culture of the Victorian music-halls.

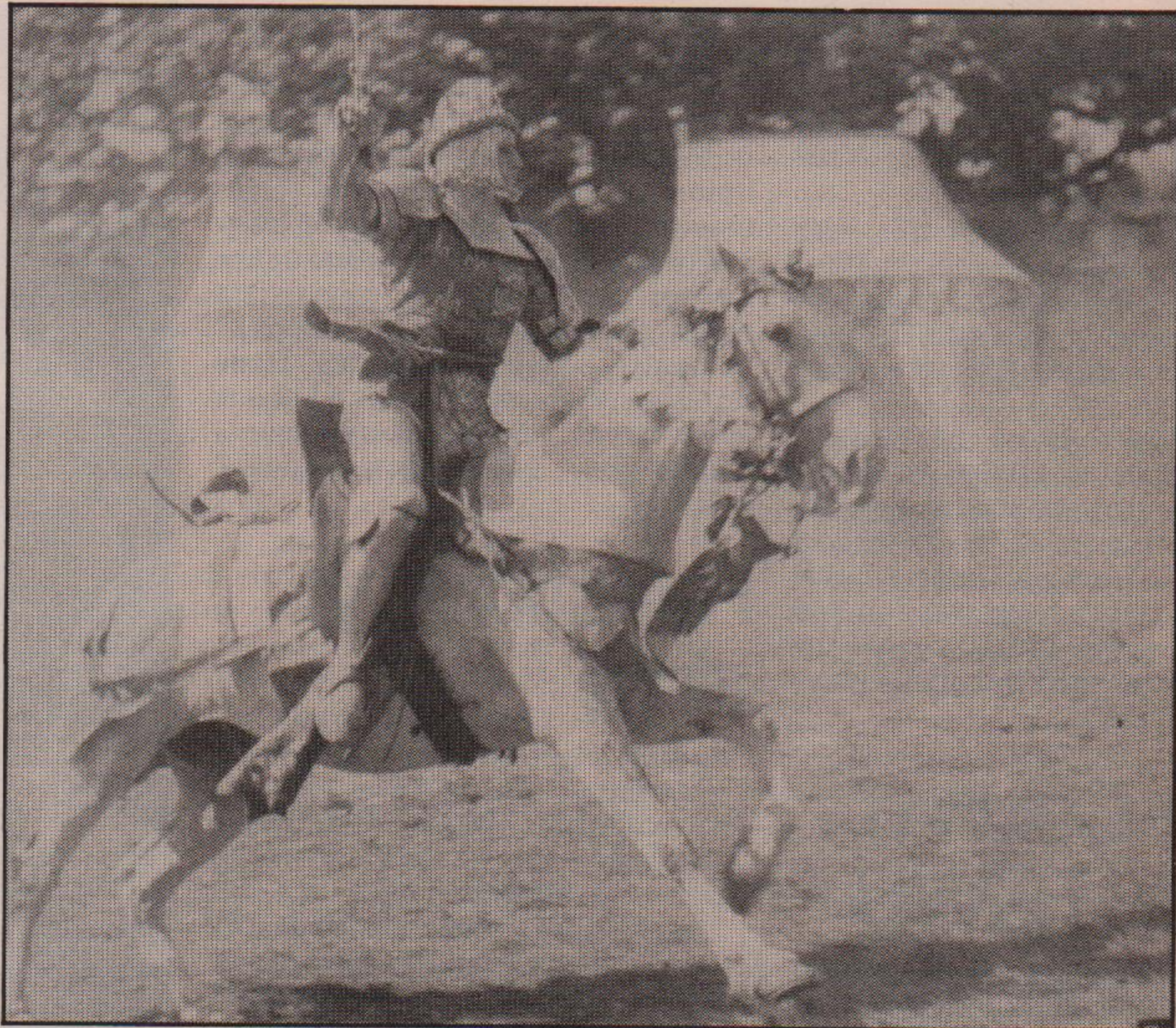
In like manner Trotsky discusses the work of the late-medieval Italian poet Dante in the acrimonious debate with the 'workerist' Na Postu group.

Trotsky's intervention was against the idea that you could build a 'workers' culture', separated from the whole of humanity's conquest, within the boundaries of what was to emerge as 'socialism in one country'.

What both Marx and Trotsky did was seize a moment from the accumulated culture of the past, 'recuperating' it, as it were, at a higher stage of overcoming the alienation of class society in the struggle for a truly human world.

