

# Workers power

**INSIDE**

Number 164 February 1993

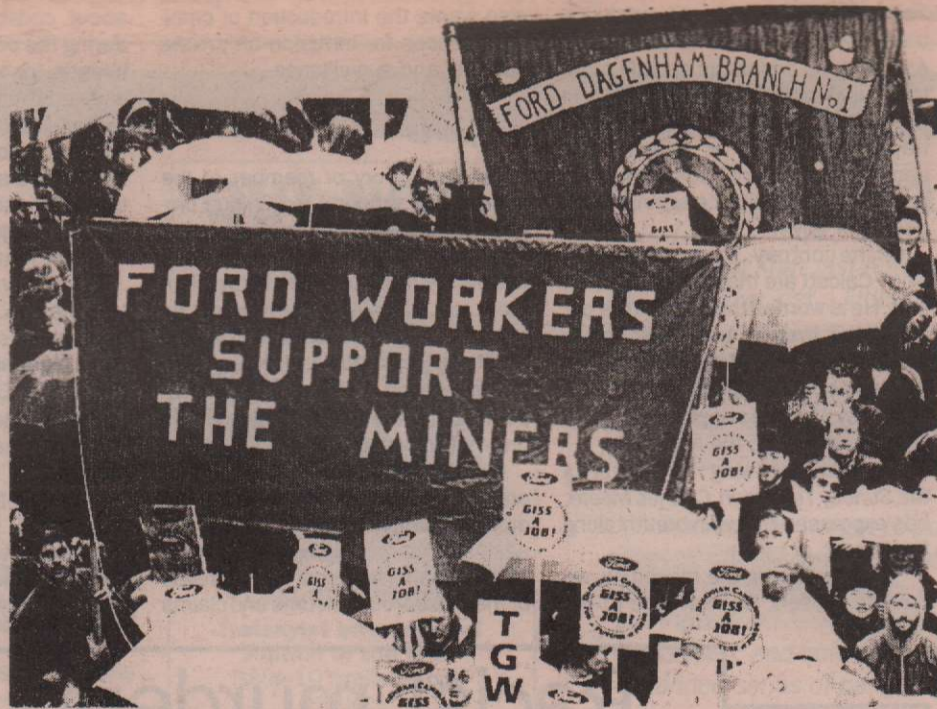
- ★ Pit closures
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- ★ Fight rail privatisation!

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## UNEMPLOYMENT SOARS

# Strike to save every job!



Above: United action can win. Top right: Real unemployment is over 4 Million!

JOHN MAJOR claims to be seeing "green shoots". The economy is all set for recovery. Confidence is returning. Booming Britain is just around the corner. He must think the working class is green if he expects us to believe that rubbish!

At the end of last year twenty companies were going bust every day. And the new year has begun with job cuts across the whole economy - public and private sectors alike. From Ford to Barclays Bank, from Birmingham City Council to British Rail, a relentless stream of announcements promises to put thousands more people on the dole.

The official unemployment figure has already nudged towards three million. The real figure is over four million.

For these four million people there is no sign of recovery. Even if order books are beginning to pick up, even if the businessmen who travelled with Major to India are feeling more confident, British

capitalism in 1993 means mass unemployment, wage cuts for millions in the public sector and pay freezes for thousands in manufacturing industry.

The whole system stands condemned. Every minute it is allowed to exist it inflicts some new misery on working class people.

We have to launch a fightback now to save jobs, services and living standards. There have been massive demonstrations against pit closures, lobbies and occupations of councils carrying out cuts, big votes for strikes amongst workers with no tradition of militancy in the Trustees Savings Bank and the Burtons clothing retailers. All this proves that there is an

anger, outrage and a will to fight back in the working class.

The immediate problem we face is how to turn that anger into a real struggle. And the obstacle to solving this problem is the existing leaders of the trade union movement who are running away from a fight with Major and the bosses.

Take the TUC's "day of action" on 18 February. This is supposed to be about saving jobs. There will be a lobby of parliament by 2,000 unemployed people. There will be leaflets and meetings. And there won't be a single job saved as a result!

The bosses deal with profit and loss. That is all they understand. If they can't make

profits they will sack workers. No lobby in the world will stop them. But working class action that threatened their profits would. If we bring their industries and services to a standstill we can hit them where it hurts.

Imagine the pain we could cause them if we pulled the plugs on the computers that deal in their multi-million pound transactions every day. Threaten that and we will be applying the sort of pressure that can save jobs.

The TUC cowers before the bosses' anti-union laws, refusing to countenance such action. But these laws would be useless if civil servants refused to allow the law courts to function, or if they were

defied by millions of people together.

Instead of making 18 February even a one day strike, Norman Willis, the TUC general secretary, insisted:

"This is not a call for industrial action but for broad based activity."

The broad base is meant to involve the very bosses who are carrying out the sackings and pay cuts. The TUC is calling on workers to hold joint meetings with the enemy.

Take just one example. What should the workers at United Distillers (owned by Guinness) do on 18 February? Their bosses are sacking 700 workers. Does the TUC seriously expect the shop

stewards to organise a joint rally with these cold hearted capitalists?

There is an alternative to the TUC's cowardice and treachery. It is to start rebuilding the fightback by organising the rank and file of the working class for action.

In every union, in every factory, office, hospital, school and pit, rank and file militants need to organise themselves into a co-ordinated network to force their leaders to fight if possible, but strong enough to take action without them if necessary.

In every town and city workers need to link up their campaigns and struggles through the building of COUNCILS OF ACTION.

Such councils can boost confidence by bringing workers together to plan combined action across the whole locality, acting as vital organising centres for each and every struggle, breaking down the barriers that leave so many workers feeling isolated and powerless.

Building for general strike action on the 18 February has been made much more difficult by the cowardice of the TUC and by Scargill's retreat from naming 18 February as a day of industrial action.

Wherever possible militants should continue to fight for strike action on the 18th, building links with Nalگو, the one union to sanction strike ballots for action that day.

Workers need to use whatever actions occur on the 18th to build rank and file organisations in the unions and councils of action in the localities. Such organisations are pivotal now in enabling us to maintain the mood of anger in the ranks of the working class and oppose the treachery of our leaders. They are vital if we are to build for the class-wide industrial action that can make John Major and the bosses retreat in panic. ■

# Forward to the Red Republic!

**A**FTER A decade of fairy tale weddings and royal births the 1990s have started off badly for the Windsors. Good. It's about time these idle parasites got some bad press.

There has been a whole series of scandals: Fergie and the Texan, suicidal Diana, Charles and Camillagate. In the midst of it all their home burnt down! Lucky it isn't their only home really.

Then they had to put up with all the criticism about the civil list and the Queen dodging taxes while the rest of the nation was tightening its belt. Her Royal Idleness was eventually forced to announce that she would pay taxes, but only after the government assured HM that they would foot the £60 million bill for repairs to her uninsured house.

Marital upsets are hardly new within the Royal family. The problem is that the Royal family was paraded before us day in day out through the press and television as an ideal to which we should all aspire. So when the marriages made in heaven end up in divorce and adultery, it does little to strengthen the bosses campaign for a return to "family values".

But while the Windsors have been reeling from successive scandals, it was the revelation of adultery by Prince Charles and the possibility of his divorce, that placed the issue of constitutional reform on the agenda.

## Reform

Suggestions for reform range from the shortening of the civil list to the disestablishment of the church. The relationship between the state and the church is particularly problematic, with widespread objections to the idea of a divorcee ascending to the throne and thereby becoming head of the Church of England.

Despite the problems of the monarchy, no serious sections of the bourgeoisie are prepared to call for its abolition. Those who pose as super-democrats refrain from calling for a constitutional republic for fear of destabilising the state by removing its titular head.

While the ruling class always deny that the monarchy is an anti-democratic institution, claiming that it has no real influence in government, their refusal to sanction either its abolition or even major reform reveal their understanding of its true role.

## Government

The monarch, as head of state, is thoroughly involved in the machinery of government. Why else does the Queen have a weekly meeting with the Prime Minister—certainly not because they enjoy each other's company. The monarch, as head of the armed forces and with the power to dissolve parliament, is a weapon the bosses can use in times of crisis.

In case of need the monarch could take over the reins of government and play a "Bonapartist" role—that is a dictator preserving the existing order but appearing to stand above all classes.

To play such a role in the future, the monarchy has to be identified with the whole nation in the eyes of large sections of the population,

BY DAVE BEECH

not representing any class or party, but simply there for the good of us all.

The Labour Party, Her Majesty's loyal opposition, is craven in its attitude towards the royal family. The Tory press has been more outspoken on the issue than these supposed representatives of the working class. Sections of the Labour and trade union bureaucracy even suggest that the monarchy protects us from a more authoritarian state. They echo Paddy Ashdown's argument against abolition—the threat of "President Thatcher".

## Alternatives

Labour's Jack Straw commented that the alternatives were "moving to a much tighter and more limited constitutional monarchy . . . or

embracing the idea of a republic." And for this timid radicalism he was firmly rebuked and told to shut up by John Smith.

All that the ruling class are considering at the moment, despite the press clamour, are reforms to save the institution of the monarchy and make it more modern and widely acceptable. From the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688 to the present day, the monarchy has learnt to change its role in society. It has learnt to bend rather than break. It of course learnt this lesson after Charles I lost his head in the English Revolution.

The working class on the other hand must learn the best lessons from the English Revolution: not to stop at reforms, but to carry out a revolutionary transformation of society.

- Abolish the monarchy!
- Forward to a Red Republic!

## LAWS, LIES AND CENSORSHIP

**A**ROW has blown up between the press and the government. Sir David Calcutt QC, author of a recently issued report on the press, argues for legislation to curb "press excesses".

What excesses is he talking about? The racist propaganda put out during the Malvinas and Gulf wars depicting Argentinians and Iraqis as little more than animals? The lies during the Great Strike of 1984-85 that portrayed the miners as violent hooligans? The constant campaigns inciting hatred and prejudice against black people or gays?

On the contrary. The excesses that worry Calcutt are those that affect his sort. He is worried that the truth is out about the lives of the Royal Family and the sex lives of ministers. He is worried about how this shows up the hypocrisy of these people who preach "family values" to the rest of us.

The arch right-wing Tory editor of the *Sunday Telegraph*, Charles Moore, has expressed this with breathtaking frankness:

"If we believe in the monarchy, we have to present its best face to the

world. I believe in concealment of these matters and, if you like, hypocrisy."

Calcutt's proposals include a statutory tribunal chaired by a judge that can stop publication, force apologies and impose fines of up to £5,000. He also wants the introduction of criminal offences for intrusion on private property and surveillance.

## Supports

Not every Tory or member of the ruling class supports the Calcutt proposals, not least the overwhelming majority of the press barons and their editors. With characteristic cynicism they are portraying themselves as champions of free speech. The *Sun* and its editor, Kelvin MacKenzie, claim to be on the side of the right to publish and are against any controls on what they can print.

MacKenzie even has the nerve to pretend he is on the side of the ordinary people, leading a crusade against the establishment. This is from the paper that spat on the graves of the Hillsborough victims and claims

the "credit" for the Tories' fourth election victory!

Britain has never had a free press. The Official Secrets Act is so restrictive that we are still unable to get information on events like the abdication of Edward VIII or the full truth about collaboration with the Nazis during the occupation of the Channel Islands. Irish republicans are not even allowed to speak on the radio or TV.

The Calcutt affair represents an attempt by one faction of the British capitalist class to restrict other capitalists whose behaviour is undermining the Major government and the Windsor family.

But his proposals would only protect the rich. That is the way that the present laws against libel work. There is no legal aid for libel. Libel lawyers like Peter Carter-Ruck charge hundreds of pounds per hour, well beyond the means of ordinary people. In most cases fees will be hundreds of thousands of pounds before even getting to trial.

That was why when the *Daily Mirror* and the Cook Report slandered Arthur Scargill, they kept challenging him to

sue. They knew that this would suck him and the NUM into an incredibly expensive quagmire. Suing for libel is a sport reserved for the rich. From Maxwell to Major, the privileged use the laws to gag anyone that might threaten their interests.

The Calcutt proposals would do nothing to change the fundamental balance of power in the world of media lies. Working class people have no interest in supporting attempts to shield the rich and powerful from well-deserved public ridicule and contempt.

## Solutions

There are other solutions on offer. Some Labour MPs like Clive Soley are trying to pass legislation giving a right to reply or forcing papers to print corrections. But the corrupt legal system, and its pampered, unelected Tory judges, cannot be relied on to make the press print accurate news. They are of the same class as the multi-millionaire newspaper owners, who lie to protect their interests and their profits against anyone who dares to fight back, and to keep us divided on lines of nationality, race or sexual preference.

This means that we should fight to force the labour movement to fund and produce its own newspaper, independent of the bosses and democratically open to contributions from all tendencies in and of the labour movement.

The TUC and Labour leaders have always proved unwilling to provide such a press, choosing to rely on fair weather friends like the *Daily Mirror*. In the current debate we should take up this demand once again.

At the same time the only way to guarantee control of the bosses' slander-sheets is through direct action by the working class, especially the printing and distribution workers. They should use their collective power and their ability to halt the printing presses or deliveries to stop anti-working class lies.

But the lies will go on for as long as the press is in the hands of a few capitalists who use it as a weapon for their class. This is why the working class movement must fight for the nationalisation of the press under workers' control. ■

## Racist murders

**RACIST KILLER** Wayne Lambert received a life sentence at Manchester Crown Court on 22 January. While passing sentence Judge Morland told him, "These were the most appalling crimes. You were the dominant figure driven by an evil senseless hatred of Pakistanis."

