Another Tory rip-off merchant

- Norman Lamont's financial affairs are never out of the headlines, with questions asked over unpaid hotel bills, his overdue Access bill, and his use of tax-payers' money to help pay his legal bills. This is the man in charge of Britain's economy!
- But in the Tory corruption stakes, his antics are small beer indeed. Mark Thatcher picked up millions for arms deals while his mum was Prime Minister.
- And whatever their shady deals, directorships and back-handers, the biggest Tory rip-offs are those they carry through as a government, using the force of law to rob working people, the unemployed, pensioners and children.

- Lamont's Autumn Statement announced a 1.5 percent pay limit that will rob every public sector worker; his cabinet colleagues are busily ripping off social security claimants and council tenants, while Michael Heseltine wants taxpayers and electricity consumers to foot the bill for his pit closure plans.
- The whole government is ripping off working people for the benefit of the rich. Lamont must go - and with him the whole wretched Tory cabinet.
- It's high time the TUC and Labour leaders stopped acting as Major's flexible friends and took up the fight to force them out of office. That would do nicely!
Gotcha!

Cook’s evidence nails Major’s gang

SHORT OF a handwritten thank-you note from John Major, putting Matrix Churchill in for the Queen’s Award for Export Achievement, it is difficult to contemplate document procurement damning as Robin Cook’s ‘iraqgate’ revelations.

Tack, the Labour Party’s outrage would be more convincing from a party that had found it in its soul to oppose the senseless carnage in the Gulf in the first place.

Labour, it seems, objects to the use of British weapons to slaughter Saddam’s soldiers, but happily cheers on while they are warning against feuding Iraqs.

Nevertheless, Major and his past and present colleagues Margaret Thatcher, Geoffrey Howe, Nicholas Ridley, Margaret Beckett and William Waldegrave and Lord Tariq are collectively bland to rights.

While Major is Chancellor, Cook has shown his private office received a copy of a letter from the private secretary of the then Trade Secretary, nice nice nice, Ricey Ricey, to Customs and Excise, regarding a forthcoming visit to Matrix Churchill.

The same February letter notes: “I also told you that my Secretary of State would be putting a Prime Minister [then Margaret Thatcher] asking that Ministers should not comment on or make reference to the issues connected with this.

This was written six months before the story broke in the press, which Major has insisted before Parliament was his first intimation of the scandal.

Major’s ‘no evil, hear no evil, see no evil’ fairy story, endlessly recycled across the Tory press, surely departs from the paths of veracity. If the erstwhile Chancellor of the Exchequer was really unaware of vital correspondence coming into his office, his competence is obviously in question.

As Cook put it himself: “For a Prime Minister to claim he is innocent by reason of ignorance is not very attractive”, just as John Major, Gregor believes this government is not only unhelpful, but unhelpful, I believe John Major was not fundamentally guided.

A further five documents were released to the press. A June 1991 letter, noted as ‘secret’, from the then Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe to the British embassy in Tokyo proves that the Foreign Office was fully aware of Matrix Churchill’s activities, the month before Major took over the department.

A letter from William Waldegrave, the then Foreign Office Minister, to Lord Tariq, dated April 1990 and again ‘secret’, argues: “I believe the Government would be unnecessarily criticised if we allowed the export of Matrix Churchill’s machine tools which could be used on the supergun project. We would, with some justification, be accused of being inconsistent if it is not.

Waldegrave’s proposals? I suggest, however, that we look again at the question in three months’ time, when the interest in the supergun generated by the ‘supergun’ has probably subsided...”

Gregor is convinced: “It is difficult to conceive. There is no question.

A September 1989 Department of Trade and Industry briefing on press interest in Matrix Churchill concedes the possibility that the machine tools “can be used for the production of military equipment in contravention of our policy”.

A June 1990 letter to Thatcher’s private secretary, Charles Powell, shows that ghost-written letters were being sent out “on behalf of the Prime Minister” which acknowledged “concerns about outstanding exports of machine tools to Iraq and confirmed that the Government would actively consider active consideration by ministers”.

Lastly, confidential April 1990 DTI minutes of the Defence Committee of the Ministry of Defence work group has no security. Launched at the question on the supply of these machine tools to Iraq, despite explicit awareness of the possibility of transfer to monitors establishments.

In future, it recommends, all export licences for Iraq should be cleared with the Cabinet Office, “who are acting as co-ordinator in the tact in cot text”.

So far, Cook has released [just 36 of the 50 or so pages of material handed over to the defence in the Matrix Churchill case, and threatens more revelations shortly.

TUC rigs oil workers’ link-up

By Bill Sutcliffe

SEVEN TUC-affiliated unions organising North Sea workers have formed a new link-up sector in a direct response to thechallenge of the offshore industry, unions and employers. The creditability of the new body, the Oilrig section, has already been severely dented by a boycott of the union’s meeting in Aberdeen by SEU engineers and electricians and the largest in the industry. As a result, the question is: How will the industry organise the workers (it has already asked for all these years)? I’m pessimistic, but I’ll be delighted to be proved wrong.

Unite the Labour left!

December 5th sees the Annual General Meeting of Labour Party Socialists. Here COUNCILLOR STEVE FRENCH and KATE AHRENS put forward the case for a new unity of the Labour Left in the Socialist Campaign Group Supporters Network and look at the implications for the future of Labour Party Socialists.

IN THE PAST few years the rise and rise of the new realists in the Labour Party and the Trade union bureaucracy has squeezed the left on the two flanks into more defensive positions. Many activists have dropped out, or been pushed out of the Party. Labour Party Socialists, and Labour left groups have linked activities, but the Labour left has become increasingly fragmented and isolated.

Network

Now, the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs, together with activists from many different groups and organisations, have launched the Socialist Campaign Group Supporters Network in an attempt to reinvigorate and unify the left. The authority that the SCC have on the Labour left could only be enhanced by uniting these forces.

Launched at the Socialist Campaign Group Conference in Leeds in June, the Network has built a large base of support and has been strongly welcomed by both left factions on the ground. The task now is to turn this auspicious beginning into a real organisation, with a democratic policy making structur, with campaigning organisation that links the struggles.

The network has active branches in Scotland, Northern Ireland, North West, North East, Yorkshire and Humberside, London and the South.

While the formation of a body like Oilrig is not in itself a real force in the sector, and is now the obvious choice for offshore workers serious about enhancing health and safety standards – an issue more important than wages in a relatively well paid but highly dangerous industry.

Oilrig’s organisational attraction comes from both OUCUS and the TUC is not of its own choosing. It should be allowed into both bodies at once.

Alternatives to Maastricht

Saturday 5 December 10.30am-5pm

The Assembly Hall, SOAS, London WC1 (Easton BK)

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I would like to register for the Alternatives to Maastricht conference and receive conference papers, and enclose £5 ( waged) £2 (un waged) plus a name, address.

