

## Political unity and a new working-class socialist party

# REFUGEES IN! TORIES OUT!

## Support grows for sacked Hillingdon cleaners



OVER 1,000 trade unionists and supporters marched through Hillingdon on 17 February in support of 56 sacked Hillingdon hospital workers who are campaigning for reinstatement.

Six months after winning the contract to provide catering, portering, cleaning and sterile supplies services the contractor Pall Mall attempted to impose a massive package of cuts in pay and conditions on its 200-strong workforce.

This was to mean pay cuts of one pound an hour to some of the lowest paid workers in the NHS. Thirty-four staff who refused to accept the cuts were sacked. They were later joined by 22 staff sacked for refusing to accept new terms and conditions.

The strike has received widespread support in the local community as well as the trade union movement. Banners on the march included Hillingdon hospital UNISON, Mersey Dock Workers Shop Stewards Committee, Hillingdon trades council, Hillingdon Hospital Support

Committee and several UNISON branches.

A rally at the end of the march was addressed by Jeremy Corbyn MP, Rodney Bickerstaffe, and Cris Rodgers, leader of Hillingdon council.

A speaker for the hospital workers warmly thanked the Liverpool dockers for coming on the march. She condemned Pall Mall's slave wages, and said they would stay out 'for as long as it takes to get our jobs back'.

A concerted effort is needed to win support for the strike in the labour movement. The women have been on strike now for 18 weeks. They have been on the picket line seven days a week in freezing conditions, facing racist taunts and company intimidation. Nevertheless they have remained solid.

All donations should be sent to: Florence Portugal, UNISON branch secretary, UNISON Office, Hillingdon Hospital, Field Heath Road, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 3NN.

Photo and story: Anton Moctonian  
More details page 6

## THE racist Asylum and Immigration Bill CAN be defeated!

Above all, this must be the message from today's national demonstration in London. The Tories' legal attack on those seeking asylum from imprisonment, torture and assassination has provoked a huge resistance as already seen in the powerful marches and lobbies of parliament.

It is essential, not only that all the different forms of protest continue, but that they are developed in such a way as to make fighting links with all those in conflict with this hated Tory regime.

There must be no attempts to limit the forms of struggle. Connections must be made with the unemployed, the homeless, those suffering from cuts to social and public services, black and Asian youth suffering the racist violence of the police, and, above all, those vanguard workers currently on long, bitter strikes, such as the Liverpool dockers and the Hillingdon cleaners.

The Liverpool dockers have already given heart to all asylum seekers by passing a vote of opposition to the Asylum and Immigration Bill at one of their mass meetings.

This is a reflection of the deep revulsion against this bill. Scores of campaigning groups have sprung up around Britain and many of these have linked up with existing anti-deportation campaigns defending immigrants already under threat of being returned to political persecution.

Many trade union branches and district committees have been involved in the anti-deportation activities and have also passed resolutions resolving to defend workers who refuse to implement the new legislation.

This bill is a major assault on the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. Already three out of four refugees seeking asylum in Britain are rejected and 700 asylum seekers are currently imprisoned. They

tiny majority and inner-party divisions. It is a reflection of the deep-lying crisis of British capitalism which is attempting to solve its problems by taking back every gain won by the working class in struggle.

The right of workers to travel wherever they wish to sell their labour and the right of asylum are two of these gains.

Their defence is an integral part of the fight of the working class against capitalism and the defeat of the Asylum and Immigration Bill will strengthen the working class everywhere.

Asylum seekers must not be left to fight on their own. Every action against this vile Tory legislation shows the necessity of uniting all the struggles. It is not possible to separate this campaign from all the other forms of working-class resistance.

This means political unity and the need for a new party to be formed which takes forward the struggle of the working class for socialism.

This striving for unity by the working class is reflected in the meetings currently going on throughout the country called by the supporters of Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party and supporters of the Socialist Labour Alliance connected with Militant Labour.

Workers Press has itself called a conference on 16 March to discuss the 'Crisis in the labour movement' and the need for a party which takes forward the struggle of the working class and if one can now be built (see page 7).

