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**Workers
power**

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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NO UN**YUGOSLAVIA
AND BOSNIA****intervention!**

THE BOSNIAN capital of Sarajevo has collapsed into wanton destruction, starvation and slaughter. Its 300,000 residents are without regular supplies of water, medicine and food. Whole suburbs have been under siege for months without relief. Buildings are pounded day and night by heavy artillery and rockets.

The Serb militias, armed and backed by the Serbian dominated Yugoslav army, are attempting to seize and annexe whole swathes of Bosnia against the wishes and national rights of the Muslim and Croatian communities who make up 60% of the population. The Croatian army and militias are doing the same in Western Herzegovina.

Tudjman's government in Croatia has a similar project of national aggrandisement at the expense of Serbian and Muslim inhabitants of the region. All workers, all socialists, must oppose these reactionary nationalist projects.

Now the United Nations (UN), with Europe and the USA as the driving force, are gearing up to intervene. A meeting of European ministers on 27 June called on the UN to take "all necessary measures" to open Sarajevo airport, a scarcely concealed code for military action. The UN Secretary General has given the Serbs a 48-hour deadline to stop the fighting or face the consequences.

Butchers

The imperialist powers, headed as ever by the "peace-loving" butchers in the White House, claim that military intervention will ensure "humanitarian aid" to the people of Sarajevo. This is filthy hypocrisy. The current crisis with all its attendant human misery is a direct result of policies pursued by US and European imperialism.

For years they crippled the Yugoslav economy with debt, giving rise to economic crisis, rivalries



and national antagonisms as the old Stalinist Yugoslav bureaucracy broke down along chauvinist lines. They encouraged the rise of the nationalist Muslim Party in Bosnia through promises of economic support and recognition of independence.

They adopted a policy of the repartition of Yugoslavia knowing full well this would divide Bosnia along national lines. A policy which, because of the interpenetrated nature of the peoples of the area, could only bring forced population transfers, pogroms, and further massacres. A policy that will only further inflame national and ethnic tensions throughout the Balkans.

The very idea that the imperialists are acting on altruistic or humanitarian motives is a sick joke. They want to break the Serbian assault to enable the Croats

to get as much out of Bosnia as they can. This will leave the imperialists free to extract profits from a new semi-colonial "Greater Croatia" and provide a buffer state against the Serbs.

Connive

As the Shi'ites of Southern Iraq discovered to their cost last year, the imperialist armies decide nothing on "humanitarian" principles. They will happily connive with the extreme rightist Tudjman and the fascist Croatian HOS militias to crush resistance to their planned new order in the Balkans, based on the restoration of capitalism.

There is only one way for the people of Sarajevo to free themselves from the cycle of destruction and death. The workers of all national and ethnic groups must

break from national chauvinism and the cynical war aims of their leaders and build multi-national defence militias against the pogroms and fratricidal wars.

In Britain, to their shame, key figures on the left such as Tony Benn have added their voices to the call for imperialist sanctions against Serbia. Where economic sanctions are imposed, military sanctions are rarely far behind. Benn's social pacifism leads him once again to fall in behind the imperialists' plans. No socialist or worker should follow him down this road.

Unlike Benn, true internationalists oppose all imperialist sanctions and military intervention in the region. We demand that all

the victims of the imperialists' policies, all refugees and victims of the civil war, must be allowed free entry to EC countries.

Belligerent

The increasingly belligerent attitude of the EC creates the need for a united campaign of all working class organisations across Europe against intervention and war. In Britain this means that the entire labour movement, the unions, Labour left and left wing organisations must unite in common action against intervention with rallies, pickets and demonstrations on the broadest possible scale. The imperialists must be given the clear message:

- **No more Iraqs! Hands off the Balkans!**
- **No sanctions! No UN interventions!**

HIV/AIDS

A matter for the law?

THE PRESS has had a field day with the case of an HIV positive Birmingham man who reportedly infected several women. It has hounded all concerned, inflicting even greater misery. AIDS is back as the main "moral panic".

Why is the press so fascinated with this particular case? Because it has been able to link what is seen as the immorality of casual sex with the immorality of willfully spreading disease. Propaganda which links the two is a powerful weapon in the hands of the ruling class. The message is: don't have casual sex.

Now someone previously seen as an "innocent victim", someone infected through treatment for haemophilia, has joined the role call of those stigmatised as spreaders of disease.

Terrified

Stories abound of terrified women who may have slept with him, their terrified boyfriends, their babies. Other stories suggest that this is revenge sex, a man's revenge on womankind because his mother gave him haemophilia through passing on a deficient gene.

Yet it is the nature of the Tories' own AIDS health prevention campaign, together with the way the gutter press has treated the AIDS threat, that are really responsible for the lack of proper information on, or encouragement of, safer sex.

The overwhelming identification of AIDS with gays, injecting drug users and Africans presented in the press has stigmatised those groups, led to terrible discrimination and attacks—and meant serious miseducation. Although the govern-

BY CLARE HEATH

ment health campaigns have insisted that AIDS is a problem for everyone, this was done in such a moralistic and ultimately unrealistic way that many people continue to think of it as a disease affecting "guilty" but not "innocent" people. Thus safer sex messages aren't taken to apply to them.

If the man accused in Birmingham

and his partners had been gay, the press would not have whipped up a panic about his "victims". Because gay men are expected to know the risks, his partners would have been considered to be irresponsible for not practicing safe sex. This same code of conduct is not applied to heterosexual relationships, however brief. HIV is considered to be so rare amongst heterosexuals (usually but mislead-

ingly called the "general population") as to be discounted as a real threat—especially at the end of a drunken Saturday night on the town.

It's true that, statistically, HIV is rare amongst heterosexual, non-drug injectors in Britain. But if your partner happens to be one of the unfortunate few, it doesn't do much good to know that it's pretty unusual! Heterosexual sex is not in

and of itself safe sex. Unless safer sex practices are used, heterosexual sex can and does spread HIV just as efficiently as gay sex. That is the lesson that the government are failing to get over.

Many gay men have radically changed their behaviour in response to AIDS. But this was not due to government health warnings, but because there was a positive message about safe sex put about through the gay community and gay press. Avoiding AIDS did not have to mean celibacy or one partner for life, but could mean many partners with safer sex. To get such a positive message across to all young people means good sex education, a positive attitude to options of sexuality, basically making people comfortable with sex, condoms and whatever else people want to do to be safe. Effectively abolishing sex education, outlawing discussions of homosexuality, closing family planning clinics, youth centres, lesbian and gay centres... all these Tory policies obstruct the fight against HIV.

Furore

And for all the furore, the Tories are not going to immediately change the law and start detaining those who are thought to be putting others at risk. Their reluctance is pragmatic. On the one hand they already have sufficient powers under existing legislation. On the other they have been convinced that legal detention of people with HIV is unlikely to be much practical help in controlling the epidemic. What would they do—lock up all those found to be HIV positive? Give them all injections to curb their sex drive?

What should we be arguing for to help fight the epidemic? If someone has HIV, they should be given all the advice and support possible to make sure they understand the risks to others. They should be encouraged to tell partners. But if the state was to start doing compulsory partner notification, basically directly telling all previous partners that they have been in contact with someone with HIV, then the most likely result is that even fewer people would come forward to have HIV tests. They would then not even know if they were HIV positive or not, and would not be able to tell their sexual partners.

Although HIV and AIDS is still most frequently affecting gay men and injecting drug users, there are an increasing number of other people infected. Rights to privacy and protection from discrimination must be won for all those with HIV. Without that people will either be reluctant to get tested, or will feel unable to tell people their results and therefore may put others at risk.

Sexually transmitted diseases have always been used to generate moral panic and then to control or stigmatise the people affected. The only real answer is to transform attitudes to sexuality, to make sex something that can be talked about, learned about and practiced free from all the present repression and guilt.

Then responsible behaviour will be much easier for those infected and everyone else. But the capitalist system, and its bourgeois morality, its family model and its hypocrisy can never deliver this. ■



Punishing the parents

FOR FROM giving much needed additional cash to single mothers and their children, the Child Support Act (CSA) is going to increase poverty. This new Tory legislation means that mothers receiving state benefits will have to name their child's father or face their benefit being cut by £7.95 a week.

The Tories argue that this is to make fathers act in a more responsible way and continue to provide financial support. They will be forced by law to pay anything from £2 to £125 a week to their families. But most women and children will not be any better off. Every pound gained from the father will be deducted from their benefit. The only winner here is the state. The government plans to save £400 million a year through reductions in benefit paid out.

Many single mothers don't want to tell the state who the father of their child is, but this law gives her no choice. This is particularly true for women who have split up from a violent and abusive partner who know they will be at risk if they name the father and allow the state to estab-

BY CLARE ROBERTS

lish contact between them. The Act makes some provision for exemption, but only where the state is satisfied that there is a risk of harm or undue distress to parent or child. So women will be forced to prove abuse to some interfering official or face having their benefit docked.

The Tories are pushing this legislation through not only to save themselves money, but as part of a general policy on the family. An increasing number of children are now being brought up in homes that don't correspond to the model of mum, dad and kids. The Tories openly label this a "threat" to society. They un-

derstand what a central role the family plays in maintaining the status quo, providing free labour in the home and disciplining children. This particular legislation is in effect a punishment for women and men who choose or are forced to live in other ways.

But the question of the family is not necessarily an easy one for the Tories. There are important divisions amongst them. On the one hand is the old Thatcherite wing who want women to be largely responsible for children and other dependents at home, further reducing public spending on state care. On the other is the more "modernising" wing who recognise the centrality of women to

the workforce, see the lack of childcare provision as obstructing this, and argue for more support for working mothers. At the moment this latter wing, represented by people like Gillian Shephard, is increasing its influence and promoting improved tax concessions and childcare for working mothers. Of course, Shephard and Co aren't arguing for increased state provision, but for the private sector to be encouraged to fill the gap. So whilst these two wings of the Tories have somewhat different ideas about the future role of women in the economy, they share one important belief... the state should not pay!

The CSA will come into full force next April. In the meantime preparations are underway in the DSS to set up ways of sticking their noses into everyone's affairs and gain powers to dock wages and benefits.

Campaigns against the CSA are being urged by various groups like the National Council for One Parent Families, Women's Aid and Child Poverty Action, but resistance needs to go beyond letter-writing and lobbying. The Campaign Against Domestic Violence in Manchester has taken this issue up. Other groups need to do the same, demanding the immediate repeal of the Act and a living wage or benefit for all families including single parents, linked to the cost of living and the average industrial wage.

It is vital that such a campaign builds links with the DSS workers who are being forced to implement the policies, and that the issue is taken to workplaces and trade unions. This attack will affect millions of men, women and children, and is something that all workers should be taking up. ■

MANCHESTER CAMPAIGN AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE Fight the Child Support Act! PUBLIC MEETING

Speaker from the campaign plus a Manchester DSS worker

Monday 6 July 6.30-8.00pm

Great Western Street

Children welcome Creche available

EDITORIAL

No vote to Prescott

THE RESULTS of Labour's leadership elections were stitched up long before this month's special conference. Even before the contest opened, trade union bureaucrats Edmonds, Jordan and Morris were making clear they expected John Smith to be the new leader.

By mid-June, a combination of "consultation exercises" and the odd postal ballot in the unions had ensured that more than half the trade union block vote was lined up for Smith and deputy leader candidate, Margaret Beckett.

Labour Party members faced with their ballot forms will search long and hard for any detectable difference between the candidates in their election platforms. There is clearly no reason for supporting any of the candidates standing for either leader or deputy leader.

Smith represents the traditional right of the party. His manifesto calls for a more "efficient economy and a fairer society . . . a strategy of investment which convinces all electors they will gain in prosperity". Capitalism will be run more efficiently under Labour with John Smith at the helm goes the argument. Gould's plea for a "radical agenda for the 1990s" is certainly no left alternative.