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Return to: Socialist Forum, 6/7-1 Ardenleigh Road, London N1 4HS.
**Don’t duck labour movement fight!**

ANYBODY with the least knowledge of the labour movement could have written the script: surprise, surprise, the TUC General Council last week refused to back calls for strike action to defend the miners, rejecting Arthur Scargill’s call for a day of action.

Meanwhile the countdown to the closure of the first tranche of 10 threatened pits goes on remorselessly. On or around January 23 they will close, unless industrial action is taken to prevent closure. The TUC, with an enormous outburst of anger over pit closures to build on, tiptoes timidly towards its ‘national recovery’ day on 9 December, complete with employers, wet Tories and vicars.

Meanwhile Labour’s leadership sticks to safe issues like the Iraq arms scandals and Norman Lamont’s credit card, but is struck dumb on mine and hospital closures, the pay freeze and Maasstricht.

The antics of the leaders of the movement through the mess that will be the tremendous outburst of anger that met the pit closure announcement, and let the government off the hook. And it has to be said that that the collapse of the planned Tube strike, and the refusal of the NUM so far to project any form of industrial action to stop pit closures has made the situation worse.

For if the Tories can impose pit closures, get through the Maasstricht crisis, and crucially force through the pay freeze, the medium term prospects of the workers’ movement will be very grim.

How should socialists face this situation?

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**TUC must call day of action – Scargill!**

By Bill Sutcliffe

Miners’ leader Arthur Scargill has called for a labour movement day of action to force the Tories to backtrack on their plans to destroy the coal industry.

The National Union of Mineworkers president made his demand as the TUC general council held a special session in Doncaster on Wednesday last week. The body was meeting outside London for the first time in its history as a gesture towards the crisis in the coalfields. But gestures are not enough.

“If the government continues to be impervious to our fair and reasonable case, I ask on behalf of the NUM that the general council call a national day of action involving the public and the whole of the movement,’ argued Scargill. ‘Is it wrong for the labour movement to stand together in an insurance economic policy?’

The meeting was picketed by around 200 protesters demanding a general strike. TUC general secretary Norman Willis concluded that this would be illegal: ‘There is no doubt that we need to intensify the campaign’, he agreed, but stressed that the TUC would not put its head in any legal noose.

December 9 has already been declared a ‘day of national recovery’, but the only strike action likely will come from small groups of workers ready to defy both the Tory anti-union and their own union leadership.

Reportedly, the TUC is ready to call a day of action if any of the ten collieries due to close in late January are shut, but there is no indication that it would be held on a working day. Such a move would be too late, too late.

The National Union of Mineworkers Support Network is organising a national conference for miners supporters at Sheffield Polytechnic students union on January 9. Other supporters include the Social Movement Trade Union Committee. It will be an major opportunity for the labour movement left to discuss the way forward.

Full details of the conference – page four

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**Give Socialist Outlook an Xmas present!**

For a lot of working class people, especially those with kids, Christmas is a big hassle which they can ill-afford. But even if your budget is stretched, please consider giving Socialist Outlook a Christmas present.

Our fighting fund needs some Xmas cheer, to push us towards the £7500 figure which will allow us to replace clapped out equipment and keep the show on the road.

Many thanks to our supporters group in Haringey for their early Xmas present of nearly £500, thanks too to supporters in Brighton who sent us £70.

All this is very welcome, but we still have a long way to go. Our costs are constantly going up. And now there is an urgent need for cash to produce publicity material on the miners’ fight and the political crisis.

Please make cheques out to Socialist Outlook.

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Page 3
London Underground dispute

A victory for intimidation

By a London Underground train driver
THE PLANNED all-out strike by RMT rail union members on London Under- ground was suddenly called off on Monday last week. What went wrong?

Readers of Socialist Worker or the London Evening Standard probably believe the incident was a straightforward sell out by the RMT bureaucracy.

In fact, the leadership played little role from start to finish. The strike was demanded, fought for and organised by rank and file activists around RMT's London Transport District Council, and called off at the behest of the same 100 or so militants.

Support was so thin that sinking would have meant not just defeat, but the sack for the small minority willing to see it through.

Three factors created this situation: vicious management intimidation; blatant sabotage by other unions; and the weakness of RMT activists themselves.

London Underground Limited (LUL) has built up a new management team over the last three years, with the express aim of smashing the unions.

In many areas, the number of managers tripled as the old guard was retired, pushed out or knocked into line by young white men brainwashed by New Management Techniques.

They made constant propaganda for the so-called Company Plan ‘rationalisation’ package the immediate issue behind the strike call, giving the thing an air of inevitability for many workers. RMT activists, especially the relatively autonomous London Underground District Council, who were targeted by class fighters, fought hard to mobilise the members in preparation for a strike. The RMT bureaucracy were happy to pass the buck.

The District Council provided a constant supply of leaflets, instructed negotiators to hold firm, and held mass rallies to boost confidence.

The vote for action revealed a desire to strike, but workers were not convinced we could win without the other unions.

Only where local activists campaigned hard were ordinary labourers ready to follow the strike call.

Elsewhere, it was clear many were not. In some areas, union reps even resigned their positions and told members to come in to work.

Many staff were interviewed individually by management and told that if they did not sign Company Plan individual contracts, they would shortly be signing dope claims. Threats to sack strikers were taken seriously, because people knew bosses wanted to axe 5,000 jobs anyway.

Even then we could have held the day if ASLEF – which effectively acted like a company union – and the craft unions had not told their members to work through any dispute. The ASLEF strike ballot is merely a face saver and should not be taken seriously. Credit is due to the handful of ASLEF militants who promised to respect picket lists.

The evening after the strike was called off, around 90 people attended a District Council meeting, representing a wide range of workplaces and several different political tendencies. Yet only one speaker said the strike should have gone ahead.

Everyone else agreed we had put up a bitter and protracted fight against the Company Plan and a defeat would have turned into a rout if we had struck.

For that militant minority tradition to be preserved, we now have to develop a stronger representation under the new formula of negotiation. We have been defeated, but we are not beaten.

Miners’ fight goes on

Support these events!

Saturday 5 December
HENLEY DEMO
March through Michael Heseltine’s constituency
Organised by Oxford Trades Council and Henley Labour Party
Supported by NUM. Assemble 12 noon railway station/coachpark.

Saturday 19 December
CENTRAL LONDON DEMO
to greet the Scottish marchers.
Details in next issue.

Saturday 9 January
Solidarity with the Miners
NATIONAL CONFERENCE
Sponsored by NUM
Called by Socialist Movement TU Committee, National Miners' Support Network, Holdaine Society Employment Committee, Trade Union News, Sheffield Polytechnic Students’ Union, 11am-5pm
Delegates from all bona fide labour movement organisations.
Registrations, £5 waged, £2.50 unwaged from: Centre for Labour Movement Studies, 53a Geers Rd, London E15 3PN. Make cheques to Socialist Movement (TU).