Workers Press invites all those fighting the Asylum and Immigration Bill, along with all those who strive for internationalism and socialism in the working-class movement, to come and participate.

BY JACKIE VANCE

have not been charged with any crime yet they may be held indefinitely.

The new law intensifies this repression. As well as effectively denying entry to most refugees it will:

■ DENY most asylum seekers the right to any benefits once they are in Britain.

■ FORCE employers, through threat of heavy fines, to check for 'illegal' workers. This is an attempt to turn employers into agents of immigration control on the shop floor.

## Bosses

Most bosses will not get involved with the lengthy procedure of checking the legal 'status' of black and ethnic minority applicants and will simply cease employing them.

■ INTRODUCE a legal category of 'immigrant,' which would include many of those long-term resident in Britain, and make their access to many basic rights dependent upon the home secretary of the time.

The mobilisation of the strength of the organised working class alongside the refugee and migrant groups can smash this bill and deepen the crisis of this weak and unstable Tory government. It is only Blair and the Labour leaders' refusal to wage a real fight that stops them being brought down.

But the government's weakness is not due only to its

## Stop the Asylum and Immigration Bill

National demonstration

Saturday 24 February

Assemble: 11am, Embankment

Rally: Trafalgar Square

Supported by the TUC







## Asylum and Immigration Bill demonstration

# nt must defend right to asylum



ast year's Africa Liberation Day demonstration (27 May 1995)

# history of trade union labour movement

sections of the trade unions supported controls against black people. The 1957 conference of the Transport and General Workers' Union voted for control.

Frank Cousins, general secretary and future Labour minister, said the union 'could not allow these people unrestricted entry into Britain.'

The TUC voted for control seven years before the 1962 act. A delegation visited the Minister of Labour and told him that the 'government must have a policy which could ensure that the rate of immigration could be controlled.'

## Racist

In 1958, shortly after the racist riots in Notting Hill and Nottingham, the TUC report recorded that: 'Apprehensions have been expressed about the number of immigrants from Pakistan.' It called for immigration controls, including a 'medical examination'.

The 1962 TUC congress report says that the General Council opposed the Commonwealth Immigrants Act — by calling for exit controls. It 'invited the governments of those Commonwealth countries

themselves to limit the flow of immigrants.'

The TUC criticised the 1962 act because the Labour Party, which was in opposition, voted against it. But when Labour came to office in 1964 it not only failed to repeal the new laws, but reinforced them.

Thus in 1965, the General Council's report called once more for immigration controls — saying that there had 'been the growth of the proportion of Commonwealth immigrants lacking an adequate knowledge of English and of British customs.'

From 1965 until 1973 the TUC united with the Labour and Tory parties on the need for some form of immigration control.

But the profoundly changed composition of the British working class, coupled with the self-organisation of black and ethnic minority workers, has gone a long way towards transforming attitudes within the trade union movement — if not in the Labour Party.

In 1973 the Trades Union Congress voted for a repeal of the 1971 Immigration Act.

Since then most sections of the trade union movement have opposed controls — but still only in a limited

way. At the 1990 TUC congress the local government officers' union NALGO moved a resolution for an end to all controls.

The General Council pulled out all the stops to force the withdrawal of the motion, and issued its own 'Statement on Racism and Immigration'.

## Support

Ron Todd, on behalf of the General Council, said: 'We support the Labour Party's plans to replace the 1971, 1981 and 1988 Immigration Acts with rules and practices which no longer discriminate on the grounds of race and sex. But we have to be clear that this is not the same as outright repeal.'

The leaders of the British trade unions and Labour Party have always accepted capitalism's demand for a workforce which can be moved and disposed of at will. But what is needed now more than ever is the unity of all workers against international capital.

[Information from *Workers' Control not Immigration Controls* by Steve Cohen, Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit.]

# Hackney centre prepares to meet benefit and housing crisis

HACKNEY in north-east London is a multi-ethnic area with a large concentration of Turkish and Kurdish people.