This is a very different practice from the 'high' literary moralism of the Leavisites. Their trouble is not their elitist focus but their claim to realise 'human' values in the cultivation of refined sensibilities, not in the realm of sensuous human practice.

In this way they turn literature into an



Marx's concern was with art as 'human essence'; for the high priests of literary criticism art 'legitimises the meanings given to history by the oppressing class'. Here Lawrence Olivier is Shakespeare's Henry V.

icon and promote themselves as the high priests of literary criticism.

I agree with Roger that their definition of 'culture' is not just exclusive but dangerous. It promotes a literary nationalism, allows art to be used to legitimise 'the meanings given to history by the oppressing class'.

There is no clearer example of this than the way in which the work of the dramatist Shakespeare has been used to create a national myth of the superiority of the English-speaking genius.

Walter Benjamin describes the 'cultural treasures' as spoils which the victors of history carry over the prostrate; reminds us that 'there is no document of civilisation which is not at the same time a document of barbarism'; and suggests that 'a historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as far as possible'.

Surely this is the source of the 'horror' that lies at the heart of all genuine contemporary artistic endeavour whatever the form, 'status', or genre it aspires to.

Does this imply the profound pessimism that Roger refers to, a kind of 'pessimism of the intellect and optimism of the will' in relation to artistic autonomy?

I do not believe so, as long as we have a sense of proportion in the way that art and politics relate to each other.

Marx revealed how under the economic relation of worker and capitalist 'labour loses all the characteristics of art'; unlike the medieval craftsman, the modern worker is indifferent to the material he or she works with, but at the same time — because of the abstract nature of their labour — workers are brought together to confront capital and lay the basis for social revolution and a leap in the productive forces.

This has, I believe, deep implications for contemporary art. The availability of not only the work of the past, but also of a variety of contemporary expression and the means of producing 'artefacts' and

'There is no way in which we can prescribe or predict how artists will contribute to the overcoming of capitalist alienation.'

images, is historically unparalleled.

It is not just the increasing technical sophistication of the capitalist 'mass media' that marks out its difference from the traditional art forms.

The means of production are increasingly socialised. The production of a novel, an easel painting, or a concerto meant intense individual labour, limited means, and a limited audience. The production of a 'pop song' involves the resources of high technology, socialised production, and a mass audience.

This means that the workers producing the material thing — a tape or a CD, for example — are indifferent to it. They can only demonstrate an interest in it as a commodity which they may feel they need.

The other contradiction is that as all forms of art are brought closer to the masses by reproduction, recording, film,

video, etc., 'consumption' becomes more privatised. You can have an 'old master' print in your home, symphonies and blues artists on tape, and so on. You do not need to visit a gallery or attend a concert or a live performance.

It is the entry of the masses onto the scene of contemporary history, led by the working class, that has changed not only politics but culture. The new secular art forms have to stand in relation to the new masses.

Of course, one option for artists is withdrawal into either neurosis or formal technique. The other is to engage with the fact that all forms of life and experience can be represented with increasing speed and sophistication.

Even the most barbaric experience of capitalist existence can be presented, as Benjamin puts it, 'by handling it in a modish and technically perfect way'. This 'modishness' is one of the ways in which capitalism constantly produces false needs.

This is what the 'entertainment industry' does all the time with its marketing of styles, its 'targeting' of 'client groups'.

It ransacks cultural forms, reconstitutes them as commodities, and exhausts them. You have only to look at the way that unique popular culture of jazz and blues has been ripped off by record companies and, unfortunately, many white British and American rock musicians.

The way the masses enter into the political and cultural process is contradictory. Benjamin, writing about the extreme form of capitalist dictatorship, said that fascism offers the masses the opportunity of expression without challenging the ownership of the means of production. It aestheticises politics and puts a gloss on alienated forms of being.

I believe that a very advanced form of this process is taking place in the commercial culture which passes itself off as 'popular'.

There is a difference between something being popular and being a product of 'the people'. There is also a difference between 'expression' and autonomous creativity. For example, those young people who go to dance clubs to express themselves can get caught up in a culture of crime, drugs and sexual exploitation. Those who have rejected this find themselves in a struggle against the Criminal Justice Bill and become involved in a range of libertarian issues.

There is no way in which we can prescribe or predict how artists will contribute to the overcoming of capitalist alienation.