Needed: an opposition movement in RMT

British Rail militants must build a new opposition movement in the main railworkers’ union, argues RMT activist SAM STACEY.

JUST AS Derek Fullock, general secretary of driver’s union ASLEF, was demanding 24 hour general strikes, his union’s executive was instructing members to observe the anti-union laws and cross then-expeceted RMT picket lines on London Underground.

Incidents like this underline the crisis of rail union leadership in ASLEF, RMT and TGSA alike. None of them are capable, let alone willing, to fight massive job cuts in the offing, never mind privatisation.

They all rushed to sign a new bargaining deal with the bosses, which pushes many vital subjects outside the scope of negotiation. Any issue related solely to a single ‘business’ – that is, individual sectors such as Network SouthEast – are subject to RMT bargaining – can no longer be discussed at national council. Potentially, InterCity could smash wages heavily, but the unions couldn’t even raise the question on the floor of the last national council.

There will be major local repercussions, too. For instance, Local Departmental Committees will be broken up by business. We could see workers on the same depot, on the same grade, on widely different wages and conditions?

This latest sell-out has created widespread anger among activists. But how can militants build on this to organise resistance to both management and bureaucratic officials?

Motherwell branch recently hosted an unofficial meeting of Scottish branches entitled the crisis of leadership of the RMT. One of the main points addressed was the need for a knock out fight against Co and Co. Necessary as this is, it is the fundamental issue. We need to transform RMT into a fighting union under membership control. It’s important to create a movement against the bureaucracy, from the ground up.

In place of their conservative apparatus, we need militant leaders.

Striking Back

Fighting privatisation on the railways

This new pamphlet written by Socialist Outlook railworkers examines the background to the privatisation proposals, and their implications for passengers, railworkers and the environment.

It also discusses how privatisation can be fought and the socialist alternative.

Send £1.25 including post and packaging to Socialist Outlook PO Box 1109, London N4 2LU
British Coal’s threat to sack all miners

By Bill Sutcliffe

BRITISH COAL has effectively dished out redundancies to 50,000 employees, including those at the ‘safe’ pits not currently facing the axe. Not a single job is now safe.

Union reps at every British Coal location have received formal written notifications of possible redundancies, covering the entire workforce, in line with the letter of current employment law.

While the company insists that the move is a technicality to facilitate voluntary redundancies, and ‘should not be taken as an indication of our future employment plans’, it is now legally placed to sack as many additional workers as possible.

Around 4,600 miners have taken voluntary redundancies in recent weeks, with National Union of Mineworkers president accusing British Coal of blackmailing miners into quitting by threatening to reduce redundancy money if they didn’t go straight away.

Mike Clapham, Labour MP for Barnsley West and Penistone and former NUN national industrial relations officer, argued that British Coal’s motivation for sending out the redundancy notices is to circumvent the colliery review procedure. In the long term, it wanted to split miners into core and peripheral workforces, he alleged.

NUS-sponsored Labour MP for Barnsley Central, Eric Illsley, pointed out that failure to give adequate notice formed the basis of the miners’ successful High Court injunction against the closures last month. They are making sure they get it right this time, sealed up and watertight.

Both men formed part of a delegation of mining area Labour MPs which met British Coal chairman Neil Clarke last week. Mr Clarke apparently gave no indication of back-tracking over the closure of the first tranche of ten pits, with the shutdowns now expected on or around January 23.

Billion pound cost of pit closures

THE National Union of Mineworkers hired top Oxford University economics don Andrew Glyn to analyse official British Coal statistics and work out exactly what the closures mean for the UK economy.

The British Coal figures don’t add up properly, however, according to Professor Glyn, who compiled a report

Money to burn – Hashtine

In 1982-83, Glyn argues, each miner produced an average 1.4 tonnes of coal per shift. In 1991-92 this was 5.3 tonnes, a productivity increase of 2.121 percent. By comparison, productivity in the manufacturing sector has grown by 50 percent over the same period and in the banking, finance and business services sector by just 14 percent.

Wages per unit of output have actually fallen in money terms over the same period from £15.90 per tonne to just £16.6 per tonne. Yet demand has fallen from £15.1 million to £6.1 million, mostly because of increased imports of foreign coal, which rose from 2.4 million to 20 million tonnes.

Imports of oil and gas to replace coal output will worsen the UK’s balance of payments deficit by between £500-£1,000 million a year. Bigger, more efficient and cheaper pit closures could even have an impact on exchange rates.

Cashing in on the miners

A 48p-a-minute ‘support the miners’ telephone line, widely advertised in the North East, has nothing to do with the National Union of Mineworkers and all proceeds are currently going straight into the hands of private companies.

The telephone number — 0961 315404 — claims to be automatically registering callers on a national electronic petition.

But when you ring, all you hear is a recorded message, and there is no opportunity even to leave your name and address. The 48p or so the call will cost could be far better spent by the National Miners’ Support Network.

The man behind the scheme, John Gallagher of Broad Vision Ltd, Birmingham, told official NUS-backed campaigner in Newcastle and anti-nuclear activist of the 081 system, I had no expectation of making money... as soon as I learned that it was possibly, I decided I would make donations to your lighting fund. You’ll forgive me for reacting badly to instructions that I was seeking to exploit the miners.

He insists: ‘We are doing everything we can to ensure that the media is made aware of the number of videos recorded from time to time’... so Socialist Outlook asked Mr Gallagher — who’s office number is 021 455 4749 — if he wished to talk to him directly how the polling was going. ‘ Haven’t I already said, the moment is here, we are looking to exploit the miners’,” he said.

Asked if he had made any money, he said: ‘Oh no no, no, not yet. We’ve laid out about £4000, I’m not sure how much you get from callers. We’ve advertised in the Daily Mirror, which is thrown away at a cost of £1.50’.

Absolutely unprompted, he wrapped up: ‘I’m sorry I’m sounding like I’m hounding and vague, it’s lack of information, not eaginess.”
How the World Bank and the IMF organise...

Third world robbery and environmental vandalism

By Peter Anderson

On current trends, some experts say, humans could theoretically be the only species left on the planet within 50 to 100 years - a grotesque danger that highlights the imminence of environmental collapse under the weight of unplanned human economic activity.

But while the domination of economy over ecology is reaching critical proportions, the world's top economic regulators, who continue to pursue development and restructuring agendas with unstated social and environmental consequences, seem purposely oblivious to the fact. This is especially true of the World bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Even the economic results are appalling. Despite all the hype in the 1960s about 'development economics', with only a few notable exceptions most of the countries of the economic 'South' are not much better off, and many positively worse off, than they were 30 years ago.