Gould stands for a further distancing from the unions and a shift in the parties policies rightwards to appeal to the so-called middle ground.

On the question of union links there is no great difference between the two main contenders. John Smith is set to continue Kinnock's "reform" of the party with the introduction of one-member one-vote (OMOV) and the reduction in the size of the block vote. While Smith is firmly wedded to doing the job demanded by the ruling class and their lackeys in the media, breaking the direct links with the trade unions, he also recognises the reality of who pays the

pipe. Thus when Smith's ally, John Edmonds, backtracked on pushing ahead with OMOV in parliamentary selections, Smith hastily backed down himself!

The undemocratic rules in the party prevented the Campaign Group's candidates, Ken Livingstone and Bernie Grant, from even reaching the ballot paper. Candidates had to receive 20% of Labour MPs nominations to go forward—a rule introduced specifically to exclude any left challenge in the leadership race.

In the absence of any left candidates John Prescott, standing for the deputy leadership, has been trying to portray himself as a "traditional" Labour leader as against the "modernisers", a candidate who stands for continuing strong links with the unions

Prescott's boasting of his working class credentials and talk of "back to basics" has fooled many trade unionists and some left Labour supporters into thinking it might be worth supporting him. Predictably enough a whole section of the far left has tailed along behind.

For the Militant it is enough for Prescott to say he is "happy to accept Clause IV" and that there is "a good case for public ownership" to declare that it "marks him out from all other candidates".

The SWP typically jumped on the band wagon when it became apparent that various trade union executives, like NUPE, were going to back Prescott. Originally it had argued that Prescott represented no real alternative, that he had never challenged Kinnock's policies and like Beckett was suddenly trying to rediscover some "left" credentials. Suddenly it discovered that:

"Voting for Prescott is the only way thousands of trade unionists and Labour Party members can show their disgust with Labour's leaders."

While Militant paints Prescott up as a defender of "Clause IV and public ownership" his actual posi-

tion is very different. In a recent interview in the *Morning Star* he makes a series of attacks on the profits of British Telecom but quickly adds:

"That is not to say that we want to immediately renationalise the utilities. Labour is a party of compensation, not confiscation, so we must look seriously at the priorities of expenditure."

Just like the rest of them Prescott has no intention of taking anything back into public ownership. Instead he waffles on about the need for the utilities to be "accountable". For all his talk about maintaining the trade union links he remains studiously vague about his actual position, saying only that he is for "reform of the block vote" and a "mass membership party", without giving any commitments on the role of the trade unions within the party.

More significantly, like the rest of the candidates, Prescott has been part of the witch-hunting right wing Labour leadership which has hounded activists from the party and dumped countless Conference policies. Unlike Livingstone and Grant, he has no links to the organised left. There is no movement behind Prescott and no way of calling him to account.

Prescott is a typical "not-so-left faker". That the so-called "revolutionary" left can help peddle illusions in this man and his policies shows how far they have been dragged rightwards by the rightward moves in the Labour Party. The only way workers and socialists can show their "disgust with Labour's leaders" and its policies is to spoil their ballot papers and return them to Walworth Road. ■

Published every month by the Workers Power Group:
BCM 7750, London WC1 3XX
ISSN 0263 - 1121
Printed by Jang International London:
57 Lant Street, London SE1 1QN

DEANE FAMILY
CAMPAIGNBritish
justice —
racist justice

ANGRY SHOUTS of "This is a South African court", "Johannesburg, Los Angeles" and "British police, racist bastards" greeted the magistrates' guilty verdict against Tony Deane on 25 June. Tony, a young black man, had just been convicted of two charges of assaulting the police. Alongside his 54-year old father, Arnold, who was acquitted on similar charges, Tony was punched and kicked by constables from West Ham police station on 4 November last year.

The police assault left Tony with facial and chest injuries. His father had a serious asthma attack and ended up in hospital.

Under the co-ordination of the Newham Monitoring Project, a community-based defence campaign soon gathered strength in response to the state's attempts to criminalise the Deanes. Its activities included a 3,000 strong demonstration through the streets of Newham in protest against the police victimisation of the Deane family and the racist murder of a 28-year old Tamil refugee.

Tony's conviction came in spite of a blistering cross examination by

the defence counsel which revealed that the constables at the heart of the Crown's case had literally copied each other's notes, in violation of their own code of practice. There were also irreconcilable differences between the police testimony and the evidence given by two civilian witnesses.

The magistrates, however, clearly saw it as their duty to save face for the racist British state. Their sheepishness was apparent in the imposition of £250 fines and £50 in court costs against Tony. They could have sent him to prison for up to a year but did not dare to go further to incite the packed gallery. Tony's barrister has promised an appeal against the conviction.

Whatever the outcome of that appeal, the struggle against state racism must continue. The fourth Tory term promises the re-introduction of the Asylum Bill which will increase state harassment of black communities.

The Deane family case is a reminder of the vital importance of supporting black community self-defence and the fight against state harassment and racism in general. ■

OILC conference

THE FOUNDING conference of the OILC, the offshore oil workers' union, took place on 27-28 June.

Since its initial decision to become an independent industrial union last October the OILC has recruited 1,500 members. It has begun to forge links with Norwegian unions which organise in the oil industry, especially the OSS which also began its life as an unofficial union. There were nine Norwegian brothers and sisters at the conference.

These significant achievements have not, however, deterred the ongoing offensive by union bureaucrats whose historic failure to organise the British sector of the North Sea created the necessity for the OILC's birth. On the eve of the conference the leadership of the RMT, which has an unspecified number of members offshore, issued a lying press statement, attacking the OILC and opposing the new union's affiliation to the STUC and the TUC. The OILC has not yet decided whether to apply for membership of either.

There is also mounting evidence that the AEEU has been pursuing a single union "sweetheart" deal with the offshore contractors. The AEEU has been especially vicious in its red-baiting of the OILC.

At the same time substantial support has developed within sections of the labour movement for the OILC. The EIS teachers' union conference defied their platform to support the oil workers' right to join the STUC, while Scottish NALGO has adopted a similar position. Aberdeen and Govan Trades Councils have also lent support.

Though the conference attracted an official representative of the SNP, the closest thing to a Labour Party presence was a flying visit by ex-MP Frank Doran. In contrast to most other union conferences the left was more than welcome and contributions were taken from workers in other sectors, including victimised building worker, Mick Dooley, secretary of the Joint Sites Committee (see p4).

A serious shortcoming of the conference was the inadequate time allocated for members to draw a balance sheet and discuss the way forward. While a three hour closed session agreed a constitution, elected a national committee and confirmed Ronnie McDonald as the OILC's first general secretary, the absence of a delegate structure precluded the discussion of resolutions.

Despite the OILC's undeniable

successes many of its activists are onshore, sacked and victimised in the wake of the summer 1990 strikes, which at their height mobilised far more workers than currently belong to the union.

At this stage ambiguities remain in the OILC's attitude towards further industrial action. Such action is necessary and inevitable if the union is to achieve the goal of recognition from the multinational oil bosses. There is a tendency within the existing leadership to rely on academically informed argument with the likes of the EC and the Health and Safety Executive.

Nonetheless, the potential remains for building a healthy democratic industrial union and in the wake of its founding conference the OILC still warrants the support of all socialists and class conscious workers. ■

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..... Trade union

SINCE THE end of January this year, rank and file building workers on the London sites have been organising in the Joint Sites Committee (JSC). Every dispute that the JSC has been involved in it has won. The JSC is a concrete example of why rank and file organisation is essential to stop the bosses making workers pay the price of the recession.

The crisis in the construction industry has brought massive unemployment for building workers. The sites have been getting more and more like the docks a hundred years ago, with workers having to turn up each morning without being sure of getting a day's work. Over the last period more than a third of all new projects and of sites where building operations are in progress have been cancelled.

The bosses are using the fear of unemployment to push down rates of pay. Three years ago before the bubble of the construction boom burst, bricklayers were getting an average of £80-£85 a day. Now many workers are lucky to get half that. On Vascroft's site at Gloucester Road pay is down to £23 a day for a ten and a quarter hour shift!

The JSC has filled the vacuum left by cringing union officials who

JOINT SITES COMMITTEE

Building workers organise!

BY RICHARD BRENNER

have refused to take up a fight and defy the anti-union laws. In a series of strikes, at the Brady Street school site in Whitechapel, Guys Hospital, Holborn Barrs, Vascroft's and at the North Circular road-works at Hanger Lane, the JSC has treated the anti-union laws with the contempt they deserve. They have defied the laws and sent out secondary pickets, used leaflets and canteen meetings to get their

message across to building workers, called on other workers for support, and united sub-contracted workers with those on the payroll.

Delegations have been sent to the UCATT conference, and on a tour of Merseyside to take the message of resistance to as many building workers as possible. By the end of May the JSC in London had won all nine of the strikes that it had been involved in.

The problem of bankruptcies amongst smaller companies of sub

and trade contractors, leading to workers not being paid, has been tackled head on. At Guy's Hospital the main contractors, Higgs and Hill, were forced to pay three weeks wages owed to the employees of a brickwork sub-contractor that had gone bust, and workers who lost three weeks money in similar circumstances at Hanger Lane have taken their fight to the main contractor, Balfour Beatty.

The JSC is building for an all-out strike for higher pay in the summer. Every trade unionist and worker should support them. As the experience of the JSC shows so far, action will be met by main and sub-contractors with sackings and victimisations of stewards and activists.

The secretary of the JSC, Mick Dooley [see interview, left], was sacked by Sterns Brickwork from the Brady St. School site. The JSC helped organise the strike action that forced them to reinstate him. At Vascroft's, Gloucester Road, a ten-day battle won reinstatement for three sacked workers, and after picketing another Vascroft's site nearby the bosses were forced to concede reinstatement, recognition of stewards, a cut in the length of the working day and proper canteen facilities.

Imaginative and militant tactics have been used such as the famous occupation of the crane at Vascroft's Harrington Hall site, in a battle over the sacking of five workers.

Mobilise

If the strike goes ahead this summer the union bureaucrats must not be allowed off the hook. They must immediately declare the strike official, and mobilise the broadest possible support if the Tories or the bosses try to use the anti-union laws. The strength of the JSC is that it is organised across the unions and across all craft divisions.

The JSC is doing what the official unions should be doing. But it will not be enough in the long run if

the JSC limits itself to being just a militant back-up for the official unions, able to confront the laws without exposing the officials to legal penalty. These laws have only succeeded so far because the fat-cat union bureaucrats have refused to challenge them time and again.

Challenge

The JSC needs to challenge the leadership of the unions, to hold them to account, to demand that they take up the struggle and to organise against them and replace them where necessary. Central to this is the fight for a single union of all building workers.

The JSC needs to fight for:

- a single union on the sites
- elected officials subject to immediate recall and paid no more than the average wage of the workers they represent
- a minimum wage of £8 an hour
- a maximum 35 hour working week
- workers' control of health and safety
- workers' control of hiring and firing
- nationalisation of the main developers and contractors under workers' control

This recession has thrown hundreds of thousands of workers onto the dole whilst thousands remain homeless or in appalling accommodation. Capitalism is unable to rationally plan production and building to meet their needs. Building workers and other workers are made to pay the price. To challenge this workers not only need to build militant unions with rank and file control, but also to build a new party.

We need a party that fights for socialism, for a democratic plan of production to launch a massive programme of house building, to house the homeless and put workers back to work.

That way the bosses' class can be forced to pay the price of the crisis in the construction industry, not the workers. ■

INTERVIEW

A bit of muscle for the union movement

G R McColl spoke to Mick Dooley, Secretary of the Joint Sites Committee (JSC), an organisation of rank and file building workers across London.

WP: Could you tell me about the organisation of the JSC?

MD: We've got about 40 hardcore active members and 150-200 in the JSC, at a push. Hopefully we're going to be spreading and building up our numbers in the future. We're also concentrating on galvanising our hardcore as well. We were meeting monthly but we've started meeting fortnightly. The first meeting was in January and the first dispute associated with the JSC was in February.