"I may as well do it again", was Lambert's only comment.

In January 1992 Lambert and others murdered 60 year old Saddick Dada in a vicious attack with a machete. Only three days later these thugs dragged Mohammed Sarwar from his taxi and repeatedly beat him until he died.

The court's acknowledgment of racism was met with a sigh of relief from the black communities. Acknowledgment of the racist nature of these murders is important, given that the judiciary usually attempts to ignore the

BY YASMIN KAHN

issue. The courts are part of a legal framework that is entrenched in its unwillingness to combat racism in any form.

The issue of racism was still undermined by the court, however, with its concentration on the pathological character of the accused, citing drug abuse, poverty and a history of petty crime. These "abnormalities" were used to justify the media's view that these were senseless and incomprehensible murders.

But such crimes are not "incomprehensible". It is capitalism that has produced institutionalised racism, enforced racist immigration controls and criminalised refugees.

It is capitalism that is creating a "Fortress Europe" to keep out non-Europeans, making legislation which gives confidence to the

growing far right. In this context the spate of racist attacks across Europe is anything but incomprehensible.

The Memorial Committee, set up in response to these attacks on the city's black communities, has successfully mobilised many forces against the increase in racist attacks, and has been instrumental in bringing the issue of racist murder to the fore.

Clearly we cannot rely on the bourgeois courts to provide a real solution. Instead we must build on the work of the black communities, organising black self-defence. At the same time we must build a national anti-racist campaign through the labour movement which will be capable of fighting against all immigration controls and the racist attacks that state racism perpetuates. ■



## EDITORIAL

# Rebuild the fightback!

OVER THE next two months the working class movement could determine the fate of John Major's government. If it acts decisively against his attack on jobs, pay and services it could wreck the government. If it continues to follow the strategy of the union leaders it will hand the Tories a new lease of life.

The scale of the attack is massive. Under the Council Tax local government spending will be cut to the bone. Privatisation of the rail and the mines will cost thousands of jobs. Over one million public sector workers face a pay cut under the Tories' 1.5% incomes policy. A survey by City accountants predicts that unemployment will rise in the private sector for the foreseeable future, even in a recovery.

There is no shortage of opposition to this. The mood of anger that brought hundreds of thousands of workers onto the streets against pit closures has not vanished. On 19 January both the North East and Birmingham saw strikes and big demonstrations by public sector workers. At the Yarrow shipyard workers voted to strike against a pay freeze. An action group in Bury staged a 2,000 strong march against cuts, one of the biggest labour movement events the town has ever seen.

In Newcastle the council Joint Trade Union Committee called for a ballot on strike action and a meeting with miners and rail workers to link the struggles. TGWU members occupied Wallasey town hall and set up a fighting fund to prepare for further action. Even in places like Truro, not known as a hotbed of militancy, trade unionists have been on the march.

All of these examples, together with the regular demonstrations and rallies against the pit closure programme, reveal the real mood of working class opposition to the Tories. But this mood is not enough to win. It has to be turned into action.

The decision by the mining and rail unions to call a synchronised ballot for strike action on 5 March provides a welcome opportunity for militants. Throughout the public sector there should be a campaign to involve more unions in the synchronised balloting. At the various conferences planned for February and March on building a public sector alliance, launching such a campaign must be at the top of the agenda.

At the same time militants need to face the fact that even the most left wing union leaders, like Scargill, are

trying to limit the action to a series of unspecified one day strikes. Militants must stop relying on such leaders to deliver action and start organising to deliver it ourselves.

This is the main lesson of the last two months. The right wing union leaders have come clean: they want a campaign of passive protest. Strike action is off their agenda. They hold the vain hope that pressure will produce a "budget for jobs" from the Tories.

But even militants who distrust the TUC have illusions in lefts like Scargill. Building opposition to his strategy is far more difficult. But it is desperately necessary, because Scargill, as well as rail union leaders like Jimmy Knapp and Derrick Fullick, will not break from the dominant

**There is no shortage of opposition to the Tories. The mood of anger that brought hundreds of thousands of workers onto the streets against pit closures has not vanished.**

right wing of the TUC. Despite their verbal militancy they are prepared to tailor their campaigns to fit the TUC's strategy.

Scargill has duped militants disgracefully over the last weeks. First he called for a "stayaway" on 19 January. Taking him at his word many workers began to build for strike action. Norman Willis had a word in Jimmy Knapp's ear. Jimmy Knapp told Scargill such a strike would be inappropriate. Scargill called off his "stayaway" and those who had fought for action were left high and dry.

The same thing happened around 18 February. Again Scargill called for strike action. He told a Cardiff rally:

"There comes a time when marches and demonstrations are insufficient. The time for mere demonstrations is at an end."

Acting on his call workers in the city began to build for a strike on 18 February. Once again, under pressure from the TUC leaders, Scargill suddenly changed his tune. Instead of a day of industrial action, 18 February is set to become a patchy "day on which activities may occur".

With each of these retreats by Scargill, more and more militants are becoming confused. The members they won to strike action grow disaffected. The prospects of rallying workers for the next day of action becomes more difficult. The fear grows that they will be left high and dry by another change of tune.

If this is allowed to continue then Major's prospects of surviving his current difficulties will grow. The mood for fighting back will evaporate. And the responsibility for this will lie with Scargill, just as much as with Willis.

Most militants find that hard to accept. They remember Scargill's role in 1984/85 and excuse his present misconduct as a result. They think that he is doing his best under difficult conditions.

Our criticisms have nothing to do with such personal considerations. It is Scargill's reformist politics that lead him to compromise with the TUC, to call and then call off action, to avoid a direct appeal to rank and file workers for joint action against pit closures and other job losses. Scargill is politically tied to the rest of the bureaucracy.

Workers need to break with that bureaucracy. A rank and file movement must be built against the bureaucrats as an organised network within and across every union and workplace. It must oppose the limits that reformists, left and right, place on our ability to fight.

A campaign to spread the synchronised ballots of 5 March to other unions must become the starting point for building a rank and file movement. It could address the burning need for action across the public sector. It could build vital links with private sector workers. It could use the mood of anger to rally the widest possible support for real united action, building the confidence to press for all out strikes, not just one day actions.

And in doing this it will come up against the fierce resistance of the entire union bureaucracy. This would pose to every militant the burning need to take the unions out of the hands of these leaders and transform them into organisations that fight. ■

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## MARXIST DISCUSSION GROUPS

Workers Power branches run a regular series of meetings to discuss vital issues facing the working class movement today, both in Britain and overseas. So don't just read the ideas in the paper, come along and discuss our theories and our practice in a lively and informal atmosphere.

### CARDIFF:

How to build a revolutionary party  
Monday 15 February, 8.30pm.

### Where is Europe Going?

Wed 3 March, 8.30pm  
both: see sellers for venue.

### MANCHESTER:

The United Nations: Saviour or Oppressor?  
Wednesday 10 February, 1.30pm

### Capitalism: Here to Stay?

Wednesday 3 March, 1.30pm  
both at Students' Union,  
Manchester Metropolitan Univer-  
sity.

### BIRMINGHAM:

The Balkans and the National  
Question  
Tuesday 16 February, 7.30pm  
See seller for venue.

### SHEFFIELD:

What do we mean by the Dictator-  
ship of the Proletariat?  
Tuesday 23 February, 7.30pm  
See sellers for venue.

### LONDON:

Britain: A Revolutionary Crisis?  
Wednesday 17 February, 7.30pm,  
Room E.199, East Building,  
London School of Economics  
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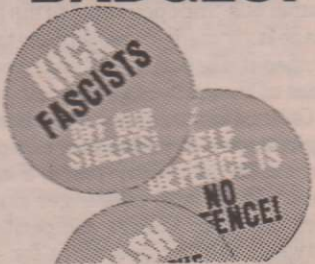
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## workers power

## FUND DRIVE

After a flying start last Autumn and in the run up to Christmas, our fund drive lost a little momentum in January. A £20 donation from an NUT rep in East London was gratefully received, together with £55 raised by Sheffield branch and another £200 from various collections. But it looks like other branches and supporters have been so busy fighting the TUC's derailing of the campaign to save the pits that they've overlooked the fund. . . temporarily!

Seriously, we've got to pull out all the stops to reach our target of £3000 by the end of March. Like the Bolsheviks, our paper is funded exclusively from the workers' own kopeks, so get those fund-raising parties, sponsored events and raffles organised, and quick. We need the money to bring out our planned series of pamphlets. Get that money coming in!

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# Fight privatisation!

## BRITISH RAIL

**T**HE TORIES are pressing ahead with the "semi-privatisation" of the whole British Rail network. This offence to the English language is the Tories' term for proposals unveiled on 22 January by Transport Minister, John McGregor.

The new bill is an attempt to calm discontent among Tory backbenchers by promising a slow track approach to the eventual sell-off of yet another nationalised industry.

McGregor stressed that his legislation provides for the creation of a network of rail users' committees and strict regulatory bodies. This is undoubtedly the most complex privatisation yet and the bosses' financial analysts have pointed to a number of potential pitfalls for the government.

The revenues from this privatisation will be minimal, and the Tories will initially have to offer heavy subsidies to lure in private capital. There will be no mass share issue, so the Tories can hardly rekindle the notion of "popular capitalism".

Under the proposals the unified national timetable would disappear and the already staggering Inter-City fares would probably rise by 10%. Network South East has already announced drastic reductions to nearly 40 services, including the complete closure of the North Downs line which had fallen into dangerous disrepair as a result of systematic under-investment and the use of ancient rolling stock.

With BR's losses running at close to £1 billion there is good reason to fear the loss of many more lines, possibly on the scale of the infamous Beeching cuts of 1962.

The key to ensuring that the Tories' plans for butchering rail services come unstuck lies with BR workers. We are faced with an enormous attack on jobs, conditions and union organisation. By BR's own admission 25,000 jobs are due for the chop while the RMT, the largest of the rail unions,

BY AN RMT MEMBER

has predicted up to 40,000 The forthcoming sale of the Railfreight Distribution section would cost at least 5,000 jobs.

Up to now the union leaderships have connived in the run-up to privatisation, accepting the "Organisation for Quality" document which established business and profit centres.

RMT chief Jimmy Knapp has captured good publicity for his verbal attacks on BR's absurd and degrading proposals to use workers as a modern equivalent of pit canaries to test the effects of wind drafts from high speed trains. But he and his fellow bureaucrats bear the blame for consenting to a new machinery of negotiation. Management now has a much freer hand to impose new rules and conditions without so much as consultation.

The leadership of the RMT and the white collar union TSSA are telling their members that the way to oppose the decimation of jobs and services is through the public relations gimmickry of the "Better Rail Campaign".

The union bureaucracies seem incapable even of informing members of their own parliamentary lobbies. While there is now a vague commitment to stage a ballot on 5 March in support of one-day strikes in conjunction with the mining unions, the union tops have yet to announce a single date for a walk out.

Rail union militants must take full advantage of this limited window of opportunity both to push for the maximum "yes" vote and argue for much broader, indefinite strike action. There is undeniably a great deal of demoralisation amongst BR workers, and important local disputes such as the fight against victimisation of guards at Manchester Piccadilly have gone down to defeat. Even so, the bosses and the Tories are not yet out of the



woods.

There are hopeful signs of a rank and file response to the attacks and the official leadership's dismal track record. On 23 January, 50 rail union members gathered in Glasgow to begin the arguments about the way forward. Emerging from this is the real possibility of a national delegate conference that could hammer out a practical strategy for resistance to management's attacks and the Tories' proposals for dismembering BR.

In the next few days and weeks it is urgent that rail union activists seek joint local meetings with other public transport workers and NUM members with the aim of building for a big "yes" vote on 5 March, and to lay the basis for fighting rank and file unity in action. This must go beyond the token one day strikes currently on the cards.

The union leaders will make noises about resistance, but in practice will do everything to undermine effective

action. The sudden convening by the RMT's leadership of a Special General Meeting in Newcastle on 10 February suggests that new moves may be afoot.

But members should be clear that without an organised challenge from below in the form of a rank and file railworkers' movement there is no chance that the rail unions will seize on the Tories' disarray and eliminate the word "semi-privatisation" from the language altogether. ■

## LONDON BUSES

**“MANAGEMENT ARE holding a gun to our heads: take a big pay cut or lose your job.”** This was the response of one London bus conductor to an ultimatum from bosses at Leaside Buses.

The ten companies which make up London Buses Ltd have demanded pay cuts of up to 20%, sharp increases in the length of the working week and job losses. The managers are saying that if operating costs are not drastically reduced then private operators will be able to win contracts by offering cheaper tenders come April.

This sweeping attack on jobs, wages and conditions is the stark reality of bus privatisation. The Tories are determined to deregulate and sell-off of London's bus network by the end of 1993.

Over the past seven years they have paved the way, making swingeing cuts in subsidies. In the past 15 months the London Forest bus company has folded completely while four of six East London garages have closed. The creation of numerous "independent" firms has made it virtually impossible to take unified strike action within the confines of the anti-union laws.

Other British cities have had a nightmarish experience of bus privatisation in recent years. Fares have soared and passenger numbers declined. Vicious competition between cowboy operators for lucrative routes has worsened traffic congestion in city centres while unprofitable rural services have disappeared.

Working class Londoners could soon face the loss of numerous routes, the axing of concessionary passes for pensioners and still more fare increases. Bus crews will come under mounting pressure to work longer hours and meet impossible timetables.