It is not difficult to trace the immediate cause of this deterioration to the debt crisis of the 1970s, when blotted by petrodollars from soaring world oil prices, the international banks sent emis- saries to the third world to unload their cash - at a price.

Worsened

The pay-back came in the 1980s, when economic conditions in the third world got seriously worse. Subjected to the dictates of the World Bank, by the end of the decade sub-Saharan Africa actually produced less per head of the population than it had at the beginning - an impoverished continent became even more so.

However while the poor countries were locked in a never-ending cycle of ballooning debt and impossible repayments, the banks shored up their finances by writing off failed loans, reschedul- ing debts and repairing their balance sheets. By the end of the decade, for the international banks the crisis was over.

Today from Amazonia to the Siberian forests, the seemingly unstoppable encroachment of the world market continues to wreak environmental havoc: beyond debt and economic destruction and the sharpening of the division between rich and poor, this market logic now threatens the possible elimination of the fundamental biological diversity on which life itself depends.

According to Susan George, well-known author of *A Fate Worse than Debt*, I was never a fan of the ex-Soviet Union and the countries which called themselves 'socialist', but the fall of the Berlin wall nevertheless has a negative side. The end of the Cold War has put an end to what political scientists used to call the 'systems' debate. Now there is only one superpower and one system...'

Meanwhile Lawrence Summers, vice-president of the World Bank, has bluntly stated his view of the world economy and the environment, in comments made at the World Bank's annual meet- ing in Bangalore. He said: ''What can the West do to drive this process of ref- orms (in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe) forward? Number one, it can spread the truth. The laws of capital [sic] economics, it is often forgotten, are like the laws of engineering - there is only one set of laws and they work everywhere.'

Evidence

Summers' staggering statement ignores the abundance of evidence which shows that if the capitalist world economy continues to exploit the world's resources in the rapacious, unfettered way it does now, the future of the planet is threatened.

An important 1986 article by Paul Er- lich and others calculated that human economic activity was then absorbing 40 per cent of the 'net photosynthetic product', that is the net capacity of the earth to regenerate itself, leaving just 60 per cent for all other species.

They found that this kind of activity was doubling every 25 or 30 years, which means that in a quarter of a century we would be consuming 80 per cent of the net photosynthetic product, leaving 20 per cent for all other species. And soon after the figure would reach 100 per cent, leaving no other species with access to anything.

Contradictions

Unfortunately this is not the way the people who run the world's economy see it. They fail to grasp a series of obvious and appalling contradictions which threaten the biosphere.

- The contradiction between the open economy and the closed biosphere means there are not 'market signals' to tell us we are in danger. The price of logs from a tropical forest, for example, is no

"50 species are being driven to extinction every day. At a conservative estimate, 20,000 are wiped out annually"

"The World Bank and the IMF found in the third world debt the perfect instrument to force integration of the indebted countries more tightly in the world capitalist economy"
way represents the value of the forest in stabilising the climate, or as a habitat for flora and fauna, and the home of biodiversity.

Although the price can tell us something about scarcity, that does not always work until it is too late. Market signals do not tell us anything about what we throw away.

Signals

The market is not going to tell us signals if there is too much carbon dioxide in the atmosphere or too many CFCs. The World Bank's finance wing called the International Finance Corporation is making a large loan to Egypt to build a factory to produce air conditioners and refrigerators with CFCs.

The market is not going to tell us that the ozone layer is only one-third of what it should be.

● The logical outcome of leaving the market to itself is dramatically growing inequality within countries and between countries. Even within the United States the family income (for all assets) of the richest 1 per cent is 115 times that of the lowest 10 per cent. On a world scale the disproportion runs into thousands of percentage points.

● Relaying on the market to do everything makes it impossible to define social or developmental objectives.

Despite all this the World Bank and the IMF are imposing a market system universally, most emphatically in the third world. In fact, the world market is the most brutal of all markets because there are not many rules, while in most states there are at least certain social rules and safety nets, however inadequate.

The World Bank and the IMF found in the third world debt the perfect instrument to force the integration of the indebted countries more and more tightly into the world capitalist economy. They way poor countries must expect more, supposedly to grow their way out of the debt, but the effect is entirely different.

A recent study of African raw materials by the Transnational Institute showed there is absolutely no hope for Africa to overcome its debt through the export of commodities, because terms of trade are declining, more synthetic substitutes are being used, improved technologies mean lower raw materials inputs are required, and there is increasing competition from Asia.

But overwhelmingly the main problem is the net transfer of wealth out of the poor countries into the rich. In 1982 the indebted countries of the South owed the North £365 billion. Ten years later, having paid over £591 billion in debt service, they owed £660 billion.

Doubled

The countries of the South are overall 60 per cent more in debt than they were at the beginning of the 1980s. Africa's debt has doubled. The debt of the poorest nations has more than doubled. In that time the poor nations have paid the equivalent of more than six Marshall Plans to the rich. Every minute £68,000 is paid by the poor to the Western banks.

Everything that stands in their path is destroyed, says Susan George of the dominant institutions. "Nature stands in to determine for many countries whether the currency is devalued or to define macro-economic policy or set foreign policy (along with the US government). Such was the case when Egypt joined US forces in the Gulf and was immediately awarded a one-quarter reduction in debt, unachieved by any other nation."

The only way out of the debt, poverty and environmental destruction is manageable action on a global scale: but this action is thwarted by the existing capitalist global institutions.

A few facts indicate the scale of the problem:

● We are within a few years of losing 15-25 per cent of the total of earth's biodiversity, but no one really knows what this really means in terms of the number of species lost. Because no one has any real idea of the number of species. In the last five years more than 300 new fish species have been identified in the Amazon region alone.

● Harvard biologists estimate that 50 species are being driven to extinction every day. Other experts put the figures much higher. Even on a conservative estimate 20,000 species are wiped out annually.

● Probably as many as one fifth of earth's plants are threatened, and in the US about 3000 native plants are considered in short-term danger of disappearing altogether.

● The scenario for the next couple of decades in the Latin American rain forests ranges for a best case loss of 15 per cent of total area, to a worst case of a terrifying two thirds.

Species have always been lost in the natural process of evolution. But scientists believe that the natural rate is now exceeded by a factor of 40,000.

For example, 'green revolution' agriculture has forced peasant cultivators to abandon farming with self-reproduced seeds which were the result of thousands of years of natural evolution, and replace them with genetically identical and vulnerable standard varieties.

Homogenised global thinking and destruction of diversity is nowhere more apparent than in the area of so-called development economics, in which it is considered that all economies must pass through the same stages on a predetermined path of economic growth. In this process there is simply no account of history, of culture, of nature, which is, at best, there to be tamed or exploited.

The development professionals in places like the World Bank are highly skilled in thinking globally and acting locally, forcing people to conform to their own view. In doing so they do not just homogenise space, they tele-scope time as well.