We've got between nine and 14 sites with active members. Not all the sites have got more than one, but we still have an input and members can tell us what's happening on the site. If there's any problems on the sites they can call us and we're quick to react. We can build around them using our contacts, people that we know are sympathetic to taking action. That's been very successful at two of the sites where 100% know what's happening. Although it's only two sites, for us it's quite a big bonus. Even when men with no hope say they won't support you, you'll never really know who will support you until the moment comes.

We've got people in the T&G, UCATT, no trade union and in the electricians' union. Basically every union has been affected.

WP: Do you see yourselves as becoming in effect an alternative union on the site?

MD: Some of the lads have got these grandiose ideas about becoming a little trade union but we never set out to be like that. All we set out to be is a bit of muscle for the trade union movement. We realised we didn't have any muscle, but that we could be like a muscular arm, a bargaining point, which officials can go in there and threaten the employers with.

Obviously there are some who want to take it a bit further and if things carry on the way they've been going it might well go a bit further. I'm easy either way, I'm not too worried. Whether it'll be another Oil Industry Liaison Committee I don't know—its early days yet and remains to be seen.

WP: It's one of your main objectives to get a London-wide strike?

MD: That's what's being discussed, and that's what we're heading for. Some members wish to widen the organisation and to just tell people what's going on within



Mick Dooley

the building industry, how it's run, the methods of employment used and build support from around the country.

WP: Is a very substantial part of the workforce employed by sub-contractors?

MD: I would say 50% at least are sub-contractors, say 700,000 sub-contractors and 600,000 PAYE. With us it doesn't matter if you're employed or a sub-contractor.

WP: What are rates of pay like in London at the moment?

They reflect the fact that there's so many unemployed building workers. There have been 50%, 60% wage cuts. But it's not just wage cuts. When you cut the wages you also cut the conditions, safety etc. The thing is that you can't afford to work in some instances unless you're signing on, criminalising people for working.

WP: What sort of demands would you be putting forward if you pull off the London-wide strike?

MD: We're very Thatcherite in our attitude towards our demands! We're Thatcher's children: we want more money. Simple as that. We realise that we're not getting the same terms and conditions of employment other workers get, so unless we get these employment rights, we want more money. That's the only language the employers understand. We understand that and we're going to hit them financially. Union recognition isn't necessarily our demand. Once we've got more money we can deal with that. ■

River Don strike

STEEL WORKERS at River Don Stampings (RDS) in Sheffield are out on strike against management attempts to cut their wages by an average of £35 a week. The bosses are also trying to renounce all previous agreements with the union.

These attacks come after four years of big give-backs to management involving changes in hours, flexible rostering and an 18 month pay standstill. This from a company that made £16 million pre-tax profit last year and paid shareholders a £9.50 dividend on each share.

RDS is part of the big steel group Forgemasters PLC, which covers four other plants. After a dispute in 1987 management broke Forge Masters up into five companies so that under Tory anti-union laws workers in dispute at one site could not bring the whole company out.

The management are deliberately taking on the Don workers as a test to see what they can introduce elsewhere. Workers at another plant in the group, Temple Springs, are also threatened with pay cuts. It is important that the workers don't let the management isolate each plant in this way. Spreading the action means defying the law, and taking on the resistance of the bureaucrats. Workers should start by sending pickets out to the other plants, holding meetings and winning their support. ■

Information, messages of support and donations: River Don Stampings Dispute Committee, C/O SCCAU, West Street, Sheffield S14 5EQ. Telephone Sheffield (0742) 724866.

LONDON'S HOSPITALS and London's hospital workers are feeling the full consequences of the Tory election victory. They are facing a management onslaught on jobs and provision which, if successful, will leave services dangerously low, and hundreds of hospital workers on the dole.

The new Kings Fund proposals, detailed in the Workers Power bulletin reproduced here, aims to shut whole hospitals. But the cuts have already started and if they are allowed to go through then the Kings Fund proposals will follow them.

Workers at the Middlesex, University College Hospital and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital and Hospital for Women, Soho, led the way in the fight against the cuts with a one day strike on 25 June.

The three hospitals are faced with 200 job losses and the slashing of 111 beds by September—and this will save only £6 million of the £19 million debt!

The strikers mounted lively and angry pickets, and marched to the Bloomsbury and Islington Health Authority headquarters, demanding to speak to the managers. Eventually Sir Alan Greengross, Chair of the Health Authority, ventured out under police protection. Greengross blamed the market mechanism for the cuts—ignoring the fact that he himself is an advocate of this system!

The danger now is that the momentum will be lost. The one day strike was useful to test the water but on its own it is not going to force a change. Management are trying to rush through redeployment and redundancies. They are already planning competitive interviews between staff for the reduced number of jobs.

The danger now is with an indefinite strike. There would be too much on management's mind to be interviewing staff! The strike should aim to win other health workers across London to strike with us and push the union leaders into making it an official regional dispute. This is the way to roll back the onslaught throughout London and put the Kings Fund proposals in the bin.

Many workers feel it is impossible to organise such a strike. But what is the alternative? It is seeing piecemeal resistance easily defeated—perhaps a handful of jobs saved, a better redeployment agreement, but the beds lost permanently.

The COHSE branch at the Middlesex has already won a commitment to a London-wide day of action. But now the officials have set the date—for September! By then

LONDON HOSPITALS

Indefinite strike to save jobs!

BY JANE POTTER

the beds will be closed and the jobs gone.

Socialist Worker Party supporters have argued that calling an indefinite strike would sow illusions in the ability of such a strike to stop the closures. They argue that it is not possible to turn a strike in one hospital into a rolling strike across London. Instead they call for a national day of action. This demand is aimed at—Norman Willis! This is really sowing illusions. In fact, the way the union officials will be compelled to listen is if they are put under the real pressure of an indefinite strike in London that has the potential to spread.

It is possible to launch such a strike if key steps are taken. Already the strike action has won over workers from the RCN and more will follow if a lead is given. The one day strike was a joint union action and this co-operation must continue at all levels together with mass meetings and an elected strike committee. Then workers can go out to other hospitals to spread the strike and to other London workers to win support.

The alternative is to sit back and let the Tories and the health chiefs destroy London's health service. ■

KINGS FUND PROPOSALS When profits come before people . . .

LONDON IS facing the biggest ever attack on NHS jobs and services.

The NHS internal market and the Trusts mean we are likely to see 2,000 beds closed along with at least two hospitals—one third of hospital beds in London will be lost over a ten year period.

But that is not the worst of it. The Kings Fund, an influential think tank, has recommended the closure of 15 teaching hospitals, the cutting of over 6,000 beds and the loss of thousands of health workers' jobs, including 3,000 medical staff.

For Bloomsbury this means not a "one site" hospital Trust but no hospitals at all!

The Kings' Fund proposals should bring anybody who supports the Tory health plans to their senses.

It claims that, because of the internal market, many hospitals in London will simply go to the wall as contracts go to cheaper areas.

It says: why not make sure the devastation of London hospitals is done in a planned way, not haphazardly, and overseen by a special NHS demolition gang called a "task force".

At the same time it recommends massive investment to bring in a new kind of health service in London based on clinics, counselling, treatment centres and nursing beds.

Whatever the pros and cons of this kind of care, we can be sure that the promise of a brave new world of commu-

nity based care will be used to justify CUTS in spending and service standards. That is exactly what has happened in psychiatric care.

The Kings Fund report admits that a minimum of £250 million extra investment will be needed to make its new plan work. But the government is committed to cutting back public spending, now the election is over.

And of course it takes no account of the jobs massacre that will take place, with thousands of NHS workers thrown on the scrapheap.

We need to fight every cut. We should

The drug and supply companies who make £millions out of the NHS should be nationalised, without compensation and integrated into a total health care service.

reject the Kings Fund proposals.

We need a workers' answer to the health care crisis.

Our answer should start from what is needed, not what the bosses and the

government can afford.

We say:

- Scrap the internal market and the trusts

- Make all health care free at the point of need

The inefficiencies in the NHS were caused by underfunding and bureaucratic control.

We need a health service run by and for those who use it and work in it. That means abolishing the appointed health authorities and placing the NHS under workers' and patients' control.

Only then will we be able to expand community and preventative care without it being the excuse for cutting the overall service and destroying jobs.

To pay for the kind of health service we need the money should come from the profits of the rich.

All private health care should be nationalised.

The drug and supply companies who make £millions out of the NHS should be nationalised, without compensation and integrated into a total health care service.

That is the socialist solution to the health crisis - a solution that puts need before profit.

Is it utopian?

Not if workers fight for it.

And the current attack on jobs and services means that there is no other option but to fight! ■

From Workers Power's 25 June strike bulletin

Birmingham strikes

THE LABOUR movement in the West Midlands has received a very welcome shot in the arm with disputes and strikes breaking out over a number of issues. Birmingham neighbourhood office workers are taking indefinite strike action against chronic under-staffing and Sandwell teachers saw off a threat of compulsory redundancies with a 90% vote for strike action. Busworkers have also showed a willingness to take action against management's attempt to cut real wages.

Two industrial strikes illustrate both the new found determination to fight for trade union rights and the need for effective tactics to win.

Three hundred hourly paid workers at Alcan Plate in Kitts Green, Birmingham, responded to management threats to derecognise the TGWU, AEEU and MSF by taking strike action. They had no choice after management announced contract changes to reduce pay, alter

shift patterns, enforce overtime and cut holiday entitlement.

A massive 93% of the blue collar workers voted for action after the bosses drafted a "new agreement" and then refused to sign it themselves! The strike has been solid and determined with round-the-clock picket rotas and mass meetings. It is receiving good support from local trade unionists where union rights are clearly at stake.

Support

The strikers are even getting financial support from workers at another Alcan plant in Ireland. Clearly they must actively seek the support of fellow workers at the thirty other Alcan sites in Britain to ensure that work is not transferred to these plants.

Workers at the Kitts Green site must also overcome management's determination to use white collar staff still inside the works as scab

labour. This threatens not just the strike but also the health and safety of the office staff. Their union (ACTTS) must call them out as well to prevent scabbing and make sure the plant is shut down tight! If this means coming up against the Tory laws then the choice is clear—either defy the law or face the prospect of no union rights for any section of the workforce and an increasingly hostile and arrogant management.

The Burnstall electro-plating workers' strike in Smethwick is also over trade union recognition plus health and safety rights. It is also concerned with a racist management and includes a fight for equal pay for women workers.

The Burnstalls management—who gave themselves a 40% pay increase last year while the workforce got a princely 1%—show no concern for safety or welfare and treat the mainly Punjabi workforce with disdain. "If the workers don't like our condi-

tions they can get another job", declared Managing Director Terry O'Neill.

Those conditions have included numerous accidents, lack of proper safety equipment and compulsory overtime which workers are expected to do at the drop of a hat. Worker Steven Wright protested at the excessive hours and was promptly sacked.

Reinstatement

The twenty strikers are demanding his reinstatement along with proper safety measures and an end to discriminatory pay where women workers take home £20-£30 less than the men.

Strikers told Workers Power about the daily pressure from a racist and arrogant management—such as one worker who was docked £4 for "being cheeky".

The defiant stand against these Victorian conditions has brought

wide support. Workers from local castings plants regularly visit the picket line and collections and delegations are coming from public and private sector alike.

This has continued despite an attempt to criminalise the strikers. Six have been prevented from attending the picket line after being accused of involvement in an assault. Management are bringing in extra workers to work alongside the three scabs, to try to keep the plant going.

Unionising and organising the many tiny firms in the Smethwick area, and areas like it, is a vital task for the union movement at present. Strikes like that at Burnstalls can be won by stopping suppliers and outlets, and getting support on the picket line to stop the plants operating.