The Asylum and Immigration Bill threatens to make thousands of these workers and their families destitute.

On 5 February, the day that all benefits were cut off to large numbers of asylum seekers, a building in Hackney was occupied to provide alternative emergency housing.

The building, the old courthouse on Stoke Newington Road, had been empty since 1992 and was bought in January 1994 by a property company which has done nothing with it except remove and sell the most valuable fittings.

The squat, the Autonomous Refugee Centre Hackney (ARCH), has the support of refugee, church, trade union and community groups in the area.

Two illegal eviction attempts by the owners were repelled due, mainly, to the involvement of the local Turkish and Kurdish community.

But on 16 February the owners of the building went to court and an eviction order was refused only on a technicality.

The squatters expect to be evicted shortly but are determined that the project will carry on.

'When necessary', a spokesperson said, 'we will move on to another building to continue the struggle.'

'Other buildings' will also be needed. Squatting is not illegal and although it is not the most secure form of housing for many it is already the only possibility.

## Homeless

'For those made homeless by this latest attack, squatting may be the only way to organise housing and the defence of those threatened with deportation.'

In the nearby Halkevi Centre there was no doubt about the effects of the asylum legislation.

One person there reckoned that in 12 months time there would be

between 2,000 and 3,000 people in Hackney in need of basic support.

Representatives of the centre have met with the Hackney Churches Refugees Support group who were very active in the late 1980s with support for the influx of refugees from Kurdistan.

They have discussed if the churches can be used as soup kitchens, night shelters and clothing banks.

## Refuse

They are also trying to get the council to refuse to implement the legislation through council workers refusing to apply checks and the council continuing to pay housing benefits. They are legally allowed to do this — it's just that the statutory requirements, and of course the money, have been removed.

At the Hundred Flowers Cultural Centre, also on the Stoke Newington Road, they believe that the militancy and organisation of the Turkish refugee groups in Britain have been a major factor in Turkey not being included on the Tories' 'white list'.

The 'white list' is those countries designated as without 'serious risk of persecution' and where asylum seekers will be automatically returned.

They were making plans for their participation in today's demonstration and were in no doubt about the politics of the asylum bill:

'Apart from resurrecting and shamefully exploiting the old myths about the threat of foreigners, the bill also attempts to give strength to the new myths about peace and stability which are supposed to be finally prevailing in some of the developing countries under the "inspirational guidance" of the New World order and the caring economic policies of the IMF and the World Bank.'

Tonight ARCH are holding a social evening with international music in the occupied building and a warm welcome is ensured for all protesters against the Tories' racist asylum bill.

# Some useful contacts

UP TO 10,000 people are imprisoned every year under immigration legislation — half in special prison camps called 'detention centres' and half in prisons and police stations.

They are locked up without even being accused of any crime, without suitable medical attention or food, access to translators or legal representation.

They are liable to deportation at any moment back to the repressive conditions they have fled on the decision of the Home Office. Their numbers will be increased by the current changes unless we close down the detention centres and smash these racist laws.

Organisations involved in the anti-deportation fight include:

- **National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns**, c/o 22, Berners St., Lozells, Birmingham B19 2DR, 0121-554 6947.
- **National Network Against Detentions and Deportations**, c/o CARF, 0171-837 1450.
- **Fatma Tahir Defence Campaign**, 0181-985 8364.
- **Joseph Nnalue Defence Campaign**, 0171-207 7097.
- **Shiji Lapite Campaign**, 0171-232 1045.
- **Sam Dibia Campaign**, 0181-340 9962.
- **Onibiyo Family Anti-Deportation Campaign**, 0171-737 2134.
- **Southall Black Sisters**, 0181-574 6781.
- **Colin Roach Centre**, 0181-986 7111.
- **Ghana Union**, 0171-700 5634.
- **C.C.R.J.**, 0171-620 4444

For information about squatting and the law:

- **Advisory Service for Squatters**, 2, St. Pauls Road, London N1, 0171-359 8814