The negative implications of homogenised global thinking are also revealed in cultural, intellectual and linguistic practice through the use of collective nouns like 'humans' and particular-ly the term 'we', as in 'we are destroying our forests', a familiar phrase of many bureaucrats, UN commissions and environmentalists. 'We are almost never responsible for these crimes, and using this terminology only makes it harder to see exactly which people and which institutions are the real perpetrators.

So long as the ideology and practice of the so-called free-market system prevails without being contested, the fate of the world hangs in the balance.

"In 1982 the indebted countries owed £365 billion. Ten years later, having paid over £591 billion in debt service, they owed £660 billion."

"In the next couple of decades the best case scenario is that 15 per cent of rain forest will be lost. It could be a terrifying two thirds."
What’s happening to the Sandinistas?

THE FSLN is suffering from a process of political disorientation that began long before the electoral defeat in 1990. Now it faces a new crisis that has not yet developed since then. Here VICTOR PRISMA attempts to answer this question, casting a spotlight on the weaknesses of FSLN policy both before and after the electoral defeat.

Tensions inside the FSLN have mounted as a result of conflicting social interests which have not been overcome in policies that can appeal to the masses and reorient the FSLN itself. This has meant that the efforts of social movements to defend their goals against the Chamorro government have been thwarted, leading to a restoration of capitalist political dominance.

State interests

The ten years of FSLN rule saw an important political evolution: from an authoritarian control at the beginning, to a situation where state interests prevailed over popular interests. The essence of the social base of the revolution, provoked by the war and the economic crisis, failed a change in the balance of forces which led to the electoral defeat of the FSLN in 1990. A rightwing coalition (UNO) took power. Shocked by its defeat, the Sandinista leadership abandoned its appeal to defend the conquests of the revolution with the hope of preserving its gains.

But what gains were there to defend? These were mainly of an institutional political character; first, the constitution and the guarantees for the personal and property distributed by the Sandinista government - the agrarian reform - and the property acquired by the FSLN itself.

Participation

No mention was made of the need to defend the Sandinista’s economic model or the social policies, and still less the influence, not to mention the participation of the people in economic management.

Why? Because the model was already worn out, and by 1988 replaced by an adjustment policy strongly marked by neoliberalism.

Social policies decreased together with the regulating role of the state. Popular participation in decision making had been very weak - something recognized by Daniel Ortega himself in an interview published in 1991, when he said the policies which would have been followed by the FSLN if it had won the elections would not have been very different to those pursued by the new government, except for 'social sensibility'.

The FSLN presents the revolutionary heritage only in institutional terms. Thus, 'We obtained a national state, a constitution, a democratic, parliamentarian framework and an army'. Most of these did not exist before, and that is why they are identified with the gains of the revolution.

For domestic and international political reasons the new government ended up accepting this institutional framework.

Counter-revolutionary

Because of this, the counter-revolutionary character of the government was not clear to the Sandinista leadership. The term 'counter-revolutionary' was reserved only for the last-right 'Somozistas'. The government was described as being in the centre and the FSLN entered into negotiations with it.

More than ten meetings have been held between the FSLN and the government since 1990, including eight focusing on social conflict. Agreements have been forged on the executive, the army and the economy. Without this, thought the FSLN, instability would be jeopardised; and the FSLN would not gain from instability and crisis, even if came back into government.

On the basis of these agreements, a centre group was formed in the FSLN representing a 'continuity' with the post-1968 FSLN positions; an orthodox economic vision, with social considerations taking a back seat to state interests, and a search for stability and development in alliance with certain sectors of the bourgeoisie.

Struggle

After the electoral defeat the FSLN did not manage to develop a strategy which could appeal to the masses in a framework of democratic political struggle.

Before 1990 the revolutionary project was already in crisis; its image was completely damaged after the adoption of monetarist measures. But the six months after the electoral defeat were particularly chaotic. Even if the FSLN leadership did not seem to be directly threatened, the authority of its leaders appeared to have diminished as a result of the scale of the defeat and lack of political vision. A feeling of mistrust, mixed with declining authority and credibility, arose concerning a leadership that once was considered infallible.

The party was full of rumours about the effects of the electoral avalanche, revealing a deep malaise that had been obscured by party discipline. Subsequently, the Front, attached to a fascist conception of power, attempted to cling onto its institutional positions to the detriment of an analysis of the socio-economic forces at work.

Stabilisation

The FSLN subordinated defence and articulation of the material interests of its mass base among the poor to a scheme for political stabilisation of the country.

Thus, the FSLN found itself politically disarmed and increasingly dependent first on conservative political stabilisation and then, to preserve that, on the neo-liberal economic policies of the government.

This was clear in the FSLN’s support for privatisation, which placed the unions and social organisations in a position of having to negotiate from a defensive position, and in its disorientation in face of state restructuring and deregulation of the economy.

The leadership thought it could manoeuvre in the upper circles and contain the capitalist restoration process. The slogan 'govern from below' was only an empty compensation for the rank and file, upset by defeat after so many sacrifices.

Nothing stood in the way of the rapid economic restructuring which restored the power and the rights of the strongest sections of the employing class.

All social roles were changed: a high level of conservatism and co-option of personnel was introduced into the army, the police, state functions and even the FSLN itself, as well as in its satellite organisations.

The state created by the revolution with the aim of assuring a certain class equilibrium which the FSLN also intended to use to preserve the revolutions gains, is leaking from all sides. Business, the preservation of certain places in the political system, the co-option of functionaries, the development of the market, and the liberalisation of the economy have gradually reduced the progressive and regulatory aspects of the state.

The free market needs the establishment of order and the maintenance of social hierarchy that is now creating. A bourgeoisie is being formed, and the FSLN is tied to this process at several levels.

Intermediary

These are the factors which have led the FSLN into a situation where it plays the role of intermediary between different interests groups within the framework of capitalist restoration.

In the absence of an overall strategy, the organisation tends to function as a feudal network of interest groups with an essentially corporatist dynamic.

It is perfectly possible that the sum total of the Sandinista revolution will be the refounding of the national state and the political system, but this means the restoration of the old class society.

The FSLN can become a bureaucratised party in which corporatist dynamics are predominant. But it can also be renewed as a party that will be an indispensable component of social equality and participation in the political system that it will create and continue to develop.

The above is a solution which first appeared in International Viewpoint, fortnightly magazine of the Fourth International.
Craziness to order

Single White Female

Starring Bridget Fonda, Jennifer Jason Leigh
Reviewed by Louise Whittle

AFTER JONES (Fonda), a young, successful middle class woman advertises in the personal columns for a flatmate, following a fight with her live-in boyfriend. A number of women apply, all polite, pleasant white women, but all with a different stereotypical quirk which puts Allison off.