To date the response of regional officials from the main bus workers' union, the TGWU, has consisted of a badly publicised march and lobby of Parliament. Instead of calling for fleet-wide strike action the union leaders have issued a plea for a select committee to set up an enquiry. Even if the Tories conceded such a body it would do nothing more than modify the details of the attack on public transport in the capital.

Attendance and votes at mass meetings in the garages have shown the anger felt at the prospect of wages falling to as little as £4 an hour. There is widespread willingness to fight. T&G officials, however have made it plain that they will continue to hide behind the anti-union laws.

During the London Forest dispute in July 1991 the union's London Buses Committee refused to call for secondary action despite spontaneous solidarity from other companies' drivers. The failure to defy the anti-union laws resulted in the imposition of worse terms and conditions by the private operator which took over one of Forest's garages.

The threat of even worse wage cuts and job losses under private operators may well be used by the

bureaucracy to sell an agreement of wage cuts and voluntary redundancies. Bus workers must fight this idea. In the long run it will not mean better conditions and the managers will always be able to come back with the threat that "if you don't agree to this the private companies will take over." At the same time managements are seeking to spread fear and confusion with incentives to take voluntary redundancy and one off transitional payments to cushion the blow of slashed wages.

Bus workers must break from the T&G bureaucracy's law abiding strategy. Some stewards have begun to forge links between garages and companies. This must be the first step to reviving links across the fleet through the election of an accountable committee with delegates from all garages.

This committee must co-ordinate all out, indefinite strike action until the Tories retreat from their privatisation plans and the managers withdraw their proposals. This could win enormous support from the London's long-suffering commuters.

Militants in the garages must form a fighting alliance with Tube and British Rail workers, linking demands and striking together. To end the misery of London's congestion an integrated, free public transport system under workers' control is needed. Transport workers must demand the government restores the subsidies it has already cut and fully funds the public transport system. ■

## NEW ATTACKS ON LECTURERS

**THE NEWLY** formed College Employers' Federation (CEF) looks poised to launch the most serious assault yet on lecturers' terms and conditions in the further education (FE) sector. In a recent address to college principals and personnel directors CEF chief Roger Ward proposed that from 1 April all new staff will face new contracts.

The current requirement for a year's notification of redundancy will go. New lecturers will be on a 36-hour week, justified in terms of harmonising conditions with other college staff. His proposals further enshrine "management's right to manage", and principals will have the right to decide appropriate levels of contact time.

Ward's aim is to scrap the so-called Silver Book, which has spelled out basic terms and conditions for lecturers. Polytechnic bosses have already achieved this objective through the tactic of denying pay rises to any lecturer refusing to accept new conditions. Ward and his co-thinkers want to impose individual contracts and performance-related pay.

The CEF briefing document suggests that the employers are very confident that they can stare down any challenge by NATFHE which, in Ward's words, "... has a well-worn procedure of threatening strikes, but in the end they give in."

He is also clear about paying no heed to a recent European Court

BY A NATFHE MEMBER

ruling upholding the validity of existing contracts after institutions pass out of local authority control.

In the face of such provocative management NATFHE needs to stiffen its posture. The Socialist Lecturers' Alliance (SLA) has called on the union to declare a national strike in the event of any college issuing new contracts. The SLA has also called for the organisation of a compulsory levy across the FE sector to build a strike fund.

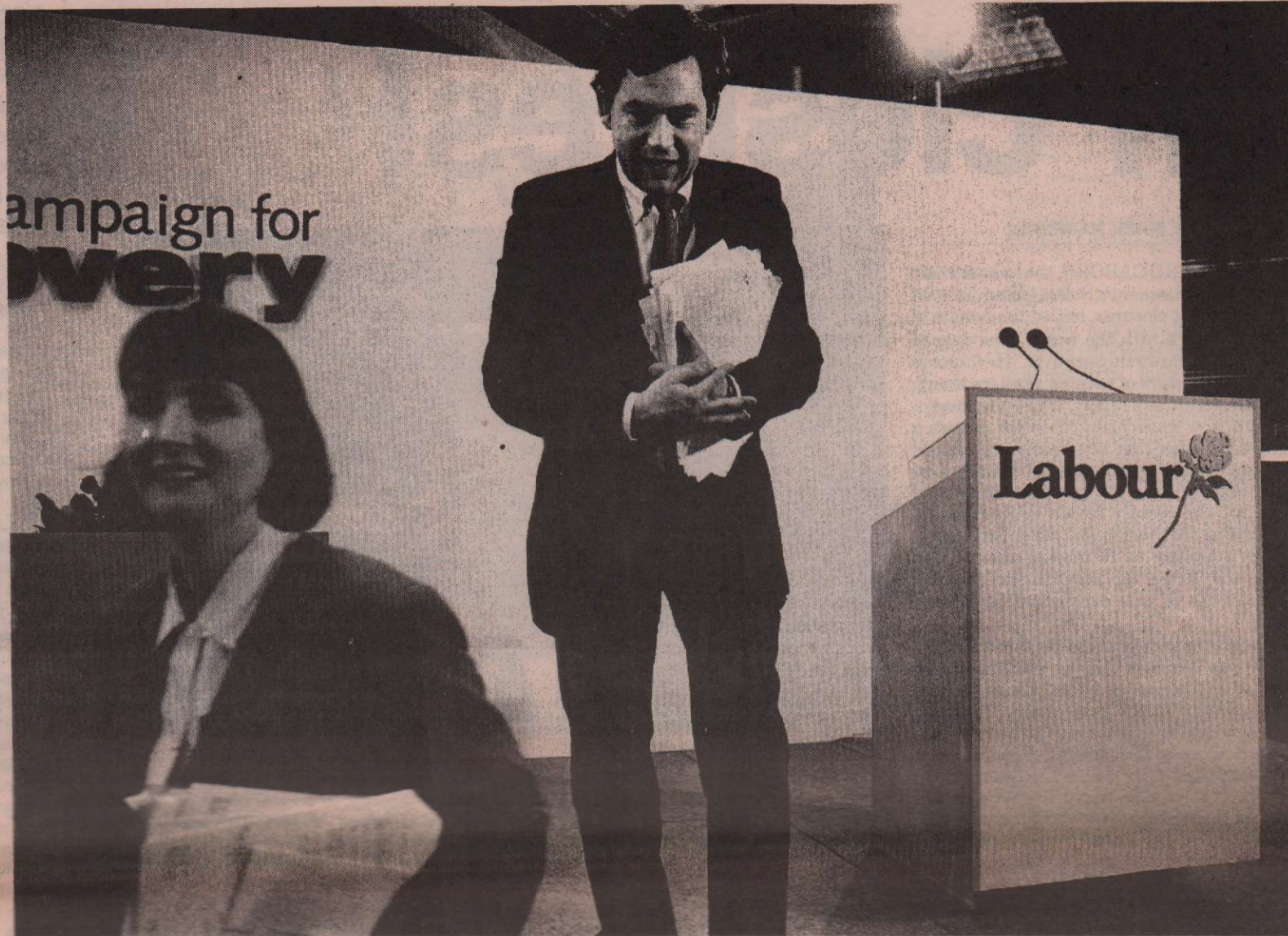
In the meantime activists must press for local action where management refuses to give a clear assurance not to introduce contracts with different conditions for new lecturing staff. The objective should be to win official national backing for any industrial action, but lecturers need to prepare for unofficial strikes against an attack which would mean the death of any effective trade unionism amongst FE lecturers. ■

Support the SLA lobby of the Further/Adult Education Sector Conference,  
Saturday 27 February at 12 noon;  
NATFHE Headquarters,  
Britannia Street, London WC1

Next SLA meeting:  
Saturday 13 March at 1.00pm;  
Carrs Lane Church Centre,  
Carrs Lane, Birmingham

## CLINTON AND LABOUR

# The road to Hope?



Gordon Brown, looking to Clinton for ideas

**N**INE MONTHS after its fourth consecutive election defeat there are no signs of the Labour Party's crisis being resolved. John Smith's leadership, the supposed cure for Labour's malaise, has been a flop, disappointing even the traditional right in the Party.

In parliament Smith's weak and uninspired performances have even managed to make John Major appear confident. More importantly he has done nothing outside parliament to mobilise Labour's supporters. He even failed to win support when the Tories were on the ropes in the aftermath of the collapse of the pound and the fury over the announcement of the pit closures.

Smith's weakness has further undermined the low morale of the party's dwindling band of activists. Standing at just over 200,000, individual membership of Labour is similar to that of the Liberal Democrats. This is a far cry from Kinnock's call for a mass party of a million members.

Against this background, sections of Labour's leadership and their advisory cliques have turned to the US Democrats and their winning presidential candidate, Bill Clinton, for inspiration.

Chief among the Clinton sycophants are Philip Gould and Patricia Hewitt, the witch-hunting, election-losing spin doctors from Kinnock's inner circle.

In an article in the *New Statesman and Society*, Gould writes of Clinton's "remaking and renewing of the Democratic Party around the traditional Democratic values, principles and populism of the 1950s and 1960s rather than the Democratic elitism of the 1970s and 1980s... Clinton united the ranks of his party and transcended the left/right conflict."

What Gould has done is rewrite US history. The organisation he praises was under the thumb of the unashamedly racist Dixiecrats who barred the majority of the black population from voting until 1965. This is the same party which waged a genocidal imperialist war against the peoples of southeast Asia.

Gould points to Clinton's "extraordinary grasp of policy". But it wasn't extraordinary at all. What Clinton succeeded in doing was wooing the highest level of financial support for his campaign of any Democratic candidate in 30 years. Much of that backing came from US bosses who saw the attraction of Clinton's proposals for mild re-

flation combined with the bare bones of a coherent industrial strategy.

This analysis, however, eludes Gould, Hewitt and their co-thinkers. They can only see that Clinton won an election in 1992 while Labour lost in the same year even in the midst of a severe recession. For all the tours of the "prawn cocktail circuit" by Labour leaders, the party is as isolated as ever in terms of real support amongst British bosses.

The key figures in Labour's parliamentary ranks who have joined the "Clintonisation" project are Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. They eagerly attended talks with members of Clinton's team and visited a recent London conference on Clinton's economic programme, sponsored by the TGWU and the *Guardian*. Having shelled out £120 to attend, Blair and Brown tell us that Clinton is the new champion of the US poor with lessons to teach British progressives.

BY ANDY ROGERS

But the "modernisers" in the Labour Party have a problem—John Smith. They have yet to prescribe saxophone lessons for him, but the personality of the dour Edinburgh barrister hardly seems to fit in with a project which relies heavily on the marketing of a charismatic media figure.

Labour's modernisers think that they can see a way forward for Labour in following the policies and style of the Democrats. Clinton is an advocate of another 100,000 cops on US streets and an enthusiastic supporter of the death penalty. Blair, the shadow Home Secretary, has begun to write about the need for Labour to be seen as the party that is tough on crime.

Another shadow cabinet member, David Blunkett, not usually associated with the extreme modernising wing of the party, has even broached the idea of a British version of "workfare", which Clinton championed as a way of cutting welfare spending and appeasing white racist anxieties about black "scroungers".

What the exponents of the "Clintonisation" project agree on is the need to deepen Labour's identification with the so-called "working middle classes" and further distance the party from the organised working class. They hope that this, combined with a more convincing strategy for revitalising manufacturing capital, will provide the necessary appeal at the next election.

This is only the latest episode in the search for a quick fix. In the 1980s many of the same electoral strategists pointed to the social democracies of Spain and Sweden as the way forward. No talk of that now, instead they give us Clinton. When Clinton fails, like the Span-

ish and Swedish models, we can expect another new model to try and dupe the working class, and to convince the bosses that Labour is supportable.

The public opposition within the parliamentary party to the modernising wing comes primarily from last year's other failed candidate for the deputy leadership, John Prescott. This voice of Labour's past poses as the upholder of the trade union link and the party's supposed commitment to "socialism". There is no evidence that Prescott has a different economic policy from the modernisers, though he seems morally repulsed at the pro-Clinton camp's focus on media spectacles.

Meanwhile, the hapless John Smith sits in the background facing a dilemma. Much as the majority of leading Labour MPs might like to move towards a US-style Democratic machine they realise that there is no-one to foot the bill for the project but the trade unions. Union funds continue to make up 85% of Labour's income. Even as the union bureaucrats accept curbs on their role in making conference policy, few of them would contemplate a breaking of the historic link any time before another General Election.

The most likely scenario should see some victories for the modernisers on policy questions and the trade union block vote, but none of this will resolve Labour's underlying crisis. The virtual silence of the now marginalised Labour left in the debate about the party's future exposes the sorry bankruptcy of the numerous schemas advanced by tendencies like *Socialist Outlook* and *Socialist Organiser* for Labour's transformation into a vehicle for achieving socialism. For that, we need a different type of party altogether. ■

## Build the boycott

BY AN NUT MEMBER

serious fight against the government over SATS.

But the Executive is now under pressure to at least give the impression of doing something after years of inactivity. The pressure originated from a campaign mounted by English teachers and the London Association of Teachers of English. Past experience suggests that if the Executive can find a pretext for avoiding a boycott, it will leap at the chance. Even if it does organise some form of boycott of the English tests it will try to resist any extension to other secondary school SATS or to the Key Stage 1 tests for seven year olds.

There is a growing current of opposition amongst teachers to these tests. They have a destructive effect on the learning process and involve yet another massive increase in teachers' workloads.

Militants must exploit this opportunity to push for a blanket boycott of SATS. Such a boycott will need to be organised from below, independently of the Ex-

ecutive and in defiance of any attempts to sabotage such action.