The strike should also be used to spark off similar action in other small firms and in particular as part of a campaign to force up safety standards in electro-plating. ■

Messages of support and donations to Joe Qulgley, GMB, Will Thorne House, 2 Birmingham Road, Halesowen, West Midlands B63 3HP

Cheque to: GMB Burnstall Strike Fund

THE DANES have really gone and done it now. First their unexpected rejection of the Maastricht treaty. Then, even less forgivable, their victory in the European Football Championship!

Whatever the implications for European football, the repercussions of the Danish referendum are still reverberating around the European Parliaments. The rejection of the treaty by Denmark has re-opened many of the debates that took place prior to the Maastricht summit. The European bourgeoisies thought they had done enough at Maastricht to paper over the contradictions that existed between them. The Danes have just torn it apart.

Maastricht was a compromise. Like all compromises it can be interpreted in different ways. The root of the problem for the British ruling class is that Britain's policy towards Europe is distinct from that of France and Germany. Although Major has broken from the deliberately obstructionist approach to economic and political integration displayed by the Thatcherites, he retains the British bourgeoisie's hostility to a highly centralised European block.

Investment

The reason for this is that British capitalism has patterns of trade and investment that are quite different from those of France and Germany. It has massive investments in non-EC countries and considerable trade with the USA and Japan. For years it has pursued a world-exploitative role under the benevolent hegemony of the USA. Major is keen to prevent European unification obstructing British trade and investment patterns.

With the Danish referendum result allowing rediscussion of such questions, Major has seized his opportunity. He is again pushing Britain's own view for the future of Europe—a larger and looser alliance. He has urged the rapid entry of Sweden, Finland, Austria and Switzerland into the EC, although he had to concede that this could not take place before other states ratified (or rejected) the Maastricht Treaty. He also wants the doors to be opened to other states, including those in Eastern Europe, to slow down the process of unification.

The Danish vote has been interpreted as a vote against the centralisation of power within the EC. To counter this, and the arguments of hard-line anti-Europeans in his own ranks, Major is promoting the doctrine of "subsidiarity". This is already in the treaty.

Subsidiarity means that the EC will only take decisions on issues that could not be better determined by the member states themselves. It involves devolution of power to national and local levels. But this is interpreted differently according to the different approaches to unity adopted by the various member states.

Subsidiarity

"Subsidiarity" could open a Pandora's box with every state claiming particular areas of policy—agriculture, competition, environment—should be left up to the individual state to decide on. The unifiers in the EC know that this is a road to disintegration not integration and unity of Europe.

European union has been the most significant issue to divide the Tories over the past decade. In recent weeks the anti-European lobby has become far more vocal, seizing the opportunity presented by the Danish vote to demand renegotiation of the treaty and a referendum too. Egged on by Thatcher, they have threatened to defeat Major when it comes up for ratification.

Socialists can only welcome any divisions in the Tory ranks. But to align ourselves in anyway with the reactionary Thatcherite forces which are opposing Maastricht would be a disaster. When Dennis Skinner shouted across to the Tory back-

benchers during a recent debate "we have the majority between us" he was doing precisely this.

Workers want a united Europe. We want to do away with the poison of nationalism and racism that has killed millions in wars and genocide on our continent. But only the working class can unite Europe in a progressive manner.

Workers must be united against the Tories by internationalism not "little Englandism".

● For a United Socialist States of Europe!

THE MORNING STAR found a new ally in its anti-Maastricht campaign at the end of last month—Baroness Thatcher! The Dipsomaniac of Dulwich got pride of place on the *Star's* front page. The paper even suggested that she was backing their call for a referendum on the issue!

The *Morning Star* and the Communist Party of Britain (CPB) have been in the forefront of initiating a campaign against Maastricht, along with the Labour left. The

Danish referendum result has been hailed as a victory which must be repeated in Britain.

On Saturday 20 June, at the "Relaunch the Left Conference" in Leeds, 500 socialists were repeatedly told how the left would be revived by campaigning for a referendum against Maastricht. Ken Livingstone has announced how this issue is already bringing the "hard left" closer to the Tribune Group. He intends to achieve his ambition of reuniting the left (under his leadership of course) around

opposition to Maastricht.

The "No to Maastricht Campaign" was officially launched at the end of June. Veteran right wing Little Englander, Peter Shore, has been dragged out of obscurity to co-chair the campaign with Tony Benn. Livingstone is its secretary. It has the support of the Campaign Group of MPs and the CPB. Its main demands are for a referendum and a no vote.

The nature of this campaign is all too clear from the arguments of its leading figures. The *Morning*

ANTI-MAASTRICHT CAM

Tying the work nationalism

Irish section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

Irish
Workers
Group
Stru

After the Irish referen

THE MAASTRICHT referendum on 18 June left nothing but confusion in its wake among Irish socialists. With the solitary exception of the LRCI section, the Irish Workers Group (IWG), every "Trotskyist", Stalinist, left reformist and nationalist group called for a no vote. Now each is struggling to prove that some portion of the 31% no vote represented an element of opposition to imperialism, capitalism or militarism, or was in defence of women's rights.

Much of that 31%, however, is widely acknowledged to be the fruit of the "Pro-Life Campaign", which fielded the biggest number of activists nationwide in the most systematic canvass.

Only in four of the 41 constituencies did the no vote edge above 40%, and only two of these, in Dublin, can claim any significant left influence. At 43% Dublin North West returned the highest no vote under the influence of deputy Proinsias De Rossa, leader of the Democratic Left.

For the pro-choice movement (Repeal the Eighth Amendment Campaign) the outcome was a disaster.

Having decided to call for a no vote in order to strike against the anti-abortion Protocol 17, they were disoriented and demobilised by public confusion of their position with that of the anti-abortionists. Their anti-Maastricht demonstration in Dublin was a total flop.

After the result they consoled themselves that pro-choice voters actually voted yes in order to reject SPUC and their boot boys in Youth Defence, an anti-abortion grouping.

The IWG published a broadsheet fighting for the elements of a working class programme to mobilise real action against capitalist austerity, against imperialist militarism, racism and immigration controls and for women's rights. We demanded an explicit rejection of both the Maastricht imperialist superstate project and of illusions in national sovereignty as an alternative. We therefore called for voters to spoil their votes by writing in internationalist and pro-choice slogans.

Both Militant Socialist (sister group of British Militant) and *Socialist Worker* trotted out the "Irish sovereignty" lobbies' stock anti-Maastricht

arguments. They differentiated themselves only by footnotes stating that socialism, and not national sovereignty, was the only alternative for workers!

They were incapable of spelling out how in any way a vote against Maastricht would help prevent an Irish capitalist offensive or an increase in militarism in the country, with or without European union. Their only justification for a no vote was to "make life difficult" for the Irish bourgeoisie. Sadly, this fantasy-politics could achieve nothing concrete for the working class and merely refurbished the deep-rooted adaptation of the Irish left to elements of economic nationalism.

The anti-Maastricht "National Platform", comprising petit bourgeois nationalists, the remnants of the Communist Party and Sinn Féin, was the fullest expression of this trend. It refused to take an openly pro-choice stand lest it alienate anti-abortion supporters, and even supplied its literature to the Pro-Life Campaign.

The capitalist parties—supported by the Irish Labour Party and the ICTU—confined their campaign to the

media and did not attempt to compete on the doorsteps. They touted their 69% majority as a crushing defeat for the right wing fundamentalists—but not because they intend to liberalise abortion rights!

They want to maintain the all-party consensus, in favour of minimal legal adjustments in the autumn, as a bulwark against divisive anti-abortion elements within the government parties and the opposition Fine Gael. In a calculated attempt to deny any focus for either right or left on the abortion issue until at least September, Albert Reynolds has refused to say what legal or constitutional measures are planned.

On the economic front the next four budgets must dramatically reduce Irish indebtedness in order to join the European Monetary Union. That means stepping up austerity measures, with ominous threats to cut unemployment assistance for the 20% jobless already on the agenda.

The central task of Irish socialists in the months ahead is to fight for a rank and file movement across the unions and the unemployed, able to challenge the increasing collabora-

Star is staunch in defence of the British Parliament. A recent editorial declared:

"This is not a run-of-the-mill issue for Parliament. It is part of the struggle to protect the democratic gains achieved by our people over centuries and to preserve the sovereign rights of Parliament."

Tony Benn, in his speech against Maastricht in Parliament, expressed similar concerns. It was absolutely wrong, he argued, to take a bill in Parliament, "without consulting the people who will lose

their power through it".

The whole theme of this campaign is that the workers of Britain will somehow lose "their" power, "their" sovereignty and "their" Parliament, if Maastricht goes through. This is absolute nonsense. The British Parliament reflects the interests of the British bourgeoisie, not the working people. Of course socialists must be the most consistent defenders of democratic rights, even under the capitalist system. But if Benn and the Stalinists were really motivated by

democratic rather than chauvinist concerns, why do they not advance the truly democratic and internationalist demand for a pan-European constituent assembly? Instead they defend the British Parliament, warts and all, and fool the working class into thinking that the sovereignty of the British bosses is "their" sovereignty.

Other arguments mustered against Maastricht utilise the "British is better" technique, by covering over the reactionary policies of our own ruling class. Ken Livingstone is a past master at this. In a recent article he declared:

"The Maastricht Treaty is being used as an opportunity to attempt, for the first time since 1945, to seriously weaken the welfare state in Western Europe."

And what have the Tories been doing for the last 13 years Comrade Livingstone? These attacks will continue, with or without Maastricht.

The same method is used in relation to immigration and racism. At a recent convention of the Anti-Racist Alliance, Livingstone declared:

"The [Maastricht] Treaty puts forward the kind of immigration controls and economic structures in which racism will increase."

The EC commissioners were, he argued, pressing for the common application of the worst immigration rules throughout the EC area. True, but who is the "market leader" in Europe in racist immigration controls? Tory Britain of course. Livingstone conveniently "forgets" this in his diatribes against Europe.

None of this is to say that socialists should line up behind the Maastricht Treaty, its undemocratic bureaucracy or the bosses' plans for a united imperialist Europe. But the whole basis of the "No to Maastricht Campaign" is to prove that Maastricht and a unified Europe will be qualitatively worse for workers, women and blacks than a Britain outside the EC.

To be able to do this the Stalinists and the Labour lefts have to paint "British institutions" in glowing colours and cover up the anti-worker and racist record of our own ruling class. These ideas can easily grow over into nationalism and

chauvinism.

But it is not just the Stalinists and the Labour left who have fallen in behind the referendum and the no vote position. They have been joined by the so-called "revolutionaries" and "internationalists" of the British left. The Militant, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), *Socialist Outlook* and *Workers Press* have all fallen in behind Benn and Livingstone.

Both Militant and the SWP argue very similar positions. *Socialist Worker* (20 June) declares:

"The EC is not in the interest of workers in Britain, Europe or the rest of the world. We are against it. The Maastricht treaty is a pro-capitalist refinement of the rules of a bosses' club. We oppose it. We are for a referendum on Maastricht and would vote no if there were such a referendum."

Both Militant and the SWP point out they are "internationalist" and seek to distinguish themselves from the nationalist arguments of the Tory right.

Before 1971 the SWP had an abstentionist position on the EEC. It used to argue, correctly, that whether Britain was in a bosses' Europe or a bosses' Britain the workers would still be exploited. Therefore the choice of in or out was irrelevant for British workers. "In or out, the struggle against capitalism goes on", they used to say.

Abstentionist

When the Labour Party and trade union left, along with the Stalinists, threw themselves into a thoroughly nationalist defence of "British sovereignty" and against the Common Market in the 1970s, the International Socialists, as the SWP was then known, quickly "swam with the stream". It dumped its abstentionist position and joined the vote no campaign in the 1975 Referendum on the EEC.

Since then of course it has never raised this "vital question" for British workers. It never argued the "need" to get out of the EC. It never demonstrated how workers were "much worse off" in the EC than they would have been outside of it. It never led a campaign against it. The simple reason for this is that after the defeat in the referendum, and especially after the victory of

Thatcher, Europe became more popular amongst the trade union leaders. The anti-marketiers dwindled to a tiny minority.