There is a need for realism rather than pessimism. The new media are not monolithic organisations. They are riven by contradiction. The Stalinists can no longer impose their phoney 'realism' as a cultural discipline to police revolutionary creativity.

Marxist theory now has the opportunity to break new ground, to open up a new range of possibilities which can overcome that distinction between 'high' and 'popular' culture, which Roger objected to.

Drugs, dirty money and capitalism

The growing connections between organised crime and 'legitimate' capitalism are investigated by NICK LEE

IN RECENT weeks violent and organised crime has figured frequently in the news. The shooting of David Ungi in the Liverpool suburb of Toxteth on 1 May in a dispute over gang territorial rights put the spotlight on guns and gang war in the North West.

The 'Observer' (28 May) quoted a Liverpool detective: 'It is a sad fact of life that whereas 20 years ago people could sort out their differences with a fist fight now they are using firearms.'

Guns are indeed more widely available — and used — in the UK. This is mainly due to the open trade from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Growing use of firearms, and the increased availability of sophisticated automatic weapons, are usually associated with the drugs trade.

However, the connection is more complex. Two weeks earlier the 'Observer' (14 May) itself carried a report on neighbouring Manchester that showed serious woundings and robberies involving firearms had fallen since the same time in 1994 as a result of a truce between drugs gangs and an agreement to divide up territory.

Such agreements are of course extremely fragile, not least because it is usually the lower-level street dealers who are most likely to use guns rather than the big-time professional drugs importers — for whom too much violence is bad for business.

This, and other features of the growing drugs trade, are documented in a recently published book, 'Eurodrugs', by Vincenzo Ruggiero and Nigel South, a fascinating study of drug markets and organised crime in London and in the Italian city of Turin.

According to Ruggiero and South, 'The development of the drug business in both Turin and London has been accompanied by shifts away from independent activity and small-scale, locally networking, groups towards a market that is increasingly dominated by many competing but more organised firms... increasingly the market involves straightforward economic relationships, the manipulation of "wage dependence" as well as drugs dependence, and hierarchical divisions of labour and authority.'

In other words the trade in illegal drugs is taking on all the characteristics of more established legal capitalist business, with distinct divisions between capitalist investors, professional technicians, and a growing inner-city unskilled labour force.

This criminal 'proletariat' is engaged in two types of work: low-level street dealing of small amounts of drugs, and providing the labour force for drug smuggling.

The latter group are the couriers or 'mules', often women from impoverished countries who are forced to bring in the cargo, frequently by swallowing it in condoms. Many couriers arrested on entry into the UK come from Nigeria.

They are recruited when they go to money-lenders to borrow the fare to London. They are offered free tickets in return for smuggling. Poverty drives them into this brutal form of exploitation, which often ends in death or imprisonment.

Research by sociologist Penny Green in 1991 showed that 72 per cent of those imprisoned for illegal importation of drugs were foreign nationals, of whom a third were Nigerians.

Liberals tend to see the drugs trade, the vast profits it makes for the criminal underworld, and the exploitation of both consumers and its own labour force, as all a ghastly mistake. If only drugs were legalised they could be properly regulated and sold.

This is wishful thinking and ignores the fact that the methods of organised crime are only exaggerated forms of the behaviour of legal business.

How could the pharmaceutical industry be trusted to sell 'harmless' forms of heroin and cocaine when it regularly falsifies test results on legal drugs to cover evidence of deadly side-effects?

Decay

The real issue is that capitalism, as a system in decay and crisis, is turning to increasingly lethal forms of profit-making — the destruction of human bodies with drugs, the pollution of the environment, and of the fabric of social life. Some forms of this are legal and others illegal, and increasingly both are tightly connected.

Multinational companies in the race for profit resort increasingly to every trick in the book to avoid environmental protection legislation and costly waste clean-up. Organised crime groups offer their services to dump dangerous toxic waste on public land.

At the other end of the scale small business may invest money in illegal drugs distribution to maintain profit levels. In Italy small firms go to the Mafia for loans at a lower interest rate than

the legal banks offer to them.

Capitalism is engaged in a global struggle to take back all the gains of the working-class movement in the form of trade union and social security rights. Some of this is conducted through the legal system as with the abolition of minimum wage laws and social rights.

In the small business sector the 'illegal system' is becoming increasingly important. A labour force of mainly immigrant workers is supervised by criminal 'heavies' to make sure nobody even thinks of trade union rights.