The Socialist Teachers' Alliance (STA), the main left current within the NUT, has been energised by the campaign around the English tests in London. It has produced some useful propaganda arguing for an across the board boycott. But the STA will not openly advocate and seek to lead such a boycott on an unofficial basis.

Instead, NUT members are encouraged to "let the union know your views", meaning pass resolutions at school groups and association meetings calling on the Executive to sanction a boycott of all SATS. Of course the STA is right to direct demands at the Executive. But it will not be enough.

Militants must argue that school NUT groups vote now to boycott all SATS and try and spread their action to other school groups and associations. If Local Education Associations and school managements attempt to discipline NUT members carrying out the boycott, this must be met with immediate strike action. ■

**THE TORIES'** latest attempt to restructure state education involves the introduction of yet more standardised tests, provoking opposition from some unlikely sources. The educational establishment has roundly condemned the introduction of Key Stage 3 Standardised Assessment Tests (SATs), an English test for all 14 year olds.

The new assessment proposal is the brainchild of the notorious Tory think-tank, the Centre for Policy Studies, which is obsessed with the abolition of comprehensive education and the reintroduction of streaming.

At present NUT members are waiting for results of a ballot over a boycott of the English language tests. But it is not a ballot for action; the union say it is merely "indicative", little more than a membership survey. This should alert union militants to the difficulties they face in winning and implementing a boycott. Once more the NUT Executive, led by the "Broad Left" (a mis-named clique which is neither broad nor left) has shown its lack of commitment to a

## SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT

# No compromise on closures!

BY MARK HARRISON

**R**ICHARD CABORN, the Labour chair of parliament's Select Committee on the pit closures, hailed the results of his handiwork with the words, "the days of an elected dictatorship are over." He forgot to add that the days of sacking workers aren't.

The committee's report, which the government is now considering, does not contain a single statement on how many pits should remain open. It recommends a subsidy over five years, putting the ten most threatened pits into the colliery review procedure and expanding the market for coal amongst electricity suppliers to 19 million tonnes. This gives the Tories the possibility of keeping some of the 31 pits earmarked for closure open.

Estimates vary on whether this will be 15 or 20 pits. What is clear is that the report, backed by Labour, gives the Tories an honourable way out of their mess. They can demonstrate to the world at large that they have listened to the views of all parties and have adjusted their policies accordingly.

Labour have also helped the Tories speed up their plans for privatising the mines. The Select Committee report contains proposals to make the mines that do stay open more efficient and more profitable.

In particular the suggestions about changing shift systems in the mines will be welcome to both British Coal and its prospective private buyers. As a price for keeping some pits open, miners, who do one of the most exhausting and hazardous jobs there is, will be expected to go onto a six day week, with a flexible shift system. As the report says:

"We would wish to see particular attention given to the reform of working hours."

For reform, read extension. The Select Committee report has laid the basis for one of the most terrible betrayals of the last decade.

It is a report in favour of sacking at least 10,000 miners. It is a report that condemns at least one third of the 31 pits, the communities around them and around 40,000 workers in related industries to the misery of the dole queue.

Bridget Bell of the North Staffordshire Wives' Action Group was spot on when she greeted the report with the words:

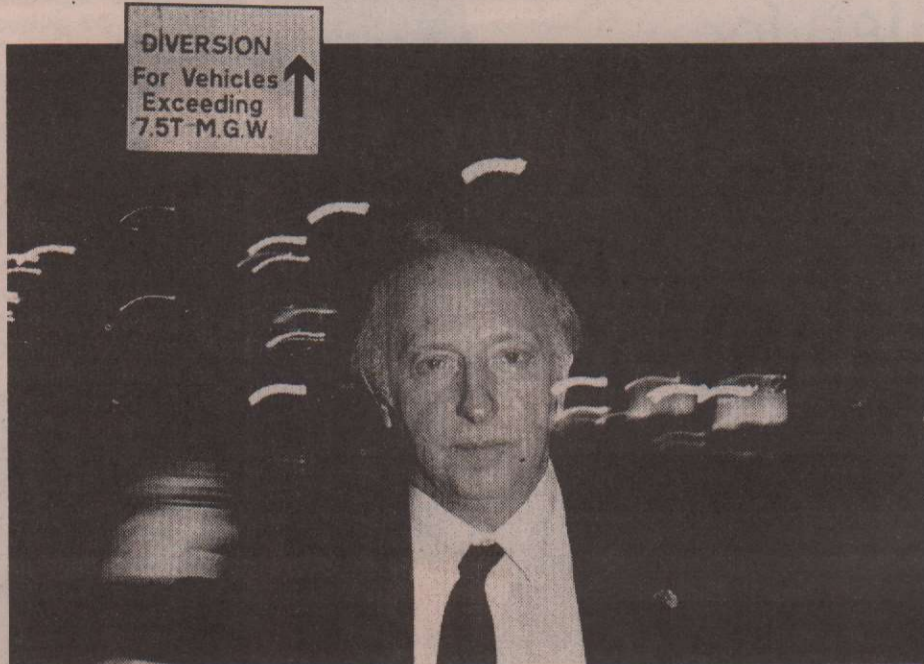
"I personally am fed up with review procedures. You can call them nine months' extra life, or a nine month death sentence."

The report, because it gives the government an escape clause, will be used to brand miners who reject it as being unreasonable, of demanding too much, of not recognising the need to compromise. It is designed to undercut the widespread support for the miners that was evident in October, leaving them isolated if they decide to take action against the closures that do go ahead.

To avoid this fate it is necessary to act before the fine details of the sell out can be pushed through. Scargill has rightly condemned the report. But more is needed. No miner should have to wait for the nine month death sentence to be carried through. The time to act is now.

Immediately the 5 March ballot should be brought forward and turned into a ballot for all out strike action in the mines. There must be a direct appeal to the rail workers to do the same. Each of the pits currently threatened with immediate closure should be occupied now until the closure threat is removed completely.

The campaign to win support from the rest of the labour movement needs to be stepped up into a campaign for a general strike against any pit closures. The retired miners' leader, Peter Heathfield, responded to ques-



No more diversions from strike action!

tions about a general strike at a rally in West London with the remark that the 1,000 Drax building workers who struck on 21 October in support of the miners, "didn't ring national office to ask permission to go on strike, because they knew what the answer would be. They did it themselves."

The example is a good one. It shows that workers can see the clear links between their own futures and the miners. But Heathfield is dodging the central issue by saying, leave it up to workers to decide what to do. He is avoiding challenging the leaders of other unions to call their members out.

You won't get a general strike that way. Scargill and the NUM need to demand that the leaders of all TUC unions call out their members in support of the miners. And when these traitors refuse, when they decide not to give "permission", the NUM must organise

to address rank and file workers from other unions directly, to appeal over the heads of the other union leaders. The success with the Drax workers shows what can be done. Build on it and the results will be even more impressive.

If Scargill himself refuses to pursue the course of industrial action—and every rank and file miner needs to fight now to ensure he doesn't—then the Tories will be saved and mines will close.

Worse, the NUM will have suffered yet another terrible defeat and will be in a very weak position to oppose the next round of job cuts and declining safety standards that will come with privatisation.

Such a defeat is far from inevitable. The support the miners won in the autumn has created the conditions for victory. *Now time is of the essence if we are to get that victory.* ■

## From pit camps to occupations!

**T**HE WOMEN of the mining communities have a proud tradition. Their role in the great strike of 1984/85 was a tremendous boost to the struggle. The organisations they built were a gain of that struggle.

Women fought alongside the men on picket lines. They addressed mass rallies of other workers. They helped build the solidarity that sustained the strike for a year.

In today's struggle against pit closures the women of the coal fields have again shown their determination to fight. The occupation of Markham Main pithead by the women of Armthorpe just before Christmas was proof of that. Women Against Pit Closures have called for a mass demonstration in London on 6 February to emphasise the role of women in the fight against closures.

To further this struggle women have set up camps outside seven of the most threatened pits. The management at Houghton Main were so rattled by this that they tried to get the camp removed from "British Coal" property.

Maureen Stebbings, the secretary of Women Against Pit Closures, explained that the camps were "to keep the fight against pit closures in the public eye". Certainly the call on trade unionists to support the camps and send delegations is a way to do this.

But there is a great danger that these camps

become simply one more aspect of a campaign of public relations which is counterposed to a campaign of action. They can become a cover for the refusal of the NUM to call for the occupation of the threatened pits instead of a base from which to launch such occupations. They can become, like the Greenham women's peace camp on which they are modelled, symbolic protests. Sadly the road to defeat is often paved with such symbols.

The task is to prevent this by linking the role of the camps to the campaign for industrial action to save the pits.

They should become organising centres to win pledges of support for actual occupations of the pits, not alternatives to such occupations. An occupation, seizing valuable property and machinery and holding it to ransom against the bosses, is a tried and tested way of stopping closures.

In France today the threatened Hoover plant in Dijon is in the hands of its workforce. They are stopping the movement of plant and machinery and costing the bosses a fortune.

They are fighting to save 600 jobs. British miners and the women of the coal fields should heed this example.

*Let's set up more pit camps: but let's set them up the other side of the pit gates and force the Tories to retreat.* ■

## Our differences

Dave Douglass, a miner at Hatfield Main in Yorkshire, is vice chair of the South Yorkshire NUM Panel. Dave criticised Workers Power in the pages of the Daily Worker, a paper produced by The Leninist. We offered him space to do the same in our paper, alongside a reply from us. We received the following letter.

“ I believe the centre of our disagreement is not just your coverage of the mining struggle this time round. It was the same in 1984/85 and at all times subsequently. Since I don't believe I can change the entire direction of your group, and especially not in public and in 1,000 words it seems a bit futile trying.

Many things are wrong, politically, tactically and in principle, but the most aggravating thing is your *factual* inaccuracies—you NEVER EVER check what's really gone on, whose said what etc. All you do is presume who makes decisions, judgments etc. So whenever we decide as a union you always say "the leadership" has done this or that. Often it is the branches themselves which have made decisions.

You also presume always to be more far sighted and politically correct than we the workers ourselves. There is no evidence of this whatsoever.

You offer yourself as OUR political leadership. Sorry but we will comprise that role *ourselves*. See the last edition of *Heavy Stuff*, "Charge of the Left Brigade", for a more detailed discussion of these points.

Revolutionary Greetings  
Dave Douglass”

● We reply: Give us one example of a *factual* inaccuracy and we'll correct it. Is it true that the delegate conference decided to authorise a ballot but left its timing in the hands of the leadership? Is it true that the leadership has waited nearly four months before calling a ballot, and then only for one day actions?

Come off it Dave, we aren't being inaccurate. We just disagree with the strategy that you and many militants as well as leaders in the NUM are carrying through.

We know full well that many branches take decisions. We also know that the leadership does what it exists to do: it leads, it sets the agenda, it devises the strategy. And it is currently doing this in what we believe to be a wrong manner. Why try to hide a disagreement on policy behind an unsubstantiated charge about our factual errors?

As to us presuming to lead the workers and being more far sighted, this is something you have been harping on about in the many publications you write for, from *Class War* and *Direct Action* through to the Leninist's *Daily Worker*.

Again you are hiding a political disagreement about the role of the revolutionary party—which from your years as a Trotskyist you know plenty about—behind a radical, but no less pathetic, version of the "outside agitators" argument.

We do believe that a party is necessary, not only to lead the working class to socialism, but to lead it in struggles like those of today that are being misled by reformists.

But we build that leadership in struggle alongside and as part of the working class, through a dialogue with militants, not a monologue by the party. We don't force anyone to accept our views, but we are confident that the value of our arguments will be proved in the course of struggle.

Your deliberate caricature of all this suits your purpose. By rubbishing your political opponents as "outsiders" you seek to preserve the domination of your own policies and strategy over others.

We happen to disagree with you. And because we want to help the miners' struggle in every way we can, we see it as our duty not only to fight for solidarity but also to argue against a strategy that we think is leading to defeat. ■

## BRITISH BOLSHEVISM

## A view from the rank and file

**H**ARRY WICKS was a founder member of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) and of British Trotskyism. When he died in 1989 he was still a revolutionary socialist, contributing as best he could to the struggles of the working class.

Socialist Platform and Logie Barrow, who edited the memoirs and completed them after Harry's death, have performed a valuable service to the labour and socialist movement in publishing this book.

Harry Wicks grew up in the working class area of Battersea, South London. Within this rich political environment he learnt his socialism from the various organisations that preceded the foundation of the CPGB. Born in 1905, by the age of 14 Harry was working on the railway as an apprentice in the Victoria South signal box.

He was also a member of the Herald League, one of the organisations that came together in 1920 to form the CPGB. Harry immediately became an enthusiastic communist, building the party's working class base in Battersea and helping in the election of Shapurji Saklatvala as the Communist MP for that area.

## Workers

A key section of the book deals with the historic period of the great miners' struggles and the General Strike of 1926. The small CPGB was faced with the task of rallying broad sections of workers in the trade unions to combat the bosses' offensive. It addressed this problem through building a rank and file movement in the unions, the National Minority Movement (NMM).

The NMM was launched in Battersea Town Hall in 1924 with Tom Mann, then a leading communist, in the Chair. The aim of the movement was to build a united front organisation which could transform the trade unions, making them real fighting organisations of the workers and replacing the class collaborationist leaders with class fighters.

There was no shortage of "lefts" who paid lip service to such plans, such as Purcell and Hicks, both leading figures on the TUC General Council. Fatally, it was the courting of these figures by a Soviet bureaucracy, increasingly concerned with implementing the perspective of "Socialism in One Country", that led to a stifling of criticism of the "lefts" by the CPGB and the NMM in the run up to the General Strike.