Now the "left" thinks it is going to relaunch itself by accommodating to nationalist opposition to European unity. So the SWP, Militant *et al* have suddenly rediscovered their opposition to the EC. These groups try and cover their capitulation to the narrow nationalism of the Labour left and Stalinists by linking a no vote to a slogan for a "Socialist Europe", or in the SWP's case, "We are against a bosses Europe and for a socialist world".

All well and good. But this is not the question posed, and they know it. It is an immediate question: *are you in favour of a united capitalist EC or an independent capitalist Britain?* Revolutionaries have no need to hesitate or vacillate on this. We are for neither. Where the choice is posed we call on workers to abstain.

Revolutionary socialists must chart a thoroughly internationalist way forward. We are for the breaking down of the European states' national barriers. We fight for the greatest unity of European workers against attacks on current welfare provisions and for their extension. We fight against all immigration controls outside and inside Europe.

To regard any of the existing imperialist states in Europe as a protective bulwark against the bosses' offensive, or worse, to line up with a Thatcher or a Le Pen against the EC, would be to strengthen the poison of nationalism in the working class movement.

We are against any referendum on Maastricht. Referenda with the questions determined by the bourgeois state are thoroughly anti-democratic and can only be weapons used against the workers. Anywhere in Europe where such referenda are called we fight for a campaign of active abstention, denouncing both the anti-working class consequences of the Maastricht Treaty and the existing reactionary legislation of the member states.

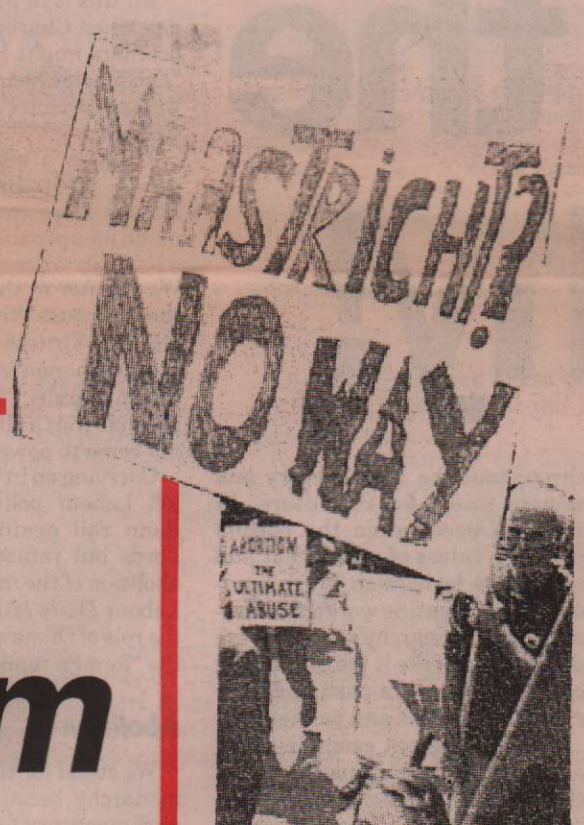
That is the way to fight against the bosses plans, inside or outside of a unified imperialist Europe. That is the way to mobilise workers in the fight for a socialist united states of Europe. ■

CAMPAIGNS

Workers to

Class
struggle

ndum



tion between government and trade unions, through a programme for real action against these attacks on all fronts.

The IWG is fighting, alongside the anarchist Workers Solidarity Movement, to create a bloc of activists fighting to re-mobilising the Repeal the Eighth Amendment Campaign on a democratic basis, and win it to outright support for decriminalisation of abortion and for abortion on demand.

The centrist "Trotskyists", however, are determined to stand by passively. They hope to find a niche in a wider but limited campaign in the autumn which they expect to emerge around the referendum predicted for November. It will propose to protect travel rights for women, to ensure that Ireland's abortion problem can still be exported to Britain, but will only allow very restricted access to abortion information.

But the Pro-Life Campaign will oppose even this. Pro-choice activists must intervene with a clear programme for women in the open battle which will certainly ensue. ■

phone: (Dublin) 01 - 679 4700

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

For a republican Europe?

SOCIALIST ORGANISER (SO) used to pride itself on the principled abstentionist position on the EC it argued against the Cliff grouping in the 1970s. In a choice between a capitalist Europe or a capitalist Britain they correctly said workers should abstain.

But that was yesteryear. Today the Alliance for Workers' Liberty (AWL) is throwing its abstentionism in the same place as it threw the rest of its Trotskyism—overboard.

Socialist Organiser No 527 announces it is for a referendum on Maastricht. Now this is very strange because firstly they argue that referenda are a "poor form of democracy" and secondly they appear to want to abstain anyway. But never mind, Tony Benn is in favour of a referendum on Maastricht so how can SO disagree? Such a referendum, we are told,

will "open up the debate on Maastricht". And how will SO respond to this debate? In its normal decisive manner. "If a referendum is called we will *probably* abstain rather than vote no." (Our emphasis)

A few paragraphs on the article declares:

"Our slogan should not just be 'No to Maastricht', but 'No to Maastricht! No to the barriers between European nations! Yes to workers' unity! Yes to a fight for democracy within the EC, and a democratic united Europe!'"

An observant reader might notice that there is a lot about democracy here but very little about socialism. This is neither an accident nor the result of a rookie AWL student left in charge of the paper for the weekend. It is the AWL's considered policy on Europe!

In the same issue they develop

their slogan as a call for a "Republican United States of Europe!" The exclamation mark is well placed, because such a slogan can only mean that SO is in favour of an imperialist united states of Europe. Or perhaps the AWL has not noticed that they are talking of uniting some of the major imperialist powers in the world under a bourgeois republic.

They even wheel out Trotsky's 1915 "Peace Programme" to try and bolster this breathtaking piece of revisionism. The carefully excerpted piece in SO deliberately gives the impression that Trotsky was arguing for a bourgeois united states of Europe, he was not.

"The united states of Europe represents first of all a form—the only conceivable form—of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Europe." ("The Peace Programme", 1915)

Trotsky and the Communist International soon recognised that the slogan he had used in 1915 was unclear and it was correctly replaced by the slogan of the "Federated European Soviet Republic".

The AWL, in line with their retreat from Leninism and attempt to turn the struggle for socialism into a struggle for "democracy" and "freedom", have once more revived this discarded slogan. They give it precisely the opposite content to Trotsky. In so doing they reveal themselves once again as pure Mensheviks. They raise two completely separate slogans. First they struggle for a "Republican [imperialist] United States of Europe!" then at some point, in the no doubt distant future, for their "Workers' United States of Europe!"

It is an old bankrupt message worthy of a bankrupt political tendency. ■

YOU HAVE to laugh. The British Royal Family has been promoted by decades of media sycophancy as the model of good behaviour and family life. Now that same media has revealed the truth behind the royal soap opera, ably abetted by the public marital break-ups of three heirs to the royal throne and thinly disguised backbiting by the royals and their hangers-on.

The model family image has been blown apart by revelations of extra-marital affairs, divorce, depression and attempted suicide. In short the royal family has much the same problems as a lot of other families, except that, overflowing with money it can afford to ease the pain of it all with perpetual ski-ing holidays and assured financial independence.

Since the mid-1960s the monarchy has consciously promoted itself in the media. We were treated to "fly on the wall" documentaries about life with the Mountbattens and photo-opportunities at every stop on the Queen's itinerary of hospital visiting, motorway opening and subsidised foreign travel.

But, in choosing the full glare of the cameras to maintain their legitimacy, the royals were taking a big gamble. No soap is complete without its sex, violence and marital breakdowns.

Innuendo

One by one the royal princes and princesses got the tabloid hatchet treatment. Mad Charles talking to his plants, fat Fergie with her endless holidays and tasteless house, horsey Ann with her bodyguard boyfriend, effete Edward who flunked the Marines, the perennially drunk divorcee Margaret: all came in for ever bolder criticism and innuendo.

Throughout it all Diana was held up as the big exception. After months of training she was finally allowed to give an interview to ITV's simpering Alastair Burnett in 1985, when she uttered the immortal words "I see my main role as wife and mother".

The trendy princess who bopped away at Michael Jackson gigs and did caring work for AIDS patients was at the same time portrayed as a model post-feminist who uncomplainingly combined her role as mother with a full day's work. In the words of one of the many unnamed palace insiders: "without Diana there is no Royal Family".

Then came Andrew Morton's revelations. By all accounts the story of bulimia, depression, suicide and victimisation has done nothing to dent Diana's popularity. But Morton's book and the subsequent press rampage has drawn vicious criticism from the aristocratic wing of the Tory press—led by the Daily Telegraph—and has provoked threatening noises about press censorship from Downing Street.

Legitimacy

Why? Because for the British ruling class there is a serious side to the public bust-up in the monarchy. It calls into question the legitimacy of two institutions that play a vital role for British capitalism.

The first is the institution of marriage. With 60% of all marriages ending in divorce, the sanctified model of monogamous sex and family life is being undermined. The royal family were supposed to be an example to all of the joy and moral satisfaction to be found in marriage itself.

The collapse of Andy and Fergie's marriage was bad enough. For whole sections of the ruling class a squalid end to Charles and Di's marriage, one that has been glorified in the media more than any other, would be nigh on intolerable.

The second is the monarchy it-



Unhappy wives of Windsor

Abolish the monarchy!

BY COLIN LLOYD

The powers of the Queen, known as the "Royal prerogative" mean she can:

- dissolve or refuse to dissolve parliament at will
 - appoint or dismiss a prime minister
 - declare war and mobilise the army
 - veto any act of parliament
 - distribute honours, including peerages in the House of Lords
- In addition she is Lord Admiral of Britain and Commander in Chief of the armed forces. Every soldier swears an oath of allegiance to the Queen, and her enemies within and without, not to parliament and British democracy.

Prerogative

In times of class peace the Queen's prerogative makes her a key power broker in British politics. She has access to, and is by all accounts an expert on, the inner workings of successive governments. She reads all cabinet minutes—which even the majority of MPs never see—and secret documents on defence, foreign policy and subversion.

Her Privy Council is appointed by, and consists of, past and present trusted members of government. Left wing members of the Labour Party, even when they are ministers, are not invited to join. The Privy Council is not just an archaic remnant of feudalism. It is the forum where major and minor crises of British imperialism are sorted out.

We are all told in school that the Queen's drastic powers to override parliamentary democracy will never be used. But they were used

throughout the 19th century and remain intact for the future. In times of need, when the normal pressure valves of parliament and repressive legislation prove inadequate to defeating workers' resistance, the monarchy's powers are designed to make it the organising centre of the extra-parliamentary rule of the bosses and bankers.

The most recent example of the extra-parliamentary usefulness of the monarchy came in 1977 when Australian Labour Prime Minister Gough Whitlam was summarily sacked by the Queen's representative in Australia in order to provoke a parliamentary coup by the Tory opposition. Like all "Bonapartists" the monarch's representative claimed to be acting in the good of the national interest, rising above class and parliamentary squabbles.

When we look at the media image the monarchy has created for itself we see it is precisely designed to legitimise its role as a force "above politics" and "above class" that can nevertheless play a decisive factor in events.

Charles' forays into the world of politics are a case in point. He has spent his adult life trying to subtly politicise the monarchy over a variety of "non-party" questions: the environment, architecture, youth training in the inner cities and population control.

The fact that every one of these is a class issue—it is the workers who have to breathe polluted air, live in crumbling tower blocks and deprived inner cities etc—does not stop him from advancing ludicrous and utopian social programmes of his own.

Despite the fact that he is supposed to be above politics none of the great defenders of parliamen-

tary democracy lift a finger to chastise him.

All this is in preparation for the day when Charlie boy or one of his brothers might have to step in to "knock some heads together"—this time not architects' but elected politicians'.