She eventually settles for a seemingly normal woman who calls herself Hedra (Leigh). Unfortunately seeing is not believing.

Hedra quickly becomes deeply suspicious of Allison and tries to disguise her needs by sublimating them into over-protection from 'wild forces'.

When Allison is unusually assaul ted by her boss, Hedra defends her more fiercely than Allison herself was prepared to. Allison, has mixed feelings about this defence: 'I hope you never get angry with me, Heddie'.

However, it is when Allison is reunited with her boyfriend that Hedra's insecurities spill over into an obsession. She drops any pretense at being anything other than completely crazy. The film then degenerates rapidly into a slasher movie.

Hedra had a twin who she says was still-born, but who, when we later find out, died in a drowning accident at birth. The implication is clearly that this accident is centrally responsible for her later 'readiness'.

This film could have been a good suspense thriller, but fails instead to collapse into ridiculous plot twists and a hopelessly simplistic view of mental illness.

The film's two types of 'psychological' (Hollywood standards) films are becoming very popular: from Fatal Attraction, The Hand that Rocks the Cradle and Cape Fear to Single White Female. All share some essentially flawed central characters – the helpless, crazed, young woman, the sanctity of society, the sanctity of the family unit.

They also tend to share (for the purposes of stringing out the very thin story line) a bizarre view of how hard it is to kill a 'crazy' person. Witness the resurrection of Glenn Close in Fatal Attraction after apparently drowning. A similarly astonishing resilience is demonstrated by Hedra in Single White Female.

The few moments of genuine suspense, the very good acting and the excellent suspense-thriller potential are all sadly suffocated by the treatment into the 'safe' formula of a psychological thriller. The great disappointment is that even the mainstay directors seem willing to break out of the stranglehold that Hollywood maintains over what a 'successful' plot can be.

Victims of Zionist terror

Making Women Talk – the Interrogation of Palestinian Women Detainees

Written by Theresa Thornhill
Published by Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights. Price £5.99
Reviewed by Terry Conway

MAKING Women Talk doesn't make cosy bed-time reading. My appreciation that within this thin volume I would find graphic descriptions of the agony and anguish endured by women involved in the intifada proved correct.

The book outlines the legal framework within which security forces are tried, and catalogues the interrogation methods, often using extensive quotes from the women themselves.

It comments on the abuses of the military personnel involved in the women in their custody. The humiliation of sexual harassment, the degradation of courts in which your interpreter is one of the enemies, the great bond of mistrust as a result of torture are powerful depicted and damned on these pages.

Thornhill analyses the findings of the Landau commission, set up by the Israeli government in 1987 to investigate the methods of the security services in dealing with 'terrorists' offering following revelations of: the destruction of a previous inquiry into a summary execution by Israeli soldiers of Palestinians involved in a bribe.picking.

She is damming in her judgement of this report, which concluded that the use of psychological and 'moderate physical' pressure of those suspected of hostile terrorist activity was not only necessary but permissible under the law as it stands.

She points out that the published recommendations of the report 'amount to an acceptance that state security can only be maintained if the judiciary countenances convictions based purely on confession evidence obtained by the use of torture', as well as adding to the sinister existence of an secret appendix which outlines a code of guidelines of precisely what is and is not permitted – or perhaps it should read what can and can't be got away with.

The weakness of the text is not merely that it is couched within a legalistic framework – indeed the cataloguing of Israel's many breaches of the Geneva Convention is a powerful part of the argument – but that the fact its conclusion, and its object have the right specific focus for the audience. This book is an international lobby.

Thornhill's book can provide inspiration and ammunition to anyone who supports the cause of the Palestinian people. Don't be bound by her conclusions but read the book.

Murdock methods take over at Mirror

By an NUJ member

The Daily Mirror – Britain's one remaining mass circulation daily newspaper – is in deep crisis following the sacking of over 500 production journalists at its London head office. Fears are also growing that newly appointed rightwingers herald a marked change in political direction.

All editorial staff – including members of both the National Union of Journalists and the recent rightwing breakaway British Association of Journalists, and those not in either – were involved in a mass strike over industrial action as Socialist Outlook went to press.

Problems started with the recent installation of David Montgomery, a man schooled at Rupert Murdoch's News International, as chief executive of Mirror Group Newspaper. Unlike Unionist Montgomery has a long union-busting track record. After the subsequent mass sackings, two of MGN's three main titles are now edited by ex-Murdoch men.

MGN publications, which include the Sunday Mirror, the People, Sporting Life and Scotland's Daily Record and Sunday Mail, have stepped up campaigning journalism following the death of their crooked proprietor, former Labour MP Robert Maxwell, last year.

But the company is now controlled by banks out to recoup some of the millions of pounds Maxwell owed. Montgomery's brief is to increase profitability and prepare a future sell-off.

Some 100 freelances working on the Mirror have been sacked by its new editor, David Banks, with no warning and no pay-off as they turned up for work one morning.

While these journalists are described as casualties, in most cases, the word is extremely misleading. Many have been kept on the paper full time for several years.

Casual shifts are traditional on national newspapers. It is a way of keeping an eye on trends and of trying out young journalists from local papers and arrange holiday and sickness cover.

For established hacks, it is a chance to make up to £100, often a cash in hand, editing sports pages on the Sundays. While such a living is not easy, it is technically against the NUJ rulebook, the preclusion was all but unenforceable.

With widespread recruitment freezes and severe financial cutbacks over the last few years, the practice has mushroomed and appears more profitable for the Mirror group.

And of course, if the boss doesn't like your face, you're simply not invited back. Comparisons with building workers or the offshore sector are not unfair.

There is also a political dimension to the Mirror crisis. Editorials have stressed that the paper would continue to back Labour at election times. However, an unsigned piece written under the Mirror's own name in the Financial Times said that the paper would carry less "exiting propaganda" and concentrate instead "on issues of real concern to readers, like mortgages and other consumer issues".

The Mirror's star columnist Paul Foot - a SWP member and Britain's most widely-read revolutionary socialist journalist - has rightly remarked: "I'm amazed at how unconcerned the Left is."

Even Neil Kinnock, the former Labour Party leader, has publicly condemned the dismissed workers, while John Smith's office said that he was "anxious about the validity of the assurances given about the political direction of the Mirror".

As Foot concluded: "The future of the papers depend on a mass march where we can stand up and assert their independence against this management."
ANC and the National Party

Riding into the sunset together?

By Charlie van Gelderen

The current which has carried South African CP leaders away from Marxism (albeit in its debauched Stalinist form) has now come as a avalanche.

The president of the SACP has finally abandoned the struggle for a democratic South Africa, based on majority rule, as enshrined in the ANC’s Freedom Charter.

In an article in the current issue of African Companion he proposed what he terms ‘a short-term solution to South Africa’s problems’. He says that since no side has won the struggle for power during the long years of open confrontation, neither side can expect surrender at the negotiating table.