Harry Wicks comments on the results of this policy at a local level:

"In the Town Hall vestibule was a man with a friendly face, a big hat and a wide girth. It was George Hicks, a rising star among the left wing trade union leaders. He was no stranger to the Battersea movement. Yet to push open the door leading from the vestibule to the conference and identify himself with the Minority Movement was something he never did."

John McKee reviews  
*Keeping My Head: The  
Memoirs of a  
British Bolshevik*  
by Harry Wicks  
(Socialist Platform, £5.95)

Neither did Purcell, nor AJ Cook, the militant leader of the miners, who had won his position thanks to NMM support.

Harry describes the overwhelming support for the General Strike in Battersea, and how the Young Communist League, along with the National Unemployed Workers Committee Movement in Battersea, marched from factory to factory to bring out workers who were just waiting for the call.

He describes his dismay as he discovered the total lack of communication between workers, even in adjacent boroughs, the lack of news and the reliance on the government-run BBC and British Gazette and the TUC's British Worker.

While the TUC leaders prevaricated and sought to sell the strike out the CPGB's *Workers Bulletins* delayed carrying any criticism of the leaders. Only by the second week of the strike did criticism appear and then only of the right wing of the TUC. This was disastrous. The TUC left had the confidence of the rank and file but was refusing to put up a fight. It was keeping the workers in the dark.

The weakness of the lefts is well illustrated by Harry's description of George Coppock, secretary of the Building Workers' Federation. This leading "left" was invited by the Battersea Council of Action to speak at the Town Hall in the middle of the strike. The building was packed from "floor to ceiling" with more crowds trying to get in desperate for news and guidance. As Harry puts it:

"And what did Coppock have for feeding their hunger? Throughout that meeting, he did nothing but make jokes, had them rolling in the aisles almost. As a comedy act it was an unsurpassable one man show. but as for strategy, guidance or even hard news, he was bankrupt. We had all ached for him to

**Within no time the Party hacks moved against the South London dissidents, denouncing and then expelling them. British Trotskyism, in the shape of the "Balham Group", was born.**

give us some perspective on what was happening nationally. I was shattered."

So were millions of workers when the strike was sold out. Even CP members were shell-shocked. Harry correctly points out that the CP itself had become part of the confusion of the workers, "sometimes praising the left leaders, and sometimes warning about their unreliability". And though Harry tends to underestimate the role of the increasingly Stalinist Communist International (CI) in this deba-

cle, his memoirs do reveal the way in which the policy towards the "lefts" not only disarmed the advanced workers but the CPGB's own members as well.

After the strike Harry was victimised. Taking advantage of this situation, he was sent in 1927, as a leading member of the Young Communist League, for a three year stay at the International Lenin School in Moscow. Here he was plunged into the maelstrom of the CI's internal political struggles.

Until 1929 Bukharin was nominally head of the school but soon after Harry arrived the purge of the "right opposition" was under way in preparation for Stalin's "left turn" and the disastrous ultra-left politics of the "Third Period".

Harry, it appears, was an industrious and diligent student. He describes how political education and seminars were interspersed with weapons training, being taught by a Cossack how to jump onto a galloping horse (a feat he never achieved) and learning how to drive a train!

Life in Moscow, and in other parts of the Soviet Union, was stimulating for the working class activist

from Battersea. But it also served to stimulate doubts in Harry's mind when evidence of the growing bureaucratisation of both the state and the party began to reveal itself.

The campaign against "counter-revolutionary" Trotskyism disquieted Harry, as did restrictions on the rights of students to freely discuss sensitive political topics. Even the Lenin School was not spared the "chistka", the purges, which began in the Autumn of 1929:

"We would all gather in the main

auditorium. The chistka went on and on, from morning till night, for weeks. All school work was suspended. Each of us had to stand alone, up on the platform in front of a row of Red Army colonels and other high dignitaries."

Every student's biography was subject to minute scrutiny as was their behaviour or off-the-cuff remarks at the school. At least one student "disappeared". But Harry was lucky. He was critical of the CPGB from the left and was seen "as a good left winger" at a time when the CI was having trouble convincing the British Party to adopt the new leftist line initiated in 1928.

## Scepticism

Harry admits that he was no Trotskyist at this time but he maintained a healthy scepticism towards the methods being used to purge the Soviet Communist Party. It was his return home after three years that was to shake Harry's faith in the party.

He found a very different CPGB to the one he left. Having grown after the General Strike, especially amongst the miners, to almost 10,000 the Party had shrivelled by 1930 when Harry went back to Britain. The decline was partly a result of the impact of the 1926 defeat.

But the principal cause of the CPGB's malaise was its implementation of the "Third Period". Workers in the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and the Labour Party, who the Party had collaborated with in the past, were now officially regarded as belonging to "social fascist" organisations.

The united front policy that had led to the creation of the NMM was jettisoned in favour of the "united front from below only"—which in practice meant the building of CPGB front organisations. According to Harry, the Party had "negligible contact with the organised labour movement". It had become "a sect". This was particularly diffi-

cult for Harry Wicks who had been brought to political life in an area renowned for its solid working class movement. It is not surprising that Harry, and others, started questioning not only the new line but the whole basis of its imposition.

While in Moscow Harry had attended the Sixth World Congress of the CI. He had listened to the attacks on Cannon as a "Trotskyite". Like other students he had been given a copy of Trotsky's Critique of Bukharin's draft programme for the International.

The students were not allowed to keep this document, but it did not stop one getting into the hands of Cannon and thus out of the USSR. The subsequent formation of a Trotskyist group in the USA made Trotsky's positions available to English speaking communists.

## Expel

Harry, now working full time at Russian Oil Products, a Soviet state trading firm, met up with Reg Groves. Together with other Party members they started reading and discussing Trotsky's writings appearing in the *US Militant*.

Within no time the Party hacks moved against the South London dissidents, denouncing and then expelling them. British Trotskyism, in the shape of the "Balham Group", was born. Following a visit in the Autumn of 1931 by the US Trotskyist Max Shachtman, agreement was reached to launch a public paper.

In the rest of the book Harry describes the launching of *The Red Flag*, the Balham Group's paper, and of the Communist League. A fascinating chapter describes Harry's visit to Copenhagen and the organisation around Trotsky's famous public speech at the University, the first since his exile from the USSR, in 1932. Harry was able to use some of the training he was given at the Lenin school to good effect—he acted as one of Trotsky's bodyguards.

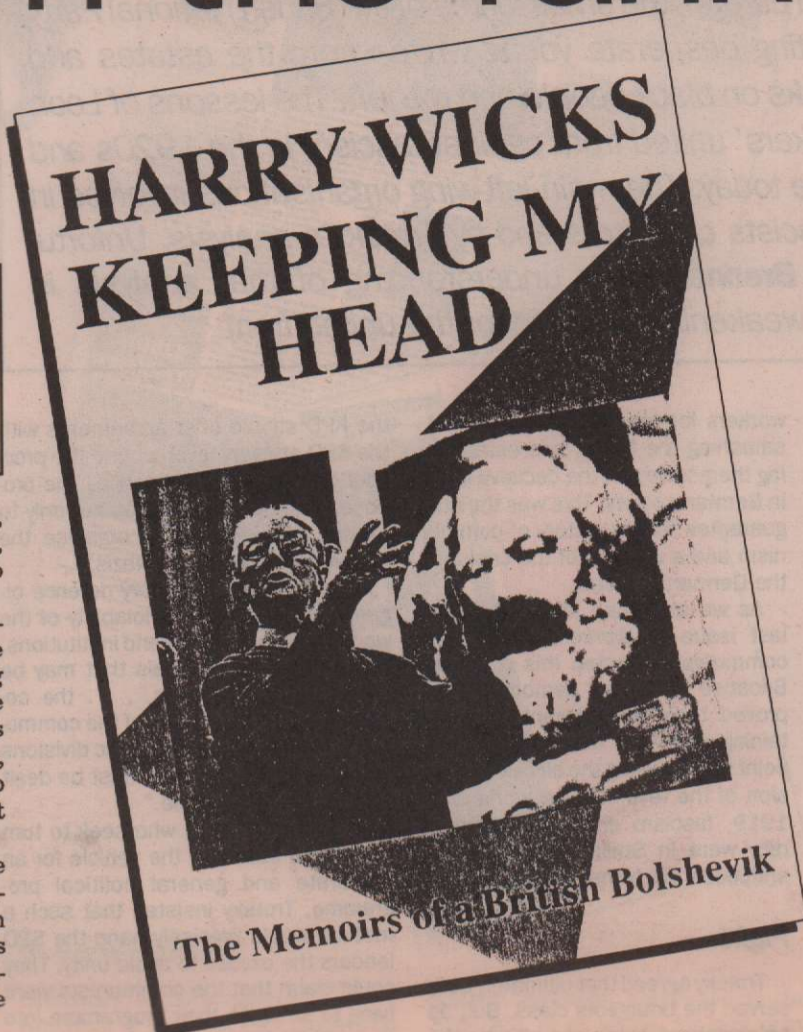
The last chapter which deals with the developments in British Trotskyism between 1933 and 1946 (Harry had ceased to be an active participant in the British Trotskyist groups by the 1940s) is less rich than the rest of the book. Undoubtedly this is because, as Logie Barrow points out, Harry did not have time to go over and re-work this section before his death.

Even here, however, Harry's voice brings home to the reader the enormous pressure brought to bear on the tiny band of Trotskyists by the Moscow Trials. The difficulties faced by the Trotskyists were compounded by ILP leaders like Fenner Brockway and other "left" intellectuals, joining the hue and cry against the "Trotskyite-Fascists".

## Fascinating

What makes Harry Wicks' memoirs such a fascinating account of this period is not just that he took part in momentous events but the way he recounts them. Harry was a worker communist with few pretensions to being an intellectual leader in the movement. And yet for all his self-deprecations it is clear that Harry Wicks had two qualities essential to a revolutionary: a clear grasp of the Marxist method and a disciplined but critical approach to its application by a communist party. Because of this we get a view from a rank and file activist, which is full of insights and refreshingly free of self-justification or distortion.

Congratulations to Socialist Platform, and special praise for the editor, Logie Barrow. Their efforts have produced a book that every revolutionary should read. ■



In last month's issue we looked at Hitler's rise to power in January 1933, and the fatally false policies of the working class parties that had allowed the catastrophe to happen. In the Britain of 1993 fascism is nowhere near the scale of threat that the German workers faced sixty years ago. But in concert with the rise of Nazism in Europe, the small forces of the British National Party are reorganising, recruiting desperate young whites from the estates and conducting vicious attacks on black people and the left. The lessons of Leon Trotsky's fight for a workers' united front against fascism in the 1920s and 30s retain their full force today. The main left-wing organisations involved in opposing the British fascists claim to stand by Trotsky's analysis. Unfortunately, writes **Richard Brenner**, their understanding of that analysis is dangerously one-sided, weakening the fight for the united front.

LEON TROTSKY and the International Left Opposition recognised the immediate problem facing the German working class movement during the period of Hitler's meteoric rise in the early 1930s. The fascists aimed for the total annihilation of all workers' organisations and every grain of working class democracy within German capitalist society. But the forces of the working class were divided between two mass political parties: the reformist Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Communist Party (KPD), led by Ernst Thälmann.

Trotsky identified two features of the situation as the key to developing a correct policy:

"a) the political responsibility of the social democracy for the strength of fascism; b) the absolute irreconcilability between fascism and those workers' organisations on which the social democracy itself depends."

### Task

The central task for Trotsky was to break the hold of the social democrats over the workers, to tear the workers away from their pro-capitalist leaders whose weakness and support for the system were pushing the middle classes and unemployed into the hands of the Nazis. This could only be done by strengthening the Communist Party, which claimed to stand for revolution, at the expense of the social democrats.

Faced with the threat of fascism many within the workers' movement could see the need for united action. But the policies of the leaderships of both the major parties meant that many workers could not see how to achieve such united action. The KPD's policy of the "revolutionary united front" excluded, in advance, social democratic workers. The SPD's servility to capitalism and the constitution obstructed the building of fighting unity with the "revolutionary" communist workers.

### Immediate

Trotsky recognised that there was a way of cutting through this disunity without compromising the struggle to win the majority of the working class to revolutionary communism—the workers' united front. The communists needed to demonstrate to the social democratic rank and file their willingness to unite and fight around the immediate task of the day: effective defence of workers' meetings and organisations against the Nazis, paving the way for the workers to go over to the offensive and destroy Hitler's gangs altogether.

If the social democratic leaders refused, they would display their unwillingness to fight and the communists would be a tremendous pole of attraction to those SPD workers who could see the threat that the Nazis posed. If they agreed, then their supporters would be impelled along a road of struggle that would end with the armed

workers forging unity at every level, smashing the Nazis, and establishing themselves as the decisive force in German society. This was the only guarantee for the victory of communism and a way out of the crisis for the German masses.

As we explained in detail in the last issue of *Workers Power*, the communists rejected this analysis. Because the social democrats had proved their commitment to maintaining capitalist rule, even to the point of organising the bloody repression of the revolutionary workers in 1919, fascism and social democracy were in Stalin's phrase, "not antipodes but twins".

### Fight

Trotsky agreed that ultimately both served the bourgeois class. But, as he explained, twins can also be the bitterest enemies. The Stalinists would have done well to remember the case of Cain and Abel!

The Nazis stood for the elimination of the SPD. The united front was possible and necessary on condition that the Communists gave the SPD leaders no excuse for refusing united action. Trotsky therefore bent every effort to winning the KPD to the fight for the united front.