Capitalism is destroying the fabric of social life, not just in whole communities torn up by 'de-industrialisation' but in entire societies. Organised crime plays its part in this.

In Russia, as the economy and social life continue to deteriorate, the logic of capitalism is to get money out of the country as fast as possible.

The 'European' weekly newspaper reported last week (26 May-1st June): 'A staggering \$1 billion a month is being illegally exported from Russia into foreign bank accounts.'

It is estimated that \$40 million of this has come to British banks from where it is invested in profitable real estate.

Criminal gangs organise this process by setting up phoney import schemes: the money is transferred abroad to pay for 'goods' which never arrive. This is made easy as the Mafia runs a large number of the new Russian private banks.

As the 'European' commented: '[B]eing a bank director is one of the most perilous occupations in the former Soviet Union. Both honest and dishonest bank chiefs are frequently gunned down on the streets of Moscow.'

Illegal currency exports join the vast profits from criminal activities, above all the drugs trade, in what has become known as 'money-laundering', the process whereby the origin of such funds are effectively disguised as they pass through the banking system, or other legal business.

The term originates in a reference to the Chinese laundry through which Al Capone and his mobsters used to pass their profits. Once 'laundered', such money can be used for investment in legal business.

According to Albert Pacey, director of the National Criminal Intelligence Service, an estimated £2.5 billion a year in drugs money alone was being

laundered through legitimate businesses in London ('Guardian', 24 May).

Money-laundering is attractive to the banking system. With such vast amounts of speculative money moving around the globe in response to minute changes in interest rates, an understanding with organised crime, carefully built up through clandestine negotiations, will produce a stable source of funds which are less likely to shoot off somewhere else when interest rates change.

It was not just the notorious Bank of Credit and Commerce International, closed down in 1991, which was into money-laundering as a major activity, it was simply the one that got caught.

'The response to organised crime is usually the call for more police powers and more international "expert" investigative agencies protected from any form of democratic accountability.'

Futility

More intelligent sections of the bourgeois press see the futility of such policy. Commenting on recent US government criticism of Colombia as being 'soft' on the cocaine exporters, the most powerful organised crime syndicates in the world, the 'Economist' (27 May-2 June) pointed out that arrests of powerful criminals are hardly likely to stem the flow of cocaine into the United States because 'any market is driven by demand as well as supply, and... the demand is as strong as ever right there on America's streets, not least those of Washington DC'.

But neither the 'Economist', nor any other bourgeois think-tank has devised a solution to that problem. The fact is that, within capitalism, there is none.

The growing poverty and social breakdown in large American inner cities is not a 'policy mistake' but driven by the endemic global crisis of capitalism.

The call for tougher policing at least appears, to the ruling class, as practical. It is indeed 'practical' in that not only does it act as a diversion from the social devastation caused by capitalism, but it also forms an ideological cover for building up forms of repressive state machinery which can then be turned against the victims of that devastation.

There is no solution to the problem of organised crime, and the conditions that give rise to it, that is not part of the abolition of capitalism. Either we destroy capitalism, or it will destroy us!

Bronwen Handyside reports

Two nations

All-party panic over benefits

LABOUR's Frank Field chairs the cross-party Commons social security committee which warned last week that Britain's spending on benefits had reached record levels and was out of control.

A colossal 700 per cent increase in spending in real terms since 1949-50 shows no sign of slowing down, to the horror of Labour and Tory MPs alike.

About half the households in Britain now contain someone who is getting one of the three most widely used benefits — income support, family credit, or housing benefit.

The committee pointed to several factors fuelling the staggering increase. The number of pensioners has doubled from 5 million in Beveridge's time to 10 million now — and is still rising. The state pension now costs a whopping £25 billion plus a year, and, with a declining birth-rate, there are fewer and fewer people of working age to support each pensioner after the turn of the century.

Unemployment now costs £9 billion a year, and the number of single parents has mushroomed from 870,000 in 1979 to 1.3 million in 1991 — one million of these are claiming benefit.

Despite much beating of breasts, the Tory government has not been prepared to take on working-class or middle-class reaction to the wholesale slashing of benefits. Not only has expenditure relentlessly increased since the founding of the Welfare State, it has risen particularly quickly since 1979, in spite of Tory efforts to cut back. It now accounts for nearly one-third of spending by the present government. Since 1993, when the arch-Thatcherite Peter Lilley was in charge of the department, the budget has soared from £74 billion to £85 billion this year.