There is a whole strain of left reformism in Britain which constantly shies away from the demand for a republic. George Orwell, a left Labourite and Spanish Civil War fighter in the 30s, once wrote that, because "the power and the glory" in Britain were divided between the men in bowler hats and the monarchy, "it is in any rate possible that a Hitler or Stalin cannot come to power".

Carrying on in Orwell's footsteps left Labour politicians like Tony Benn rail against the House of Lords but refuse to fight for the abolition of the monarchy. The pro-Labour *Daily Mirror* casts itself in the role of Diana's protector against the "foreign republican" Murdoch.

Abolition

We stand for the abolition of the monarchy because it is an extra-parliamentary tool in the hands of the bosses and an obstacle to the struggle for socialism. The labour movement cannot afford to ignore the Royals, however peripheral they may appear in political life.

A spoof copy of an Act of Parliament once circulated amongst *Militant* supporters and the Labour left, with Elizabeth R giving royal assent to an "enabling act" to nationalise the top 200 monopolies. The joke would have been on the Labour left if they had ever tried it in reality.

There is no parliamentary road to socialism. Faced with any real threat to their power and privilege the British bosses would mobilise the police, courts and army against the working class. They would use what is left of the power and prestige of the royal family to legitimise their actions and win the broadest possible public support.

That's why we say: shed no tears for Charles and Di. Even if she dumps the hapless crank, Di will not have to live like so many working class single mothers, on income support, or in squalid bed and breakfast. She will go back to the privileged lifestyle she came from. Her kids will have their top private education and health treatment, and nobody will be chasing Charles for maintenance. ■

Rabin: no peace-maker

Does the victory of the Labour Party in the Israeli elections herald a just solution for the Palestinian people? **Richard Brenner** suggests not.

NO SOCIALIST could have failed to enjoy the sight of Yitzhak Shamir's face when he realised that his political career was over. This justified sense of satisfaction over the ousting of a leader who was responsible for a state policy of murder, terror and torture against Palestinian militants, should blind no-one to a simple fact about the outcome of Israel's June election: Yitzhak Rabin is, like his predecessor, a hardened racist and foe of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination.

Fifteen years of rule by the right wing Likud coalition are over. There are a number of reasons why Rabin's Labour Party and its allies have won 61 out of the 120 seats in the Knesset, Israel's parliament: disenchantment with the corruption of the Likud; the party's internal strife in the run up to the election, overwhelming support for Labour by new immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

Negotiations

But the crucial question was the peace negotiations. Labour gained because the Likud appeared incapable of taking the talks any further. Likud's support for continuing settlements of occupied land undermined any prospects for a negotiated solution. Above all it had antagonised the USA, which responded by threatening to withhold \$10 billion in loan guarantees.

Given Israel's dependence on US finance and military support, there was little chance for a party which appeared in direct conflict with the state major backer. US loans are essential if Israel is to gain access to further finance in the world's currency markets. Without them, the massive numbers of Soviet and other Jewish immigrants cannot be housed. Therefore, not only the immigrants but also broad sections of Israeli Jewish society seeking an American sponsored settlement in the region voted overwhelmingly for Labour.

The "peace process" will now move up a gear. Already Rabin has pledged that Israel will give up land for peace. He claims he will implement autonomy for the Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza within six to nine months of taking office.

Dilemma

Israel has long faced a dilemma. It was founded according to the principles of the Zionist movement as a specifically Jewish state in Palestine, a supposed "land without a people for a people without a land". But Palestine was not a land without a people. It was inhabited by Palestinian Arabs. Hundreds of thousands were driven from their land, to be denied the right to return whilst at the same time entry and citizenship rights were extended to anyone of Jewish birth.

Since the 1967 war, Israel has been in military occupation of extensive Arab lands including Gaza, the West Bank, the Golan Heights

and East Jerusalem. If these territories were formally annexed, Arabs would outnumber Jews in very little time. The fundamentally racist foundations of the Zionist project make this prospect intolerable unless, as the far right have advocated, Palestinians are further restricted in their democratic rights or forcibly removed.

Time-bomb

Shamir wanted to increase the speed and scope of Jewish settlement in the occupied territories in order to slow the fuse on the demographic time-bomb, and to create extra space for new immigrants. But millions of Israelis, and significantly also their US paymasters, realised that this could be no lasting solution, that it would exacerbate tensions and make further cycles of war and Arab insurrection inevitable. For that reason Labour favours "land for peace", a halt to new settlements and a negotiated solution. And the USA, keen to re-establish the region under its own hegemony, threatened to cut Israel's financial lifeline if it did not follow this path.

Neither Labour nor the USA is acting on altruistic motives. Neither is committed to genuine self-determination for the Palestinians. When PLO leader Yasser Arafat commented that "The Israeli public voted against war and the terrorism of Shamir" he was motivated more by opportunism than naivety. Rabin, far from opposing Zionist terror, has been one of its principal perpetrators. As a general he masterminded the land-grabbing 1967 war. In 1988 he was the minister responsible for the murderous suppression of the uprising of Palestinian youth.

What Labour is proposing bears no resemblance to a just or demo-

cratic solution to the Palestinians' national claim. Like Shamir, Rabin will have no truck with negotiations with genuine Palestinian organisations and will continue trying to keep the PLO excluded from the talks. East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights have been declared non-negotiable.

The "limited self-rule" envisaged by Labour would ensure that the Zionist oppressors maintain a monopoly of armed force and complete Israeli control over the economic life of the territories, with an effective Israeli veto over the political forces and policy decisions of the Palestinian areas' "autonomous" governing bodies.

Discrimination

The "semi-state" would remain a source of cheap labour for Israeli agriculture, construction and service industries. Such a Palestinian state or statelet alongside Israel would constitute an "Arab bantustan", abandoning the 750,000 Arabs within Israel itself to continued discrimination in housing and employment, and demobilising the Palestinians' national revolt in return for a puppet state on the least fertile land, ruled by a pliant administration of sanitised Palestinian nationalist bureaucrats.

The "left-wing" Meretz, an alliance of the former Mapam, Shinui and Citizens' Rights Movement, were able to win twelve seats drawing many young voters to their support for civil rights and an independent Palestinian state. But these "left" Zionists can only go so far as recognising the Palestinians' rights to a state alongside Israel. This would preserve the unjustifiable privileges of the Israeli-Jewish population, who benefit from the Zionists having seized the best



land, and the most developed conurbations.

Partition would leave the Palestinian national question unresolved. The Jewish state would continue to exist on the basis of the systematic denial of the national and democratic rights of the Palestinians.

Support

A really socialist Israeli-Jewish left cannot be Zionist. It must stand for the ending of the expansionist and racist Zionist state of Israel. It must support the struggles of the Palestinian resistance without conditions. Only in that way can unity be built between Jew and Arab, based not on the abandonment of

the just claims of the oppressed but on common struggle against chauvinism and for socialism and lasting peace within a single state of Palestine.

Illusions in Labour's peace initiative can only lead the Palestinian masses to defeat. They must reject all accommodation to Zionism on the part of their leaders and forge a revolutionary workers' party. Such a party must maintain strict independence from the Palestinian bourgeoisie. In alliance with the poor peasantry, it must adopt a strategy based neither on imperialist peace deals nor guerrilla war, but on the mobilisation of the Palestinian workers at the head of the fight against the Zionist state and its imperialist sponsors. ■

LRCI

Lutte Ouvriere Fête

OVER THE weekend of 6-8 June, a 16-strong delegation from the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI) attended the fête organised by the French left organisation Lutte Ouvriere (LO). The LO fête combines cultural and social events with political meetings and forums and is an annual event for many groups on the international left.

The LRCI's activity at the fête, led by our French section, Pouvoir Ouvrier (PO) and the LRCI enjoyed considerable success. We made a significant number of contacts and sold 138 copies of various LRCI publications, conducted two well attended forums and contributed to many others organised by different left tendencies.

In our first forum on the rise of fascism and the far right in Europe PO comrades explained the background to the growth of Le Pen's

Front National in France and detailed the appalling passive response from the major "revolutionary" organisations. LO in particular has argued that the FN presents little threat and can be ignored by the left.

According to LO, the FN cannot be characterised as a fascist organisation because it has not organised attacks on "left wing militants, or on working class militants in general", preferring the respectable road of "electoralism".

This position completely ignores the FN's involvement in attacks on immigrants and their hostels. Of course Le Pen wishes to hold onto his "respectable" image as long as possible, while at the same time encouraging his fascist bands to attack and terrorise immigrant communities. LO uses this classic fascist division of labour to clap a telescope to its blind eye and de-

clare, "We see no fascists!"

Our comrades in PO, who have been consistently arguing for, and where possible seeking to implement, a policy of no platform for Le Pen, have first hand experience of the danger of such passivity. Each time Le Pen is allowed to march unchallenged his movement gains strength. Each time his fascist core is allowed to surround itself with the cover of the "respectable racists" of the middle class, that core is emboldened. Attacks on left wingers have been the result, and the threat of Le Pen growing stronger looms.

The forum attracted 75 people, mostly youth, some of whom were deeply alarmed at the do-nothing approach of LO. An intervention into the forum by LO to justify their stance was welcome. It gave PO the opportunity to debate with this larger tendency in front of a receptive audi-

ence.

A second forum was held on the CIS attracted around fifty people. A comrade from PO gave a first hand account of the crisis there and outlined the LRCI's action programme.

Both the LRCI and PO got our message across to many visitors to the fête through our forums and the many impromptu discussions with visitors to our stall, and also through the sale of publications in French, English, German, Spanish, Russian and Italian.

One event that did mar an otherwise very open and democratically run political fête was LO's decision not to allow the lesbian and gay AIDS campaigning group Act-Up to have a stall. LO have always granted stalls to left political tendencies big and small, regardless of their differences with such tendencies. To not extend this to Act-Up, at a time of increased homophobia and with the issue of AIDS a vital one for the left, can only be construed as an act of anti-gay discrimination by LO itself. As such we call on them to reverse their policy for next year and lift the ban on Act-Up and any other campaigning lesbian or gay organisation. ■

Proletarian power and democracy

THE RECENT period in South Africa has been a testing time for revolutionaries. The ANC, charting a path of negotiation and compromise, has shown itself prepared to betray the interests of the mass of black workers. Having subordinated the working class struggle to a fight for capitalist democracy alone, in alliance with bourgeois forces, it is now prepared to settle for less than one person one vote, in the form of various proposals for "interim", or "transitional" forms of rule. It aims to achieve not socialism, but a stable "non-racial" capitalist South Africa.

To win the masses from the treacherous leadership of the ANC, a revolutionary workers' party must be built. It would have to take up not only the immediate questions of jobs, prices, housing, land and state/Inkatha terror, but also that of democratic rights—the most burning and pressing question for the South African masses. The ANC appears to offer a "democratic" South Africa and promises black power. As a result the masses have deep-seated illusions in the negotiations and the assembly that they hope it will achieve.

Aspirations

Trotskyists recognise the democratic aspirations of the South African masses and relate to these illusions. They fight to demonstrate in practice that the bourgeois nationalist forces such as the ANC are unprepared to see the fight even for democratic rights through to the end. That is why they must fight for a democratic constituent assembly, without any restrictions imposed by the capitalists on its decision-making powers, on the basis of one person one vote. They must point out that such an assembly could only be convened in the teeth of the most violent opposition of South Africa's rulers. Such an assembly must therefore be established through revolutionary methods of struggle, through general strikes, delegate-based councils of action, and the formation of workers' militias.

Revolutionaries must also recognise that the constituent assembly is not an end in itself. Because we recognise that racism, exploitation and oppression will continue under capitalism whatever the form of rule, we fight for the total destruction of the capitalist state and its replacement by a workers' state.

But many on the left use the constituent assembly slogan in a muddled or opportunist fashion. This is certainly the case with the journal *Qina Msebenzi*.