But this never meant that the KPD should strive towards political unity with the SPD, or abandon its criti-

cism. The united front needed to be not a mere formal unity, not phrases and high-sounding talk, but a thoroughly practical common agreement for action. Trotsky was withering in his criticism of the anti-fascist "Iron Front" established by the SPD leaders because it avoided this very question. As no more than a collection of trade union, SPD and bourgeois notables, it in fact served to paralyse the will of the SPD rank and file to fight.



Nazi's campaigning in the 1932 election

cal danger today is hardly the mushrooming of uncontrollable squads. Bambery's polemic with "squadism" actually represents a cowardly refusal to countenance the need for the left to mount physical opposition to the fascists in the here and now.

This is why he never explains why, in his view, the organisation of defence squads is necessarily counterposed to involving the workers and local communities in the fight. In fact such methods can and must be central to that involvement. If Bambery had quoted more widely from Trotsky's advice to the French left in the 1930s, his argument would have been shown up as a travesty of Trotsky's position.



British fascists during the Battle of Britain

Trotsky wrote:

"We need mass self-defence and not the militia, we are often told. But what is this 'mass self-defence' without combat organisations, without specialised cadres, without arms? To give over the defence against fascism to unorganised and unprepared masses left to themselves would be to play a role incomparably lower than Pontius Pilate... Without the support of the masses, the militia is nothing. But without organised combat detach-

**"The programme of action strictly objective, to the artificial 'claims', without the social democratic what the communists indispensable for the st**

ments, the most heroic masses will be smashed bit by bit by the fascist gangs."

Today, a militia with modern arms is not the immediate requirement to deal with the scale of threat that we face. But any seller of *Socialist Worker* who has faced a trained BNP squad armed with iron bars, the family and friends of Rolan Adams killed by a BNP inspired gang on the Thamesmead estate, demonstrators harried and threatened by BNP/Loyalist thugs: these people will know very well the value of "organised combat detachments". But they will know it the hard way, by their absence. Poor Leon Trotsky, that his name should be used against this elementary policy of self-defence, for

## LEON TROTSKY AND

# Lessons

in order the better to prepare for future, more wide-ranging campaigns. And the violence of the fascists' methods presents a real threat today to black families and youth in Thamesmead, Tower Hamlets, Rochdale and Mansfield. In such run down and deprived working class areas black communities face persistent harassment, arson and beatings at the instigation and even at the hands of the BNP.

### Attacks

The BNP similarly threatens left-wing flyposters and paper-sellers, subject to increasingly regular and ever more violent assaults. Over the last year such attacks have resulted in a number of serious injuries and hospitalisations. Fascism also threatens opponents of British rule in Ireland, whose demonstrations are subject to harassment and attack by the National Front and the BNP.

To combat this menace, the left needs to unite as broadly as possible and adopt militant fighting methods and organisation to crush the fascists, breaking up their parties and driving them back into the sewers. The method elaborated by Trotsky in his fight for the united front needs to be applied to present conditions. That is why *Workers Power* campaigns for the left-wing groups and parties, black organisations and existing anti-racist campaigns to form joint *anti-fascist committees* and *anti-fascist defence squads*.

The largest party on the left, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), which claims some 7,500 members in 150 branches up and down the country, has failed to adopt this straightforward perspective. Instead it has launched its own front campaign, the Anti-Nazi League (ANL), without open meetings, without a real alliance with other fighting forces. Instead it has acquired sponsorship from a gaggle of do-nothing public figures.

Worse, the SWP refuses to go beyond passive opposition to the fascists, even quoting from Trotsky in support of its refusal to engage in a physical challenge to the BNP or to impose its paper position of no platform for fascists. In their mis-named pamphlet *Killing the Nazi menace—how to stop the fascists*, Chris Bambery sets the need to win masses of people to action as an alternative to the need to build defence squads:

"Rather than seeking to mobilise large numbers, such squads become more and more conspiratorial, more and more isolated and almost exclusively made up of young white males. Trotsky was clear on this matter. Writing after the Communist Party employed such tactics in France in the early 1930s he wrote:

"The task is to involve the workers in increasing numbers in the fight against fascism... adventures can only isolate a small, militant minority."

This whole argument would be laughable—if it wasn't for the fact that dozens of SWP members have paid for this stupidity with broken noses, black eyes and stab wounds. It is uncontentious that the actions of squads have to serve the interests of the mass struggle and not become separated from such mass struggles. It is wrong to present the building of squads in any other way. But the prin-

from being a mass force, particularly compared to developments in Europe. Far from menacing workers' organisations and institutions on a systematic basis they generally keep a safe distance from them, or confine themselves to sporadic guerilla attacks on the workers' movement (such as the recent nocturnal raid on the Nalco offices in East London).

Despite this there is little doubt that the incipient fascist bands are growing. The British National Party chooses targets commensurate with its current size,



# THE UNITED FRONT

# for today

which he fought with such conviction and urgency!

Such organisations—squads, detachments, defence guards, call them what you will—would provide an immense pole of attraction to local youth on the estates, to black militants, to anti-racist workers and youth. As Trotsky recognised, conspiratorial methods would necessarily embrace the technical, but *only* the technical side of the matter.

They would be accompanied by the widest possible political campaign in their support, and for mass street demonstrations, pickets and propaganda. Joint committees of trade unionists, black and anti-racist organisa-

Unfortunately, since late last year the Red Action group have demonstrated a serious sectarianism in refusing to build on AFA's successes to develop a broader united response to the fascist threat.

### Boycott

Instead of addressing clear calls for joint action to the many thousands of members and supporters of the Anti-Nazi League, they increasingly boycotted ANL organised events, leaving sometimes sizeable groups of genuine anti-fascists on pickets of BNP meetings to the passive "leadership" of the SWP. When the SWP tried to mobilise for the defence of a paper selling pitch in Brick Lane, Red Action abstained from the fight for united action. Instead they insist that those who want to fight should come to Anti-Fascist Action direct.

In an article in their December/January issue, Red Action follow the SWP's lead in quoting Trotsky to support a position which he would have been unambiguously hostile towards. Sharing Trotsky's insistence that the united front "has as its task to separate those who want to fight from those who do not", they rightly take the ANL to task for its refusal to engage in physical confrontation, and for its character as a sectarian party front, which insists that its own organisation must lead the fight. But they go on to write:

"We know from bitter experience that appealing to the leadership of the party front anti-fascist organisations to support an alliance that they do not control is utterly futile."

With one flick of the pen, the central purpose of Trotsky's entire tactic is abandoned as "utterly futile". The leaders of the SWP will not agree to joint action—therefore there is no purpose in demanding it. KPD leaders and militants raised just that argument against the Left Opposition's call for a united front with the SPD. The SPD supports capitalism, organised the killing of the earliest leaders of German communism, accuses the KPD of being as bad as the Nazis... and yet Trotsky imagines they will ally themselves with us!

This schematic method of posing the united front missed the entire point of Trotsky's tactic, just as Red Action do today.

The first question is whether a united front is necessary. Red Action say that it is. Alone they may be able to damage the fascists' morale from time to time; in alliance with anarchists or Workers Power they may be able to achieve more, but certainly no more than the "containment" of the BNP. But to defeat the BNP, destroy their organisations, defend the left and the black communities wider forces are needed. The small groups in AFA alone are unable to provide or mobilise such forces directly.

But they exist in their thousands, in black groups, left-wing organisations, trade unions... and in the SWP. To call on such forces to unite in joint committees and squads does not for a minute express the illusion that their leaders will freely agree. But it poses the question directly, in a non-sectarian way, in full view of their members and supporters.

To "separate those who want to fight from those who do not" it is



### Distortors of Trotsky

necessary to demonstrate to those who want to fight that their leaders do not, that they are the ones obstructing unity. Every boycott of an ANL event last year, every refusal to attend a picket or demonstration and to display there in practice the value of organised self-defence, every abstention from campaigning for a common fight: these things play right into the hands of the cynical SWP leaders.

These leaders will use such incidents as further examples of how "conspiratorial" methods and the building of organised defence are somehow "counterposed" to building a mass campaign. They will be let off the hook. A well-planned, patient and per-

sistent campaign, addressed to the SWP/ANL at all levels, for joint committees and joint defence, coupled with a continuing policy of putting no platform into practice, would pose the question point blank: why won't your leaders let you fight fascism in deeds as well as words?

### Leaders

Red Action's article on Trotsky and the United Front rightly rails at the KPD for its sectarianism and failure to build a united front. But the KPD did not exclude a united front with the social democratic workers, just with the leaders. That was why they failed to mount

an effective campaign for the united front, and why Trotsky was so critical of the notion of a united front *only from below*, and not also addressed to the leaders, *from above*. The KPD had its own "non-party" organisation, called (ironically enough) Anti-Fascist Action. But they insisted that any social democratic workers that wanted to fight should simply come to it direct. Trotsky attacked this mercilessly:

"To say to the social democratic workers: 'Cast your leaders aside and join our 'nonparty' united front' means to add just one more hollow phrase to a thousand others." He wrote that it was utterly futile "not to put the question of relations between parties when that is exactly where the essence of the question lies", and ridiculed the KPD's united front from below policy, writing "To the social democratic workers who today ask how we shall achieve joint actions between your party and ours against fascism, Thälmann answers: 'On a class and not a party basis' stream toward us by the millions. Isn't this the most wretched bombast?"

The concluding words of Red Action's "defence" of Trotsky's position can therefore only ring with a bitter irony:

"Red Action therefore appeals to all principled anti-fascist rank and file activists, whatever their previous history of alignment or non-alignment, to join the united front as it exists in practice, as it exists now—in ANTI-FASCIST ACTION."

In practice this means the united front *only from below*. And it means you won't mobilise the forces beyond those who already exist in AFA to take on and destroy the fascists. It is a sectarian distortion of Trotsky's position.

The specific threat posed by the BNP demands a specific response. Neither sectarian appeals for a united front *only from below* nor the cowardly passive protest politics of the ANL are the answer. The left, black and anti-racist organisations must unite in joint committees and militant defence squads to crush the menace of fascism in Britain. Nothing less will do.

It is for that strategy—the strategy advanced by Trotsky in the 1930s applied to today's conditions—that the Trotskyists of Workers Power are fighting for with all our strength. Join us in that fight!



Waterloo, September 1992

tions could organise to isolate the Nazis whilst at the same time really putting them on the defensive and even rooting them out altogether. But instead of this policy the SWP prefer a narrow party front. They appeal for the need to win the masses as an excuse—no more, no less—for the cowardice of their leaders.

There has been an alternative to this wretched passivity. Anti-Fascist Action (AFA), an alliance between Workers Power, the Red Action group, the

**must be strictly practical, point, without any of those any reservations so that worker can say to himself: propose is completely struggle against fascism."**

Direct Action Movement and others, successfully rallied hundreds to direct physical challenges to the BNP, most notably in September 1992 at the "Battle of Waterloo". In that victory anti-fascists scattered the assembling forces of the Nazi music outfit Blood and Honour, supported by the BNP and the British National Socialist Movement, who were attempting to hold a public neo-Nazi gig in London.

The whole basis of AFA's approach was to build a working class campaign committed to physical and ideological opposition to the fascists. It never had the big name sponsors of the ANL, but it scored more victories than the ANL's pacifist campaign could hope to achieve.

# The 43 Group

"It was ugly. You saw hate in their eyes and you were on the receiving end of that hate. Let's face it, we were hating back. But these bastards are like cancer—if you don't fight them, they spread."

These words come from an unlikely source—Vidal Sassoon, the internationally renowned hairdresser. He is less well known as a militant anti-fascist. But he was, and the "bastards" he refers to were the British fascists.

Vidal Sassoon was part of the 43 Group and Morris Beckman's book is a fascinating account of this group's activities in the period immediately after the second world war.

The 43 Group was made up of Jewish ex-servicemen and women. Returning from the war these people were astonished to find London's streets smeared with anti-semitic graffiti, fascist meetings being organised in London's East End and fascist pamphlets on sale. They would leave cinemas, sickened by newsreel footage of the Nazi death camps only to hear fascist street speakers claim that "not enough Jews were bumed at Belsen."

Phil Griffiths reviews *The 43 Group* by Morris Beckman (Centreprise Publications, £7.50)

Fourteen fascist groups sprang up all over London, especially in areas with a large Jewish community. From the start of 1946 there were some 40 fascist meetings a week in London alone.

In February 1946, 43 ex-servicemen and women banded together. They decided to take on the fascists. Employing military-style techniques, learnt in the forces, including infiltration and intelligence gathering, the 43 group carried through a series of highly effective strikes on almost every fascist target.

There were huge pitched battles at East End fascist gathering points—like Ridley Road and Bethnal Green. The success of the group was reflected in its growth. Despite being heavily criticised by the leaders of the Jewish establishment for their violent ac-

tivities—and even being accused of encouraging anti-semitism because of their willingness to take on the fascists—the group grew from 43 to over 1,000. By 1949 the group could claim to have driven the fascists off the streets of London.

The group's great strength was its clear commitment to no platform for fascists and its ability to carry this through in practice. Its weakness was its failure to extend its organisation into the wider working class movement and, crucially, its illusions in the state as the means to deal with the fascists. It repeatedly called on the Labour Home Secretary, Chuter Ede, to ban the fascists. The state's response, of course, was the same as today—it gave police protection to the fascists and charged many of the 43 Group with public order offences.

But despite its weaknesses this previously untold story of anti-fascism is an inspiration for all those who want to take on today's Nazis. Morris Beckman has written a vivid and inspiring account of Jewish resistance to the fascists which deserves to be widely read.