'As soon as you pay out a benefit, people expect it as an entitlement,' the social security agency complained.

Frank Field's committee concluded that means-tested benefits have discouraged the seeking of work; that benefit policies had encouraged fraud and in some cases 'large-scale criminal activity'. Field called for tough action against shirkers and moonlighters, and a return to some kind of 'insurance-based' system which would greatly reduce the proportion of welfare spending available as non-contributory benefit.

In other words, if you do not pay for your benefits yourself (if of course you are one of those lucky enough to be in work), you will not get them.

Word is that Blair is contemplating Frank Field's elevation to the Cabinet after a Labour win in the next election.

Who is paying for whom?

THE connection between Tory policies on privatisation, attacks on the unions, rejection of a minimum living wage and the current payment of £2.4 billion a year in benefits to top up the miserable wages of thousands of low-paid workers was not part of the commons committee's report.

The omission probably bears some relation to the new model Labour party's not-dissimilar policies on not-dissimilar issues.

also being paid out to an ever increasing army of casual, temporary and agency workers while they are between jobs.

The state is in fact now subsidising employers' profits through such benefit payments.

A recent report from the Equal Opportunities Commission on the effects of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (back door privatisation) in local councils showed that the cost of unemployment resulting from CCT is just 39 local authorities was £41.2 million, compared with savings by the councils of £16.5 million.

Harriet Harman, shadow employment secretary, while criticising present levels of low pay and pointing out the cost to the taxpayer, refuses to set a pre-election figure for a minimum wage. She has now withdrawn Labour's former commitment to level of half male median earnings (£5 an hour). She is the other half of Jack Dromey, aspirant to the general secretaryship of the Transport and General Workers Union, who announced in the 'Sun' last week that class divisions in Britain are a thing of the past.

Shirkers exposed!

WHILE we are discussing Labour's vision of taking a firm hand with parasitical shirkers living the high life on state benefits, let us contemplate the income of the Prince and Princess of Wales, which rose by almost 10 per cent last year.

In 1994, Mr Windsor received an income of £4,467,254 — an increase over 1993 of £385,000.

He will pay £1 million in tax (the second time he has paid in his life), and deduct £2 million for 'official expenses'. That leaves him with £1.5 million in income support, which he will ek out on expenses like private education for his two sons, and an allowance to his wife — among whose necessities is a £160,000 yearly bill for hairdressing.

While inflation has risen by 12.1 per cent over the past three years, and public sector wages by 16.4 per cent, the prince's income has increased by 59 per cent over the same period.

A palace spokeswoman said that it would be wrong to equate the prince's income with recent chief executive pay increases in the privatised industries.

I'm inclined to agree with her — they do at least try to look as if they are working.

Rat invasion

NO, this is not about parliament or the board rooms of the privatised industries — or perhaps it is.

According to a recent report rats occupy 39 per cent more British houses than they did 20 years ago — which means that one in 20 homes are infested.

Increased poverty, together with cutbacks in pest control by the privatised water authorities, are assisting the rat population explosion.

'Water companies profits are increasing, while they are clamping down on rodent control', said Graham Jukes of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health. Sewer baiting is the single most effective control measure.

Rats carry salmonella, toxoplasmosis and Weil's disease. They used to have to beat them off in the Victorian slums as well.

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



Scene outside the City of London offices of the Bank of Commerce and Credit International the day after its collapse in July 1991

France: Lutte Ouvrière calls for workers' party

COMMENT BY VERONIQUE RAKOSE

ON THE EVENING of the first round of the French presidential election Lutte Ouvrière (LO), having gained 5.33 per cent, announced their intention to create a workers' party.

During their campaign, LO stated loudly that those elections would not change anything for the working class.

In different meetings and speeches, LO leader Arlette Laguiller denounced the anti-working-class politics of the previous socialist government.

In her speeches she also condemned the betrayals of the French Communist Party as part of the government between 1981 and 1983.

Anybody could agree with such criticisms! But what did LO propose during its campaign?

According to Laguiller, in a speech she made in a town near Paris, LO did not ask people to vote for the programme of her party.

Instead, they were asked to vote for an 'emergency plan', which calls for a wage increase, better working conditions, better public services... Which, of course, everybody wants!

Line

But now a few weeks after the rightwing Gaullist President Jacques Chirac has been elected, what is the line of LO?