Announced

When the new South African journal was announced in the pages of the WIL's paper *Workers News* last November, the organisers declared:

"At present our central political emphasis is the rejection of negotiations in favour of the struggle for a revolutionary democratic constituent assembly convened by the oppressed masses themselves. For us, a struggle on this basis is now the *shortest route* to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat in South Africa." [Our emphasis]

Is it the case that the struggle for a

John Mckee reviews the first two issues of a new South African journal Qina Msebenzi launched last year. The journal declares itself to be a "Leninist-Trotskyist newspaper". The group of comrades around Qina Msebenzi declare themselves "in solidarity" with the Leninist Trotskyist Tendency (LTT) which was formed in March 1991 by the British Workers International League (WIL) and a small group in Germany and Belgium.

constituent assembly necessarily represents "the shortest route to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat"?

It is not. The example of the Russian Revolution shows that it is possible for the working class to seize power without first establishing a constituent assembly. The struggle itself, the forms of workers' organisation thrown up in the struggle, the strength of the revolutionary party, the changing consciousness of the masses: all these factors will determine whether a constituent assembly will first come into existence or, as in the case of Russia in 1917, will be bypassed by the coming into existence of organs of dual power in the form of soviets, the embryos of the future proletarian dictatorship. The main task of revolutionaries is to advance methods of struggle and a programme of action which can link the struggles of the present day to the goal of socialist revolution and the building of a workers' state.

Negotiations

The LTT, in its pamphlet "Negotiations in South Africa and the Struggle for a Revolutionary Democratic Constituent Assembly" (May 1992) state: "... without conceding one iota on our understanding of the necessity of establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat, we believe that the revolutionary vanguard will be won from the ANC by a consistent struggle for 100% democracy and the slogan for a constituent assembly."

It is insufficient and dangerous to allow the question of the proletarian dictatorship to remain an abstract strategic goal without linking it to present struggles through the use of transitional demands. The problem is that *Qina Msebenzi* makes just that mistake.

In the first issue of the journal they try to emphasize class demands alongside democratic ones. They assert:

"... alongside the call for the constituent assembly, we call on workers to form their own defence units, for mass action to be intensified and for the masses to form their own organs of power."

But all this is left at the level of abstraction rather than integrated with democratic demands in a concrete transitional programme. By issue 2 of *Qina Msebenzi* the problem is resolved... for the worse. In an article entitled "COSATU and revolutionary trades unionism", they advance not a transitional action programme but a hybrid of the "workers' control" demands of the left of COSATU and

some transitional demands gutted of their revolutionary content.

Thus they demand "workers' control and nationalisation" without calling for the expropriation without compensation of these factories from the bosses. The struggle against Inkatha is reduced to a programme for organising the unemployed, public works schemes and fighting redundancies.

Astonishingly, in a situation where the reactionary gangs of Inkatha are terrorising the workers and the townships the question of armed self-defence and the organisation of workers' community defence squads is missing.

The question of organising factory committees of struggle, and of linking them to township based soviet-type organisations is not even mentioned in this "transitional programme". Yet such organs of proletarian power are essential if our class is to break the resistance of the capitalists and establish its own rule.

When it comes to the question of government *Qina Msebenzi* calls for "a workers' government in order to make the transition to socialism". But what sort of "workers' govern-

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ment" is posed? A government that enables *Qina Msebenzi* to elide the struggle for socialism with the struggle for bourgeois democracy. This is an inevitable consequence of the notion that the struggle for democracy is the "shortest route" to the proletarian dictatorship:

"It should be a government run by the workers, in some ways like a trade union—democratic reps, right to recall these reps, structures for mandating etc. It should take over the newspapers, radio stations, large venues, everything that the workers need for communicating ideas and discussing issues. A genuine constituent assembly is a step towards such a government."

The only workers' government that revolutionary socialists fight for is a workers' government that breaks from the bourgeoisie. One that arms the workers, sets about disbanding the repressive organs of the bourgeois state and expropriates the capitalists. Such a government, in order to survive, could only base itself on the armed workers and their soviets. Its assumption of power would be a prelude to civil war with the bourgeoisie.

Qina Msebenzi

Bi-Monthly Leninist / Trotskyist Newspaper March/April 1992 No. 2, R1.00

CODESA: WHAT SHOULD WE DO ?



Also in this issue:

ANC and the Racist Referendum

Metal Workers Strike?

Review of SACP booklet 'Understanding History'

Who was Leon Trotsky

Militant Splits in Britain / Brazil's PT / Fascism's rise in Europe

It would either rapidly assume the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat or collapse before the bourgeoisie's offensive.

Could such a government come through a constituent assembly? Possibly, but only if the working class was mobilised around a revolutionary action programme which had won them to building soviet organisations and their own workers' militias. The constituent assembly would have to be forced by a revolutionary party to subordinate itself to organs of workers' power.

To maintain that a constituent assembly could be a step towards a workers' government without taking this path is to confuse bourgeois democracy and the proletarian dictatorship. Instead of the constituent assembly demand being utilised in a principled manner to break the democratic illusions of the masses, *Qina Msebenzi* strengthens precisely those illusions. In short, it adapts to the programme of bourgeois democracy.

Far worse is *Qina Msebenzi's* position on the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA). CODESA consists of 19 parties, including the ANC, De Klerk's National Party, Inkatha and various stooge "Bantustan" groups. It seeks a constitutional settlement aimed at preventing the black majority controlling the constituent assembly. Since December 1991 it has been the vehicle through which the ANC is trying to impose the sell-out on the masses.

Revolutionaries have to take a clear line on CODESA, ruthlessly exposing its role, demanding that the ANC pulls out of it, clearly counterposing to it the struggle to overthrow the apartheid government and the fight for a constituent assembly. *Qina Msebenzi* claims to recognise all these aspects of CODESA but concludes:

"Given all these problems with CODESA, should COSATU be in CODESA? Our answer given the present balance of forces, is 'yes.'"

What explains this appalling accommodation? The majority in the leadership of COSATU wanted to participate in CODESA. The SACP and ANC were against it doing so, because they want a completely free

hand to broker a deal. But none of this means that revolutionaries should support or endorse the COSATU leadership's willingness to enter this undemocratic stitch-up. To do so would sow further illusions amongst the masses, especially amongst the workers who see their leaders participating in the negotiations.

Qina Msebenzi calls on COSATU to go but, "not to participate, but to make demands; to force the ANC out of CODESA: to call for the mass organisations to convene the constituent assembly". This is a sheer evasion. All *Qina Msebenzi's* demands could be better mobilised for outside of CODESA and against it. Workers should be demanding that COSATU, from the outside, mobilise the trade unions against the sell out being organised by CODESA—or whatever body replaces it—through strikes and mass action. They should demand that the ANC and SACP themselves withdraw from CODESA. Instead *Qina Msebenzi* provides left cover for the leadership of COSATU and sows illusions in CODESA.

Confusion

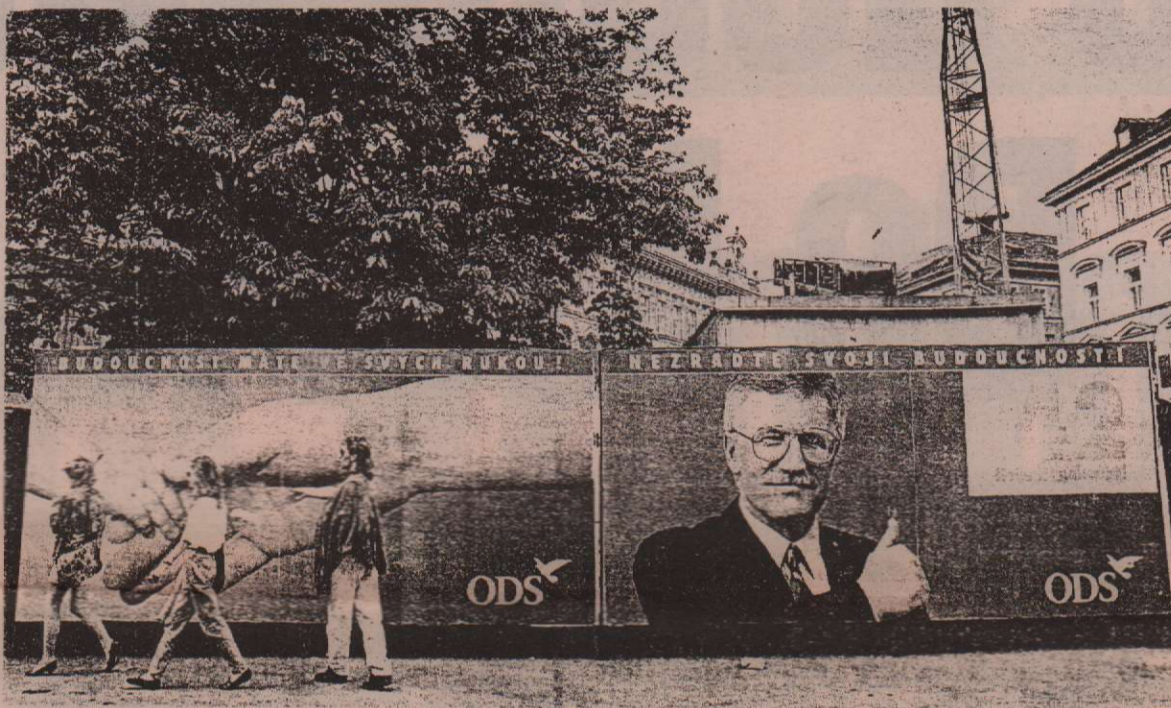
Thus confusion on the relationship between the democratic and socialist tasks of the revolution has had the direst of consequences for *Qina Msebenzi*. What may have seemed to the unwary reader to be an innocuous formulation on the struggle for democratic rights being the "shortest route" to workers' power reveals itself to be justification for a thoroughgoing adaptation to the bourgeois democratic illusions of the masses.

When it launched its journal the comrades around *Qina Msebenzi* declared it would, "serve as a beacon and a pole of attraction for the militants in the unions, in the township organisations and on the campuses". Unfortunately, judging from the political line of its first two issues, *Qina Msebenzi* has done little more than add yet another journal to contribute to the centrist confusion on the South African left. ■

CZECHOSLOVAK ELECTIONS

The election results in Czechoslovakia increased growing divisions between Czechs and Slovaks. Whatever the outcome of the current negotiations between the major parties, there is a difficult period ahead for workers and socialists in both republics, as **Kate Fields** explains

The road to division



Czechoslovakian election posters

THE RESULTS of last month's Czechoslovak election makes some form of separation of the two republics within the federal state appear to be unavoidable.

In Slovakia the largest party is now the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), led by Vladimir Meciar. During the election campaign Meciar promised that, if elected, he would immediately declare Slovakia a sovereign state. He would also slow down the return to the private market, i.e. the restoration of capitalism, and maintain state subsidies to industry.

In the Czech lands the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) was elected the largest party. Their leader, right winger and chief architect of the moves to restore capitalism, is Vaclav Klaus. The ODS wants no slow down in restoration and is prepared to see huge swathes of Czech industry go to the wall in the name of free enterprise.

With such radically different leaders the scene was set for conflict between the Czechs and Slovaks. Not only were there economic policy differences over the pace of restoration but these differences became rapidly intermixed with the national question as each leader played the nationalist card against the other.

In 1990, over a year after the so-called "Velvet Revolution", the Federal Assembly finally decided on a programme to reintroduce capitalism to Czechoslovakia. It involved rapid privatisation, cuts in subsidies for industry and the freeing of prices. The reforms resulted in a severe crisis in the Czechoslovak economy, which had already been languishing in stagnation for years.

Recession

The economy went into a deep recession. Net Material Product fell last year by 20%, industrial output fell by 23.1%, construction was down by 31% and retail trade was down by 39%. Over this period Czechoslovakia did worse than any other Eastern European state except Bulgaria. The reforms naturally had a dramatic effect on living standards. In 1991 the consumer price index increased by 53.6% whilst wages only rose by a mere 10%.