# Civil war and famine in Somalia

IMPERIALIST TROOPS invaded Somalia for, they claimed, purely humanitarian reasons. The media have conducted a widespread propaganda campaign to back up this fairy tale. The troops, tanks and fighter planes are, we are told, the best means of combating famine in the country. Talk about guns not butter!

US imperialism is the prime cause of famine in Africa. Its long history of involvement in the continent has directly contributed to the plight of millions of starving Africans. The invasion of Somalia is all about maintaining US influence, not eradicating famine.

From the late 1970s onwards the USA actively supported the Somali dictator Siad Barre, the man whose regime led to the death by murder or starvation of nearly 10% of the population. His regime drove another 25% of the Somali people into exile.

Famine is not unique to Somalia—27 million Africans are facing famine as a result of decades of imperialist exploitation. Land that was farmed for subsistence is now producing crops for export, the direct result of pressure and intervention by the imperialist multinational companies. Governments have supported this transformation with the aim of creating economies in which the peasants gain income, pay taxes, buy urban products and generate foreign currency.

## Exploitation

But the use of the land for cash crops in Sub-Saharan Africa has not only made these economies dependent on imported food for their own populations, it has also resulted in the destruction of whole swathes of land for productive use. The advancing of desert in this part of Africa is not some inevitable natural progression. It is the inevitable result of imperialist exploitation which encourages the anarchic use, and destruction, of existing resources.

When countries like Somalia produce for export rather than internal consumption they become dependent on the world market for their income and their ability to purchase other foodstuffs for their own people. They have no control over the prices either of their exports or imports (US companies control 90% of the world's exports in wheat, enabling them to dictate world prices) and are susceptible to dramatic changes in their balance of payments. This leads to their inability to provide even the most basic level of subsistence for the masses.

Somalia is one of the poorest countries in the world. The average monthly income of a Somali is a miserable \$25. Two thirds of the population are nomadic or semi-nomadic and there is a tiny industrial working class. There is a massive trade deficit, with exports worth \$94 million and imports of \$495 million in 1986. It has no major natural resources for the imperialists to exploit, and its major export is livestock.

## Warning

So why is the US willing to send in troops? It is obviously not to defend oil interests as in the case of Kuwait and Iraq, but neither is it out of humanitarian concern. Somalia may not have much wealth but it is strategically situated in the Horn of Africa, an ideal base for operations throughout the region. And the US invasion is a warning to semi-colonies and the ex-Stalinist states that imperialism will use its troops to defend its interests.

This particular invasion is directed at achieving strategic influence and at appearing to play a

"positive" role in policing the world. It will be easier for imperialism to win support for other interventions that it decides are necessary if the great lie of "humanitarian" invasions is widely accepted. The instability of the whole region, wracked as it is by famine, unemployment, massive numbers of refugees and civil wars (in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti and Sudan, for example) may dictate further such invasions.

US interest in the area is not new. The history of the region reveals that there was a continued struggle for influence by the USA and the USSR, with the two protagonists variously backing, arming and subsidising different sides in repeated power struggles.

After the older colonial powers, Italy and Britain, conceded independence to their respective colonies in the region, a merger resulted in the establishment of the Somali Republic in 1960. Since that time there have been constant disputes with Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti. These countries were themselves products of the artificial borders in the whole region, based more on colonial interests than on historically constituted nations. The creation of the Somali Republic on the basis of former Italian and British controlled territory left large numbers of Somalis in neighbouring countries.

## Politics

Siad Barre came to power in a bloodless coup in 1969. One of his central policies was incorporating all Somalis into the Somali state. He used "Marxist-Leninist" rhetoric and reconstituted his old nationalist party as the Revolutionary Socialist Party of Somalia. His politics were a combination of Stalinism, pan-Somali nationalism and Islamicism.

His "socialism" extended to developing the economy in a state capitalist direction, nationalising social services, banks and transport. In 1975 land was nationalised, with farmers receiving holdings on 50 year renewable leases. Prices were subject to state control and all grain had to be sold via the state. In this period the regime developed close links with the USSR and joined the Arab League, offering the USSR a strategic position in the Horn of Africa.

In 1974 the Dergue came to power in neighbouring Ethiopia after the overthrow of the monarchy. They pursued a similar political line of radical nationalism and Stalinism dressed up as "Marxism-Leninism". The Dergue was a highly repressive dictatorship raising the slogan "Ethiopia first" to crush all opposition, including the massacre of thousands of supporters of the pro-Chinese Stalinist Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP).

In this period the USSR attempted to create a pro-Soviet bloc

BY JOSE VILLA

in the region, through an alliance of Somalia, Ethiopia and Southern Yemen. Cuba sent troops into Ethiopia in 1977. But to achieve a bloc the Soviets needed Somalis and Eritreans to renounce their claims over parts of Ethiopia. This they were unwilling to do. The ensuing disputes created opportunities for the USA to exploit.

In 1977 Somali troops joined forces with the West Somali Liberation Front, an opposition within Ethiopia, and occupied Western Somalia—a quarter of Ethiopia's territory. The Cubans and the USSR backed the Ethiopians and sent 15,000 Cuban and Yemeni troops to help defeat Somalia and drive its troops out of Ethiopian territory.

In response Siad Barre moved even closer to the imperialists, but they refused to provide military support and were prepared to tolerate Moscow's influence in the region as a part of their policy of "detente". But over the following years the second cold war opened

up and the USA increased its support for Siad Barre, including assistance in the crushing of oppositions within Somalia.

Throughout the 1980s Siad Barre was struggling to retain power by basing himself on particular tribes within Somalia. There are six major tribes in Somalia, themselves divided further into clans. These groups have particular claims to territory and form the basis for the oppositions, often sponsored by different external forces.

The Somali National Movement (SNM) based on the Isaaq clan in the north, resented the incorporation of their area into a united Somalia under the rule of the Darod and Hawiya tribes. They received considerable backing from the Saudis. The Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), based on the Majeerten branch of the Darod tribe in the north east, was under strong influence from Mengistu's Ethiopian Workers Party. The government launched offensives against these oppositions which resulted in the deaths of thousands of members of these tribes and continued

to fuel opposition to the regime. In 1989 Siad Barre called for a truce and a multi-party democracy, but he couldn't avert the escalating civil war. He lost the support of those tribal leaders who were formerly his allies and was finally expelled from government. In January 1991 the opposition around the Hawiya based United Somali Congress (USC) seized control of Mogadishu.

Barre and his supporters were forced to take refuge in the south where his Marehan clan is based, and where they received support from Kenya. Ali Mahdi, a rich hotel owner from the Abgan clan of the Hawiya tribe, became president, but within a few months his party split and there was a rebellion against him. This was led by General Farha Aydid, also a Hawiya but from the Habar-gidir clan.

At the point when the USA went into Somalia, Aydid forces controlled three quarters of Mogadishu, Kismayu and nearly all of central Somalia. Mahdi only retained control of the north of Mogadishu, but made an opportunist alliance with Barre's forces in the south and the SDF forces controlling the north west. In the middle of 1991 the SNM declared a new independent state in the former British Somaliland.

## Elites

There are ten other parties within Somalia, all reflecting the particular interests of different ruling elites. They constantly make and break alliances, and are all looking to build links with external forces. Some look to fundamentalist Islamic supporters in Iran, for example, others to the imperialists or the bordering states in Africa.

But none of them represent a progressive resolution to the problems of the Somali people. Indeed, leaders like Mahdi and Aydid are amongst the richest people in the country—making money through controlling food distribution and drug trading.

From the 1970s until the late 1980s power struggles in the region reflected the international balance of forces between the USSR and the USA, with each side striving to retain influence and strategic posts for trading routes. The Horn of Africa is a key point for access to the oil-producing Arab nations.

The collapse of the USSR and the withdrawal of its support for regimes in the region has removed one source of support, and given the imperialists a free rein in their attempts to establish a more secure and stable base for their military and economic operations.

## Revolution

The small urban working class in Somalia and neighbouring countries, in alliance with the mass of poor peasants, must resist this offensive from imperialism. The imperialists will not enable the development of agriculture to benefit the masses and eradicate famine. They will not provide the necessary investment in technology to produce food for local consumption. They will continue to bleed these countries of resources, and will sponsor one or other tribe to take power at the expense of the democratic rights of others.

There is no answer to this severe crisis in Africa other than to fight against imperialism, with the working class taking the lead in a revolutionary struggle for power. Trotsky's programme of permanent revolution offers the workers and poor peasants such a road. Without it the masses of the region will continue to face famine, poverty and civil wars. ■



US marines seizing an arms store in Mogadishu

# WORKERS' PARTY

# Break with the Brazilian bosses!

**B**RAZIL HAS seen some dramatic political shifts over the last six months. President Collor, elected in 1989, resigned in the last days of 1992. He jumped before he was pushed—he was about to be impeached by the Senate for corruption. He has now been banned from running for any office until the end of the century.

Corruption is widespread among Brazil's politicians. So why did powerful forces within the state and the bourgeoisie decide to blow the whistle on Collor?

Brazil has been in recession for two years and has triple figure inflation. The recession has hit the mass of the population hard. Around 1.2 million jobs have gone in Sao Paulo alone in the last 18 months. The growing vote for the Workers Party (PT) in recent state elections indicated mass discontent with the record of the Collor government and left the bosses feeling uneasy.

## Initiative

The initiative to get rid of Collor—or force him into abandoning his chosen neo-liberal economic policies—was taken by his enemies within the ruling class. And these were powerful enemies. Brazil is the biggest and most industrialised Latin American economy with considerable monopoly capital and a large state capitalist sector.

These sectors were the ones with most to lose in the privatisation policies of Collor and the ones in need of direct state assistance in the recession. These forces hoped to unseat Collor by constitutional measures and placate the mass of workers without rousing them to uncontrollable anger. The weakness of Collor's party, which lacked a significant social base, made this easier. By such actions the bosses hoped to forestall uprisings of the urban dispossessed, like those Venezuela has witnessed in the last two years.

But Collor's refusal to go quietly opened up a protracted struggle which helped politicise wider layers of the population. In mid-September Collor made a desperate gamble, calling his supporters onto the streets to back him. This flopped, and instead millions of people flocked to the streets in 13 cities over two days to demand that he go. From that point on it was inconceivable that Collor could stay in office.

## Populist

Collor has been replaced by Itamar Franco, a self proclaimed "populist" claiming to be all things to all classes. For the bosses he has outlined counter-recessionary measures such as housing construction to boost growth. He has suspended the privatisation pro-

BY KEITH HARVEY

gramme for three months. For the masses he has announced plans to protect pensions and the minimum wage, and promised to control food prices and reduce the cost of medicines.

There is a burning need for a package of emergency social and economic measures to address the lack of land for millions of Brazilians, the destruction of wages and benefits by inflation, and the shortage of decent homes. The masses must continue to fight for them. The danger now lies in the nature of the government that Franco has appointed to oversee his programme. The new cabinet includes almost all the parties, and the Labour Minister, Walter Barelle, is backed by the PT and is one of its strongest supporters.

## Government

This new government—dubbed the Super Democratic Alliance—is in fact a popular frontist or national unity government. Its purpose is to extend the government's social base to enable it to carry through unpopular measures in the period ahead. It also aims to discredit the left, especially the PT, by identifying it in the minds of its supporters with austerity measures and the failure to keep the promises made already. Lula, the leader of PT, has already said "if Itamar does one good thing, I'll be satisfied." This process of discrediting the left is essential in Brazil if the pro-imperialists and neo-liberals are to create the con-

ditions for defeating the powerful working class. A large populist bourgeois party with mass roots in the working class—like the Peronists in Argentina—does not exist in Brazil.

Although the unions and the PT have conciliated and approved job losses and privatisations in the last two years, the PT's continued oppositional role creates difficulties for the Brazilian bosses. The PT was the major party mobilising for the large demonstrations against Collor, and made gains in the last municipal elections.

## Constitution

In the coming year there is going to be a major reform of the Constitution, and the bosses are concerned that the PT could be the main beneficiary. But if the PT can be drawn into taking responsibility for unpopular measures it may be undermined. The bosses have seen the defeat suffered by the PT in losing its mayor of Sao Paulo, precisely as a result of acting as a model "responsible" bourgeois party.

The Brazilian workers do not have to wait passively in the face of the bosses' game plan. They should demand that PT does not support this government and that Barelle breaks with it. The burning economic and political needs of the masses should be fought for from below in mass organisations and extracted from the government through mass actions, on the streets, in occupations of threatened factories and in land invasions. The PT must be forced to break with the bourgeoisie and enter the road of open struggle not collaboration. ■



Masses demonstrate against Collor

## INDIA

# Austerity breeds chauvinism

**T**ENSION BETWEEN Muslims and Hindus continues in India, with outbursts of violence in Dehli and Bombay. The massive scale of riots seen after the destruction of the Ayódhya mosque on 6 December (see *Workers Power* 163) has declined, but the situation has not stabilised.

The Congress government swung from repression to concession in its dealings with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the organisation responsible for the attack on the mosque and for fomenting violence against Muslims across the country. After clamping down on the BJP and other Hindu chauvinist groups in December, prime minister Narasimha Rao has now relented. These groups are being allowed to organise again. BJP leader

Advani is free to spread his filthy chauvinist message and his followers to march into the poorest slums of Dehli to terrorise Muslims. In an attempt to appear in control of the situation Rao re-shuffled his cabinet in mid-January, bringing in more neo-liberals. They want to push ahead with policies agreed with the World Bank and the IMF. These amount to continued austerity and attacks on the already appalling living standards of the workers and peasants. They will introduce further cuts in government spending and privatisation plans in an attempt to make India more attractive to foreign investment.