Going nowhere

But this does not draw him to the conclusion that revolutionary Marxists drew long ago—that negotiations per se would get the liberation struggle nowhere—but to the realization that compromise is inevitable.

He goes even further. There should be no question of dismantling the apartheid state. Civil servants, including police and army officers should be given guarantees that they would keep their jobs in a post-apartheid (so South Africa, and if necessary be granted amnesties.

In an interview in the Independent (20 October) he says: ‘I am not pandering to white people...I am acting in the interests of a lasting democratic transformation because the new fledgling democracy, if it emerges as a product of an inordinate social and economic problems which will require the broadest national effort to resolve.

...most important, within the context of basic democratic principles we should try to minimise those forces which could provide the potential for right-wing destabilisation and sabotage, what I call counter-revolutionary forces’.

‘...even if the ANC gets a 60 or 70 per cent majority in the first constitutional election, it will achieve political office but will not really achieve control over the essentials of the state framework or the state services. The evil service will be exactly the same the day after, the same with the judiciary...the army...the police force and so on.’

Stages

So now we know what SLOVO’s theory of achieving socialism in stages really means (he still says he thinks socialism is the only sensible form of human existence!), the first stage means no socialism at all.

Everything stays just the same with a few black faces in the cabinet and, maybe, a dozen or so black generals in the police and army.

The mineowners and finance capital will still be in control of the economy, white farmers will still dominate the ownership of land.

‘We are not talking of equality’ says Joe Slovo “but we are talking of meaningful participation’.

Slovo’s line has now been endorsed by the ANC leadership at its mid-October summit, which laid the basis for the so-called Strategic Plan.

It suggests a return to the question of job security, pensions and a general amnesty for civil servants and military personnel who have kept the wheels of apartheid oiled and which may need to form part of a negotiated settlement.

National unity

It also suggests that a government of national unity may be necessary after the adoption of a constitution ‘in which the ANC and the (truly National) Party are the main players’.

This policy of capitulation has been scathingly attacked by Pallo Jordan, a member of the ANC National Executive Committee.

In an article entitled Happy Trail to you, or Riding into the Sunset together?, he argues that long-held ANC goals aim for not only the creation of a democratic state but also for the dismemberment of the racist state.

He says: ‘It is these organs of white minority state power that we are now being told should not be tampered with to enable the liberation movement and the regime to ride blissfully into the sunset together.

‘We have to keep in place a public service that has no interest in serving the mass of the oppressed who are the ANC’s electoral base. We need a public service that will do everything to undermine the democratic government; and keep under arms the agency that can ensure the democratic state can teach the public service when its disloyalty is un-

A national liberation movement that did this would not be riding into the sunset; it would be building its own funeral pyre.

Air controllers mount challenge to Yeltsin

BORIS Yeltsin’s first major clash with organised working class resistance seems likely to begin on December 1 with an all-out strike by air traffic controllers.

Six out of 15 regional air traffic control centres have voted to join the dispute, which is decided for the future survival of the union; the controllers’ union federation is regarded as second only to the Russian miners in its level of organisation.

Though relatively well-paid by Russian standards, controllers’ wages have been frozen by Yeltsin’s 2,000 per cent inflation, and they are demanding parity with their counterparts in the West.

Another grievance is the victimisation of three leaders of the union’s short-lived strike at 20 centres on August 15. Negotiators have refused to back down from their demand that legal proceedings against those who struck in August

On November 20 their threatened indefinite strike was declared illegal by Russia’s procurator general.

Yeltsin has promised to get a new law out next year, but this is as little help to those who are still in prison.

It has said it will use members of the Federation of Unions to break the strikes, but these lack the technical skills to operate a complete civil service. If the controllers, however, cannot persuade Yeltsin who is yoking into trouble.

Germany

Bans on Nazis won’t work

By Paul Clarke

LESS THAN two weeks after 300,000 people marched against racism, three Turkish people, two women and a young girl, were murdered on 23 November by Nazi thugs when their flats were burnt down in Moehl in northern Germany.

In response the German government banned the tiny Nazi National Front, and warned of tougher action against anti-GDR groups.

The murders came on the same weekend as street fighting between Nazis and left wing protesters in Berlin and East Germany, which resulted in one person being stabbed to death.

The flats in which the three Turkish women were in one of several buildings throughout the city set on fire by the Nazis.

Since the burning down of an immigrant table during the Riots against a flat by stoppage, attacks on immigrants and asylum seekers have increased. Virtually every night there is news of more attacks throughout Germany.

The Nazis are beginning to build a mass base amongst youth, especially in the East. But ban won’t stop them, because legal action won’t deal with the root causes of the Nazi surge.

Worse, bans, and the statement by Interior Minister Rudolf Seitz in favour of deporting far-leftists of their vote and civil liberties, threaten repressive laws which will be used against the left and the workers movement in place to form a negotiated settlement.

Already the police are aiming their main fire at squatters and ‘left extremists’.

The social basis of racism is the vast growth of unemployment in the GDR, and the rise in unemployment and insecurity throughout the country.

At the same time, the leaders of both major political parties, the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats, have capitulated to racist arguments, agreeing to immigrants and asylum seekers are the problem.

Germany of course does have migrants from war and economic catastrophe in the eastern bloc pressuring on its borders. It is predictable that racist groups will attempt to use this to build support.

But the worst destruction of the industries of the former GDR, to the benefit of West German capital, and the 25 per cent unemployment that this has caused, gives the Nazis the ability to build a mass base.

Fighting fascism means building mass labour movement action against the Nazis, and winning the argument against racism. It will be exceedingly difficult to do that without making a political fight against unemployment, and the other effects of the crisis in the ex-GDR.

Defence against racist attacks and building groups to guard immigrant locals is of course a vital necessity, and something which the whole of the German left supports.

But in the German left far left, ‘automnism’ semi-anarchist groups are a few weight. But their line of simple street fights with the fascists won’t win the fight for an alternative programme in the labour movement.

Dutch skinheads have confessed to beating to death a 53-year-old German man in Maastricht because they believed he was a Jew. After a meal in a restaurant in which he called them Nazi pigs, they beat him to death, poured his body with alcohol and set fire to him, before dumping his body on the Dutch-German border near Venlo.
Defeat the Child Support Act!
Tories target single mums

By Marian Brain

The Child Support Act could be more aptly called the Treasury Support Act. Coming into force in April 1993, it aims to force 'absent fathers' to pay maintenance to mothers on benefit. Far from being a progressive piece of legislation it is viciously racist, sexist and anti-working class.

The key aim of the Act, like so many pieces of Tory legislation, is to force the working class to pay another slice of the cost of the capitalist crisis. Under the guise of 'helping women' the Tories aim to save the Treasury, not mothers, who will pocket all the money paid to women on Income Support, it will also pocket part of what is paid to mothers on Family Credit, Disability Working Allowance and students grants.