In the 5 May editorial of their paper we read: 'The Communist Party has announced that its 2,600,000 votes [8.8 per cent] could be the base for a real fight of the working class...'

LO then warns Communist Party members not to seek an alliance with the Socialists, but rather, points out its own good showing in the presidential election, and implies the CP should seek unity with them.

'It is to realise this unity, that we need, alongside the Communist Party, a real party that represents the interest of the working class...'

So, LO considers that the Stalinist party represents the interests of the working class, and is therefore prepared to work with a party that has betrayed our class.

LO is officially a 'Trotskyist party' or at least that is what their paper says!

This is a Trotskyist party, which does not defend its own programme but an 'emergency plan'; a party that is ready to collaborate with the Stalinists; a party that does not even mention the Fourth International and the Transitional Programme!

UN lets Chetniks police Sarajevo's food

UNITED NATIONS' forces in Bosnia compounded tragedy and farce last week, letting Serb nationalists besieging Sarajevo take charge of a food convoy bound for the city.

Earlier, on Monday morning, a Bosnian army convoy had defied Serb gunfire to fetch food over a difficult mountain route to the UN mission in the Bosnian capital.

Sarajevo has been under siege by the Serb nationalist forces, Chetniks as they are known, for three years. The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) is supposed to be in Bosnia to ensure humanitarian aid reaches Bosnian civilians.

BY CHARLIE POTTINS
When Bosnian government forces trying to break the siege gained ground, they were attacked by French UNPROFOR forces. But the Bosnian army has re-opened a risky aid route over Mount Igman, using rough-hewn tracks not unlike those which Workers Aid for Bosnia convoys have had to take en route to Tuzla. The Mount Igman route regu-

larly comes under Bosnian Serb-nationalist Chetnik gunfire. Moving at night, the Bosnian lorries can only bring 30 tonnes of food on a run.

UNPROFOR, which has armoured vehicles in the area (other than those the Chetniks have 'borrowed'), refused to provide protection for the Mount Igman route, saying this might provoke the Chetniks!

Instead, after weeks of letting

the Chetniks hold up convoys for the capital, the UN decided to let those besieging the capital take over. An entire convoy — trucks with 200 tonnes of flour, and drivers — was handed over by UNPROFOR to Serb police to deliver.

The indication was that this could be a regular arrangement, handing control of Sarajevo's supplies to nationalist forces which have spent the past three years trying to bomb and starve its citi-

zens — Muslim, Serb, Croat and Jew — into submission.

The so-called 'hostage crisis' ended last week with more imperialist UN troops in Bosnia, more dirty deals made by their governments with the Chetniks. The Bosnian people can rely only on their own forces, and international working-class solidarity.

We must step up the fight to lift the arms embargo, get UN troops out, and workers' aid in!

Profit versus people in Papua

THE Indonesian government is using troops and planes to clear people out of the way so a big mining company can expand its operations in West Papua.

Armed security men employed by Freeport Indonesia, a subsidiary of Freeport Mc Moran Copper and Gold Corp., took part in an attack on demonstrators in Tembagapura.

Freeport has the largest published gold reserves in the world at Mount Grasberg in West Papua. Last year it was granted a new 30-year concession, with the possibility of further ten-year concessions, to expand its area of operations from 10,000 hectares to 2.6 million hectares. Thousands of local tribes-people are to be displaced under the plan.

It was reported a few years ago that less than 15 per cent of Freeport's employees were local people, and that little thought had been given to training Papuans.

A reporter from the paper 'Tifia Irian' described the settlement established for locals in Tembagapura as an 'unhealthy slum area'. It said people had a 14km return journey to fetch clean drinking water, and children had to walk miles to get to school.

'In the middle of the luxury town, the indigenous inhabitants live like beggars and are treated roughly by company people.'

Opposes

The OPM, which opposes Indonesian rule in Papua, claims 1 July as its Independence Day. On 1 July last year, it raised its flag and held meetings in several villages. Indonesian troops and planes moved into the regions, and military check-points were set up to control the population.

At least 15 members of the OPM and 22 civilians were killed in clashes, or were put in deten-

tion, while hundreds of people fled into the forest for safety.

Kelly Kwalik, a leader of the OPM, says six of his relatives disappeared after being interrogated and tortured by the Indonesians.

On Christmas Day, rebels raised the OPM flag in Tembagapura. People going to church stopped to watch the rally.