Historically, Slovakia has been the weaker of the two republics and the Slovaks have suffered most from the effects of restoration. Twenty seven per cent of households in Slovakia now exist at official subsistence levels. Real wages fell in the last year by 21% for white and blue collar workers and by 30% for agricultural workers.

Unemployment in Slovakia is much higher than in the Czech areas. At present unemployment in the Czech Lands is 3.2%, whilst in Slovakia it is 11.1%. There are plans for it to be allowed to rise to 10% in the Czech Lands and 18% in Slovakia.

It is no surprise that such disparity has fanned nationalist feelings. Yet, whilst most Slovaks feel they are being treated unfairly, there is no sign that they wanted a total split. Opinion polls show that the majority of Slovaks (60-80%) appear in favour of keeping some form of federation. The political party most clearly in favour of separation, the Slovak National Party, gained only 14 seats in the Slovak parliament in the election.

This does not, of course, mean that the national question does not exist in Czechoslovakia. The fact that it is at centre stage at the moment is, however, more to do with the manoeuvring of the pro-capitalist restorationists.

As in other parts of Eastern Europe the fragments of the old Stalinist bureaucracy and the pro-

bourgeois restorationists seek to use nationalism to divide the working class and destroy any working class resistance to their attempts to reintroduce capitalism.

Meciar in Slovakia, whilst he calls for a slow down in the restoration programme, is certainly not opposed to it. His political base is built on the idea that there is some painless route to capitalism for Slovakia, if only the Czechs would pay for it! He knows that this is impossible but can easily pose as a hero of the Slovaks in his demagogic speeches. That is, until separation is posed point blank.

restoration.

The results of the Czechoslovak elections saw the bourgeois press in the West react with dismay. Was this a concern that a separation might lead to a bloody conflict? Were they worried about the fate of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia? No. Their only concern was the fate of capitalist restoration across Eastern Europe.

With Hungary moving increasingly hesitantly towards the market, Poland in chaos and Yugoslavia torn apart, Czechoslovakia was the big hope for the European bourgeoisie. Czechoslovakia was the

more than 30% of the state's foreign trade. Slovakian industry is primarily heavy industry and military rather than civilian. With a much weaker industrial base, less trade with the West and less ability to earn hard currency, Meciar is unlikely to be able to deliver on his promises of a less painful transformation.

The economic climate may look better in the Czech Lands but it will be forced to expend considerable political energy on resolving questions posed by the separation. It will have to reach agreement with Slovakia on dividing the national debt, disentangling the pri-

The results of the Czechoslovak elections saw the bourgeois press in the West react with dismay. Was this a concern that a separation might bring lead to a bloody conflict? Were they worried about the fate of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia? No. Their only concern was the fate of capitalist restoration across Eastern Europe.

Klaus in the Czech Lands has shown that he too is prepared to play the nationalist card. Since the election he has gradually been promoting the idea that the Czechs would be better off without the Slovaks. He will increasingly blame the Slovaks for holding up restoration and, therefore, creating all the economic problems and hardships that the Czech masses will have to endure.

But, whilst both Meciar and Klaus can use the national question, it is a highly risky strategy. The endless talks, negotiations, threats and back-peddling over the past few weeks are a reflection of this dilemma. Whatever happens the national question poses great dangers for the future of capitalist

"model" restorationist state. It was committed to pressing ahead with massive privatisations, rapid removal of state subsidies and forcing thousands of enterprises into bankruptcy, measures seen essential to the rapid restoration of capitalism.

In the weeks before the election Western pundits were praising the commitment and courage of the Czechoslovak restorationists. Now they are wringing their hands bemoaning the prospect of yet another failure.

The worries of the imperialist bourgeoisie are not unfounded. If there is a total split in the Czechoslovak state there would quickly be economic chaos in independent Slovakia. Slovakia accounts for less

than 30% of the state's foreign trade. Slovakian industry is primarily heavy industry and military rather than civilian. With a much weaker industrial base, less trade with the West and less ability to earn hard currency, Meciar is unlikely to be able to deliver on his promises of a less painful transformation.

The economic climate may look better in the Czech Lands but it will be forced to expend considerable political energy on resolving questions posed by the separation. It will have to reach agreement with Slovakia on dividing the national debt, disentangling the pri-

vatation plans and separating the two economies. This will be a drag on the pace of restoration. If there is only a partial split—with looser ties while maintaining some federal structures—the prospect of any rapid restoration is no better. The present constitution will ensure that both the HZDS and the ODS have effective vetoes in the House of Nations, the federal parliament. It seems likely that there will quickly be a situation of deadlock.

whatever the outcome, we can expect both Klaus and Meciar to look hard at the luxury of democracy as they are faced with growing economic problems. They are both likely to take on greater powers to use against the masses. The iron fist will appear with the "velvet" glove. The restorationists will continue to try to solve their difficulties at the expense of the Czechoslovak working class. The attacks on jobs and living standards will continue and worsen.

Already in Slovakia, Meciar has declared that Slovak will become the only official language. This will not only affect the small number of Czechs. A fifth of the population is made up of various minorities, the largest being the Hungarians. Already nationalists have been obliterating the Magyar parts of dual language signs in Slovakia—a harbinger of what is in store for the Hungarian and Romany minorities if nationalism is let off the leash as in the former Yugoslavia.

Divided

What prospects are there then of resistance? There have been some protests and strikes against the effects of the restoration programme. They have, however, often been divided along national lines.

Farmers have protested against the cutting of state subsidies and repeal of the law on land ownership. On 10 February 15,000 Czech transport workers struck against the halving of state transport subsidies. The strike was supported by the Czech and Slovak Confederation of Trade Unions. However, despite the high degree of sympathy among Slovak transport workers they were not called upon to support the strike.

The ex-communists—the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia and the Slovak Democratic Party of Labour—support the restoration process, albeit with the utopian demand that the working class should not suffer too much. They are developing into clearly social democratic parties. The anti-capitalist left in Czechoslovakia is tiny.

The Czechoslovak trade unions are weak and inexperienced. They are influenced by pro-restorationist ideas and therefore cripple the possibility of any real struggle against the government onslaught. Unlike Solidarnosc in Poland the unions have little experience of organising struggles. Whilst the new unions played a key part in the "Velvet Revolution" establishing 6,000 strike committees, this was a short lived period of activity. They were used rather as a stage army by the Civic Forum and were not able to establish their own independent political leadership.

If the attempts to reintroduce capitalism on the backs of the workers are to be fought, a new Czechoslovak workers' movement has to be built around an intransigent struggle against capitalist restoration.

A revolutionary Trotskyist party must be built which leads the struggle against the attempt of the leaders of the HZDS and ODS to divide the workers with poisonous nationalism. Czech and Slovak workers' unity must be forged in the struggle against the restorationist measures and for a genuine Soviet Republic of Czechoslovakia. ■

Workers power

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SOUTH AFRICA

No deals with De Klerk

The Boipatong massacre, where 41 township residents were hacked to death by an Inkatha hostel gang, as well as the hundreds of other township killings, are the direct result of an offensive unleashed by the white minority government.

De Klerk and other ministers hypocritically declared their grief at the "tragedy" of Boipatong. But it was they who deliberately unleashed the violence on the ANC supporters, using both state forces and the murder gangs of Inkatha.

Law and Order spokesman Captain Craig Kotze quite brazenly admitted as much the day after the massacre.

"We warned the ANC what would happen if they took the road of mass action. It is now quite obvious that the political temperature has been pushed unacceptably high by it and created a climate in which these incidents will happen."

In other words any militant action against the government will be met by death squads.

The ANC had been forced to launch a mass action campaign after the breakdown of the talks at CODESA in May. This meeting of the negotiating body was due to agree the form of the "Constituent Assembly" which would draw up a new constitution. Over the previous months, the ANC had made concession after concession—but De Klerk still wanted more. He is determined to entrench an effective white veto in any assembly that comes into being. Such a veto would ensure that the power and privileges of the white capitalists could remain intact and that South Africa will remain safe for capitalism.

After De Klerk's sweeping victory in the whites-only referendum last March on the promise of achieving a "power sharing" solution, the National Party stepped up the pressure on the ANC.

De Klerk tabled proposals to CODESA which demanded that constitutional proposals would need a 75% majority in the constituent assembly, a proposal guaranteeing that the whites and their allies like Buthelezi would have a blocking mechanism. Mandela responded by agreeing to 70%. The ANC could not concede any further without the risk of losing the support of a black population growing increasingly suspicious of a sell out.

But this was not enough for De Klerk who quickly declared CODESA deadlocked. Even then the ANC refused to pull out of the negotiations, instead agreeing to the referral



Inkatha supporters - used by De Klerk

of the matter to a CODESA Management Committee.

The ANC executive called the mass action campaign to try to force De Klerk's hand—and in response to growing pressure for action. Millions observed the 16 June traditional Soweto Day Stay-away and thousands marched demanding a constituent assembly. The trade union federation COSATU called for a general strike if the regime had not shifted position by the start of July.

But this new wave of mass action was called in a situation where the balance of forces is heavily weighted against the ANC and the trade union movement—as a direct result of the ANC's own strategy.

Last year, the ANC leadership agreed to disband MK, the armed wing of the ANC and to "peace accords" involving the government and Gatsha Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party. These concessions were made to keep the negotiating process on the road. The peace deals have left townships undefended against the police and Inkatha gangs. The ANC has refused to organise the defence of communities. Meanwhile evidence has mounted of years of collusion between the government, the security forces and Inkatha. Since De Klerk took power in 1989 on his "reforming" platform, 7,000 black people have died in political violence. The massacre at Boipatong

is only the most open and bloody example of the long established collusion between the police, troops and Inkatha gangs.

"Mandela, give us guns" demanded Boipatong residents. But this is a vain cry. The ANC does not want a militant armed black working class. The intention of the ANC leaders is to join the white bourgeoisie in a new capitalist government. Just a week before Boipatong, the South African press carried pictures of ANC executive member Thabo Mbeki's 50th birthday party. Amongst the guests were various rich businessmen including gambling king Sol Kerzner, who made his pile in the notorious Sun City.

Boipatong, in arousing the wrath

of the masses, has left both De Klerk and Mandela with difficulties. De Klerk's offensive ran out of control and leaves him with problems on the international and national arena. To keep in with foreign governments and investors he must be able to promise a stable future, a return to negotiations. And inside South Africa he dare not undermine too far the authority of the ANC over the masses. Otherwise the spectre of 1986 and a new revolutionary uprising will be raised again.

Mandela shares these fears. He is having to carve a path which keeps negotiations open and does not alienate his working class base and young supporters. So both are looking to outside "advisers" from the UN, Organisation of African Unity and even the ramshackle British Commonwealth to play the outside "honest broker".

The hope is that these worthies will help to stitch up a deal—a deal that will amount to a total betrayal of the black working class of South Africa. It will entrench capitalist rule and white privilege. It will mean benefits for the Thabo Mbekis but little for the poverty stricken township dwellers.

If such a betrayal is to be stopped then black workers have to break from the ANC and challenge its right to dictate the policies of the movement.

They have to demand that the ANC leaders permanently pull out of the talks. Instead of the CODESA stitch up they should demand the immediate convening of a fully sovereign constituent assembly whose decisions will need only a simple majority. They have to organise to stop COSATU's support for the ANC strategy and insist that the planned July Stay-away is turned into an all-out general strike to force the National Party from power. They have to organise workers' defence of the communities against Inkatha and state attack.

The white ruling class has shown that, whether in the National Party regime or in the guise of a new "reformed" capitalist government led by the ANC, it is determined to cling onto power. It will use all the armed might of the state to do so. A General Strike could become an opportunity to overthrow not only the National Party but the capitalist gang as a whole—but only if the working class arms itself, forms workers' Councils of Action and takes over the factories and mines. Justice and peace will come only by overthrowing the capitalist state, not trying to reform it. ■

BLACK WORKERS MUST BREAK FROM ANC LEADERSHIP!