DSS officers are already targeting single mums to name the father, demand he pays the arrears, all while asking for photos, threatening to cut off their benefits if they do not cooperate. This is illegal. We must stop their illegality now and in doing so make the Act unworkable when it comes into force, just as we did with the Poll Tax.

From 1993 single mothers on grants or benefits will be fined £3.49 a week for refusing to give information about their absent fathers. This could propel women into having forcible contact with fathers even if they are violent and precipitate custodial battles, especially for lesbian mothers.

It will give racist, sexist and homophobic DSS officers enormous disciplinary powers. The Act will pressure women into taking low-paid or illegal work even where it makes them poorer, rather than risk their safety or children in unwarranted contact with fathers.

It is thus an attack on the rights of single mothers, the right to an undisturbed state benefit. The Child Support Agency is establishing computerised records on absent fathers' incomes, taxation and housing from Inland revenue and local authorities. This has already involved walking into their workplaces and questioning employers and co-workers. The Act targets Black families, for almost half Afro-Caribbean families are headed by single mothers; and although it is often kept quiet, there are many single Asian mothers now.

Men of African, Asian and Caribbean descent are more likely to be unemployed, on lower wages, and supporting more dependents than white men and therefore will be harder hit. And the courts might see 'failure to maintain' as grounds for deportation. Key battle in the campaign against the Act is:

● Affiliating labour movement and campaign organisations to the Campaign against the Child Support Act

● Circulating material from the campaign

● All DSS harassment and illegalities

● Press local authorities to adopt a policy of non-cooperation with the Act

● Get trade unions to force employers not to co-operate with the Act.

To contact the campaign write to: PO Box 287, London NW6 5QU. Phone 071-437 7690.

BURNSALLS DEMO BOOSTS STRIKERS

By Bob Smith

The 19 workers employed by Burnsall, women on strike at Burnsall electroplating plant in Smithfield, London, following a one-shift protest march past the plant last Saturday. The strikers are seeking an increase in wages, properly unionised working conditions, and a 19th Century, petty-dictatorial, management regime.

Bill Smith, local organiser of the workers, described the union's unequivocal support for the strikers as "one of the clearest decisions the Indian Workers Association president, called for political and financial support for Burnsall's campaign is the first time in our history". The IWAB union has described the dreadful bullying and victimisation they had suffered.

Lynn Jones, Labour MP for Selly Oak, brought messages of support from Tony Benn and many other Labour MPs. Mike Willis, NUM executive, stated that it was essential that disputes like Burnsall never happen again and that the TUC took effective action to support them.

Lambeth strike against racism

By expelled Labour Councillor Steve French

Thirty-one Lambeth pay-section workers have been on all-out strike for the last month. This is the culmination of a 30-month-long struggle.

Five white officers were regarded as too high a scale than the thirty-one predominantly black workers who do the same job. The council leadership and management have refused to negotiate. Their solution is to reassign the white officers to surrendered羌े邱白 officer has been given a new promising post in the GLEA for help with their rejected this unpalatable for them — option. The director of the CLEA has even sent his promised letter of apology to the thirty-one, who he accepts have been "unfairly treated".

Now Chief Executive Her- man Oxeney has found employment as boss of the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) while overseeing institutional racism within Lambeth council.

The strike is bold and the workers will now argue for an escalation of action across the council. Meanwhile the Borough faces £47 million in cuts, but the council leadership prefers to face down this strike rather than ally with the workers in their struggle against cuts.

Messages of support and queries for support should be sent to Lambeth NAPO 64 Acre Lane, Brixton SW9.

JOE QUIGLY, the GMB official responsible for the strike, argued that the 20-month protest down the Tory government, and commit to further Labour government to repeal all anti-trade union laws as giving real power to industrial disputes within the Health and Safety executive. No McClymont, TGWU convenor at Longwood, added.

The Burnsall strike is against conditions suffered by hundreds of thousands of workers in small, low-paid factories run by unscrupulous employers.

It has many parallels with the historic strike at Greenwood's Minsforth Holroyd and Imperial Textile Printers. The TGWU and GMB leaders described the campaign against unionised isolated and low-paid workplaces. Burnsall is crucial for the credibility of their campaign, in the West Midlands at least.

For donations and speakers contact Danny Parry of Joe Quigley, 021-350-4844.

Arnie-Marie Sweeney, of the Or- dox Friends of China, described making a one-hour film about the dispute for Channel 4.

HSE concedes 70 per cent of deaths in China are preventable. But no employer has ever been jailed for causing death, or serious injury through poor safety. Indeed, management face prosecution in less than one per cent of all incidents involving construction site deaths.

Last week, the work-and-life-based Construction Safety Campaign lobbied parliament to draw attention to a situation which Labour MP Sam Gilmour, amounts to an annual Piper Alpha disaster.

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It's not just the Tories...

It's a right royal rip-off

Making the boss of a caste of state-supported hereditary billionaires Britain's head of state is not just a bad joke. It is a serious restraint on democracy itself. The monarch is an integral part of the bourgeois state which can appoint and dismiss governments at will.

All socialists should be unconditional republicans by definition. We argue for a democratic socialist republic - a workers' state. But we recognise that even a republic on the basis of capitalism would still be a step forward for democracy.

Even the Queen's belated and doubtless grudging concessions are an absolute con. She is reportedly trying to make out that her taxable wealth is a mere £50 million, and that after deducting 'legitimate business expenses', it will take four or five years even to repay the latest handout. Bollocks, Ma'am.

The Queen is the richest woman in the world, with the royal fortune widely estimated at £3000-7000 million. Phillip Hall, a leading authority on royal finances, estimates the Queen has investments worth £330 million, yielding £19 million a year.

Sandringham and Balmoral castles are worth another £100 million, and the royals' £56 million a year in taxpayers' doh annually.

Then there is the annual £3 million revenue from the Duchy of Lancaster, not to mention the antiques, jewels, racehorses and art collections, and an ocean-going liner passed off as 'the royal yacht'. All this has been tax-free since 1937.

Liberal Democrat MP Simon Hughes last year tabled a bill calling on the Queen to pay tax. Even thoroughly blue-blooded Tory Michael Ancram MP - heir to the Marquess of Lothian and married to the Duke of Norfolk's daughter - has demanded such a change. Not a dickie bird from the Labour front bench.

Major's announcement of the latest measures came in response to a planted question from Labour leader John Smith. It was the sort of sycophancy normally dispayed by backbench Tory toadies out to curry favour with the whips.

The Queen last week remarked that 1992 had been an 'annus horribilis', or horrible year. Not half as horrible as 1917 was for the Romanovs, your Majesty. Anyone know the Latin for 'year of revolution'?