Indonesian troops and armed Freeport security men appeared and fired into the crowd.

Later troops barged into the church looking for 'suspects'. An officer accused members of the congregation of having given food to rebels, and supporting the flag-raising ceremony. 'Are you Christians or communists?' he barked.

One man who arrived late, and stopped when he saw troops surrounding the church, was shot dead.

Escape

Six Dani tribes-people who had been in church later took the bus back to Timika, but never reached home. Eyewitnesses said they saw a blindfolded man with his hands tied behind his back trying to escape from the bus out of a window.

Over the next few days troops searched a number of villages, and detained 13 people. After torture with electric shocks and razor blades, 12 of the men 'confessed' that they had helped the rebels, while the remaining detainee refused, and was held for further ill-treatment.

The Australian Council for Foreign Aid issued a report in April, naming 16 civilians who had been killed or disappeared, along with six unnamed Dani men, bring the list to 22.

The Indonesian army insisted only one person had been shot, while trying to escape after raising the OPM flag near the Freeport site. The Freeport company claimed its presence had 'benefitted indigenous people', and denied that its security personnel carried guns.

More people have been killed by troops since then. People in the valleys near the Freeport site say company security personnel have been going around telling them

they will have to move out.

The Indonesian army's Trikora regional command announced in April that, in co-operation with the Transmigration Department, the Social Department and Freeport International, it would resettle the Tsinga inhabitants in a 'specially designated area'. Be-

tween 300 and 500 families were to be moved.

A Tsinga leader said: 'If ABRI, the government and the company want to move us, you must also move the mountains, valleys and everything else that is ours, to the new place.'

'Otherwise you might as well

murder the lot of us because we will never agree to move from our ancestral land, the land which is our entire life and on which our survival depends.'

[Information from Tapol, Indonesia Human Rights Campaign, 111 Northwood Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey CR7 8HW.]



OPM warriors in West Papua oppose the rule of the Indonesian government military forces

If I had a hammer . . .

WE'D no idea the photographs we use in Workers Press could be so significant. Allan Hetherington's article on Indonesian repression in East Timor ('East Timor: 20 years of murder by proxy', Workers Press, 3 June) was illustrated by a photo of demonstrators outside British Aerospace protesting military plane sales to Indonesia. Next to the woman with a 'No

Hawks to Indonesia' placard was a determined-looking little girl with one of those blow-up plastic hammers that tots like swinging.

Reports

Now the June issue of 'Tapol', the bulletin of the Indonesia Human Rights Campaign, reports that authorities in Pemalang, Central Java, have issued a de-

creed banning the toys, because they may 'introduce the symbol of communism to children'.

A man was acquitted of taking a hammer to the nose cones of several Hawks during a protest visit to British Aerospace in Lancashire, but we don't think an inflatable plastic hammer was involved. By the way, is anyone making blow-up sickles?

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Bangladesh war echoes in East End

ECHOES of Bangladesh's bitter fight for independence in 1971 have resounded in London's East End this month, with the launch of a campaign to bring three alleged war criminals to justice.

Lutfur Rahman, Abu Syeed and Chowdhury Mueen Uddin were named in a recent Channel 4 Dispatches programme, 'The War Crimes File', which described how religious extremists collaborated with the Pakistani army in 1971, carrying out mass murders.

Fleeing Bangladesh with the Pakistani army, the three went to Saudi Arabia before coming to Britain, says the Centre for Advancing the Spirit of the Liberation Struggle.

Criminals

The point that the Home Office allowed these criminals a safe abode in Britain in spite of their grievous misdeeds is not lost on the Bengali community.

'Maulana' Luthfur Rahman is

imam at the East London Mosque, and due to be succeeded by Abu Sayeed, presently holding an educational post. Choudhury Moinuddin is secretary of the mosque.

A packed and stormy public meeting in Tower Hamlets last week backed the setting up of a Bangladesh Anti-War-Criminal committee, demanding that the three be investigated and brought to justice. There were also calls to stop intimidation of the Bengali community by right-wing funda-

mentalists. Some 3 million Bangladeshis were killed during the war.

The issue is still very much alive because, despite their bloody record, Islamic extremists have crept back as a reactionary force in Bangladesh, terrorising and murdering democratic opponents.

There is also concern about their use of religion as a cover to gain influence among young Bengali Muslims here, who don't know about the war.