The austerity programme has already reduced annual inflation to 7.1%, and Rao is claiming that a growth rate of 4.2% shows neo-liberalism is working. But in order to get that growth rate the workers and peasants of India have had to suffer massive unemployment and ever worse living conditions.

Rao thinks that pursuing these economic policies will detract attention from his inability to deal with the continuing violence and in particular assaults on Muslims in the cities. But it is precisely these policies which produce the economic and social conditions in which Hindu chauvinism grows, with the resultant violence that has led to hundreds of deaths in the last month in India.

There is nothing natural or automatic about Hindu-Muslim rivalry. Chauvinists on both sides can and must be fought, with self defence organised where needed. Both Muslims and Hindus need to be drawn into united action against the austerity measures, through organising in trade unions and peasant unions. Not least, Hindus and Muslims must both be won to the project of building a revolutionary workers' party in India, committed to ending imperialist exploitation and Indian capitalism—the real sources of the current rise in Hindu chauvinism. ■

# Meltdown in Japan?

**F**EBRUARY IS a key month for the Japanese economy.

The end of the month is the end of the financial year for the banks. The bad debts they have built up will be revealed.

Nobody has been able to accurately assess the level of bad debts corroding the Japanese banking system. Japanese banks are even more secretive than those of the other major imperialist economies. They created a network of small banking outlets around them to engage in massive speculation in the late 1980s.

The authorities fear that the banks will try to dump shares and other assets before the end of the financial year to reduce their losses. The Japanese Stock Exchange has already fallen by over half since its peak in late 1989, and property prices in many cities have fallen by up to 60%. The cumulative losses are enormous. The loss in stocks alone is equal

BY BRIAN GREEN

to wiping out all the European stock exchanges, while the fall in property prices is eight times greater than all the loans made to third world countries and eastern Europe since the 1970s.

Should share and property prices fall much lower under the pressure of selling it could cause a meltdown of the Japanese financial system. That would rock the whole world economy. During the 1980s Japan became banker to the world. Most of the top twenty banks in the world remain Japanese.

The Japanese government is still in a position to bail out the banking system. While its finances are deteriorating it still has scope to plunder saving schemes, like that of the Post Office, plus social security surpluses to help prop up the banks. Ordinary working class Japanese

families and pensioners will pay for the excesses of the banks.

Regardless of what the end of February brings, Japan faces the need for major economic restructuring. If Japanese capitalism is to regenerate itself it will have to become more like the west, with short term profitability instead of long term strategies to win market shares, and a more flexible labour market instead of jobs for life. The archaic agricultural and distribution sectors also have to be modernised. A restructuring on this scale has enormous political ramifications. The ruling party is faction-riddled, and anger is growing across society. The corruption and scandals have undermined the loyalty of sections of workers to "their company" creating the potential for a wider opposition and radicalisation, which can include layers of Japanese youth who now face an uncertain future. ■

## AUSTRIA

# Fighting the racist referendum

ON 23 JANUARY almost a quarter of a million people demonstrated in the Austrian capital of Vienna. This is the largest demonstration in Austrian post-war history. The marchers were opposing the referendum being organised by Jorg Haider, the far-right racist leader of the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ).

Under the Austrian constitution it is possible to force a parliamentary discussion on a subject by means of collecting 100,000 signatures—the so called referendum. Haider's party has been busy collecting signatures to force a discussion on his proposed package of vile racist measures against immigrants and foreign workers. He explicitly blames them for all the social ills such as unemployment and bad housing that are getting worse day by day.

Haider's referendum calls for the closing of the borders (except to workers that the Austrian capitalists deem suitable to exploit), and a quota on the number of foreign school students or on those whose parents speak German as a second language. This means further limits on the rights of workers from Turkey, Eastern Europe and the Balkans.

But the government is using the support that Haider is attracting to stiffen existing racist laws. The government is also in favour of closing the borders except for selected cases. They too have declared, under pressure, that they will restrict the rights of immigrant children to an education. Whereas Haider demands a special force to patrol the borders, the government have gone one better: they use the army.

The leaders of the official labour movement have also played along with the racist game. The Social Democratic Party and the trade union leaders have called for a limit of 8% on the number of foreign workers in the workforce. Hardly surprising that with "opposition" like that, Haider's support among workers has been alarmingly high.

But the opposition to racism is beginning to get organised. Below we print an article by Eric Wegner, from the Austrian Trotskyist organisation and section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International, ArbeiterInnenstandpunkt (AST). It provides an analysis of Haider's strategy, and a critique of the existing campaigns against the referendum.

The AST has intervened vigorously in the new political ferment in Austria, participating in a left bloc on the mass demonstration and addressing the crowds from a left platform. Five hundred copies of the AST's paper were sold on the march, and 8,000 leaflets explaining why workers should oppose the referendum were distributed. To meet the enormous opportunities for consistent anti-racists and socialists in the current situation, the AST has been holding weekly bookstalls and meetings in Vienna.

HAIDER IS a major landowner who presents himself as a front line fighter for the "little people" against the establishment. But this is just a front for the anti-foreigner referendum being run by the FPÖ.

Haider's concrete demands don't go much further than the racist laws introduced by the government, a coalition between the Social Democrats of the SPÖ and the conservatives of the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP). What gives the referendum campaign its particularly reactionary character is that it represents an attempt to take an inflammatory racist campaign onto the streets, to mobilise the potential for racism within the population and organise it into a movement. In short Haider is presenting racism as a desire and a need really felt by the people.

In interviews Haider passes himself off as a serious and temperate politician. The reason is clear: after the withdrawal of his official subsidy by the Industrialists' Union (because of the referendum and his position on the EC), Haider is keen to avoid undermining his links with the capitalists completely. In the medium term the FPÖ wants to stay in the running as a party that

the capitalists are prepared to trust in government.

Haider needs to become stronger at an electoral level and build himself an organisational base. In the medium term this will be mainly at the expense of the SPÖ, something that the Industrialists' Union would be only too glad to see. But later, from a stronger position, he will offer himself as a governmental partner for the ÖVP. To increase his strength, he has to rely on populism. So he allows some disagreements with the bourgeoisie... as long as they don't lead to a break. The referendum falls into this category: it is just a new step forward in an existing "populist" racist campaign.

## Damage

Today the capitalists are not basing their hopes on a racist campaign. They fear it would damage Austria's image in Western Europe and would not be conducive to joining the EC. At the same time the bosses are not relying on a sharpening of internal conflict as a means of dealing with their problems. Their strategy is to try and maintain the social peace and stability that has characterised Austria over

the last period.

The government's answer to the FPÖ's referendum is pathetic, but not unexpected. Even as they curse Haider and moan on about peace and order, in the same breath they protest that they have already met almost all of the FPÖ's demands! The SPÖ's "counter-offensive" expresses this most clearly. It advocates racist "laws instead of hatred of foreigners". A campaign against the FPÖ's racism must also protest about the fact that this whipping up of racism was first put into practice by the government, with its inhuman laws and its police measures.

The existing anti-racist campaigns are far from adequate in their response to Haider's offensive. SOS-Mitmensch (People for People) is an alliance between liberal artists, the church, high school students, the greens, SPÖ and ÖVP politicians and others. The platform is so wishy-washy that anyone from the SPÖ through to Haider himself (if he felt like it) would have no problem signing it!

It has not uttered a single word or taken a position against the referendum, let alone against state racism. Instead it spews out meaningless phrases: "we demand a

change of climate" or "for equality in togetherness". SOS-Mitmensch gives no answer to the social problems which Haider addresses and which are the real material basis for the racist illusions of many workers and youth.

People who only argue against racism on humanitarian lines, and who either do not understand or deliberately ignore the real social problems facing workers and youth, remain at best ineffectual. At worst they push confused victims of this society into the arms of the racists.

## Bourgeois

It is not surprising that the well-bred bourgeois of SOS-Mitmensch prefer to concentrate on "media-friendly" actions rather than on taking the struggle onto the streets, into the communities, factories and the schools and organising an active campaign against the referendum. They planned no more than a "sea of light" for the 23 January. The thousands of anti-racists on the mobilisation are intended to play a silent role in the drama, to walk on and walk off again, as no more than a backdrop for the "stars" at the press conferences.

SOS-Mitmensch is no basis on

which to build an anti-racist movement. Rather it is an obstacle, because it demobilises the masses and leads into a political dead-end. The left should not support SOS-Mitmensch, but should take part in its existing mobilisations with its own contingent, in order not to leave the masses of anti-racists under the unchallenged influence of the helpless humanists.

The "Platform against Hatred of Foreigners" is an alliance of liberal and leftist currents: Asylum-Coordination, the Vienna Greens, the Communist Party, the Alternative School Students' organisation, and so on. It speaks out explicitly against the Haider referendum and also against the racist laws of the government.

It organises an active campaign in the community in Vienna. Although the campaign fails to raise concrete social demands and does not orient towards the workers' movement, nonetheless it represents a clear advance on SOS-Mitmensch. The left should take part in this campaign and fight for an orientation to the workers' movement.

Another campaign is the Viennese Anti-Fascist Committee's campaign, known as "Revolt against the Referendum" [which rhymes in German]. This is also politically opportunist because it only speaks out against "anti-foreigner politics" in general, but not concretely against the government's laws. Despite that the campaign is supportable, because on the one hand it raises central social demands, and on the other hand it organises an active campaign against the referendum on the streets and in the schools.

## Sectarian

All the same, on an organisational level the campaign is sectarian. Instead of seriously taking part in the large mobilisations and fighting for a working class orientation among thousands of people, it prefers to hold its own "small but pure" mobilisations of 2-300 school students. The supporters of the newspaper *Vorwärts* (sister-paper of the British *Militant*) are responsible for this sectarian narrow-mindedness. They dominate the Anti-Fascist Committee and want to preserve it as their own private allotment.

In spite of the growth of racist ideas among the working class, there are thousands of youth and workers who want to fight the right-wing demagoguery of the FPÖ. The task of the hour is to win this minority to a real campaign of opposition.

Only through an active struggle by this minority can we hope to turn back the influence of racism within the working class and in the longer term win a majority against Haider and against state racism. An anti-racist movement must orientate to the working class and give class struggle answers to the grave social problems that the right are giving their own racist answers to.

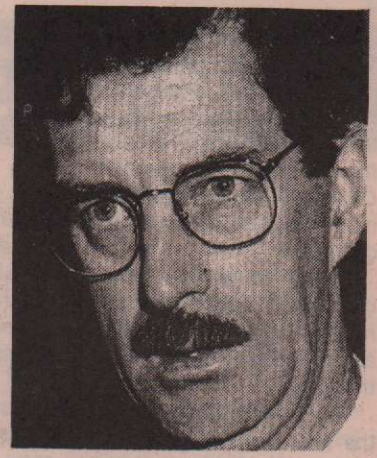
Against the referendum mass street mobilisations are just as necessary as explanation and agitation in the factories and workplaces. The anti-racists must mobilise against the public meetings in support of the referendum and give out anti-racist propaganda at them.

Admittedly the chances of getting such a campaign are slim, because the workers' movement is paralysed and a major section of its leadership is playing directly into Haider's hands. All the more important then for the anti-racist protesters to represent a clear class standpoint. That is what we Trotskyists are fighting for with all our strength. ■



"Fight Haider's Referendum!" demands the Austrian Trotskyist paper. The picture shows a social democratic poster.

The AST's caption reads: "Social democratic doublespeak: left wing posters, right wing laws".



Labour leader Dick Spring

# Labour out of coalition!

**G**ROSS POLITICAL corruption and faction fighting within the Cabinet destroyed the credibility of Fianna Fáil and brought the government down in November last year. By 13 January, however, Labour had put the discredited Fianna Fáil safely back into power. And this was despite the fact that only Labour made significant gains while both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael slumped badly. Labour leader Spring doubled his party's seats to 30 out of 166. Labour scored as the party of clean hands, open government and "real" concern for jobs.

Labour then teamed up with a party whose leader is currently a key witness at the infamous tribunal of investigation into the beef industry (which is still sitting). Fianna Fáil's Reynolds is up to his neck in allegations of political favouritism and economic mismanagement. Meanwhile the recipient of his benevolence—the Larry Goodman group of companies—is also the subject of scrutiny regarding massive irregularities in the conduct of their business.

At the special Labour Party Conference on 11 January only five delegates tried to speak against going into a "partnership" government with Fianna Fáil and three of these had apparently changed their minds by the time they got to the rostrum. Only 50 out of 1,500 delegates voted against the deal between Spring and Reynolds.

Prominent in supporting the new coalition was Deputy Emmet Stagg who only a year ago resigned the Labour Party whip because Spring would not openly rule out future coalitions with any capitalist party. Now Stagg is a Junior Minister.

## Greeted

The new coalition government was greeted as a major achievement by the trade union leadership, accepted as inevitable by the opposition Democratic Left, praised as realistic by Sinn Féin, openly supported by the rump of Irish Stalinism and greeted by commentators and sections of Fianna Fáil as the fulfilment of the most "natural" coalition possible in Irish politics.

The trade union bureaucracy in Ireland has usually found it more congenial to deal with Fianna Fáil than with Fine Gael. Certainly union leaders had little taste for what seemed the inevitable alternative government—a repeat of the more confrontational Fine Gael-Labour Coalition of 1982-87.

Fianna Fáil, on the other hand, has always been ready to talk out of both sides of its mouth, promising all things to all comers. And when it came to discovering that the national interest demanded re-negotiation of promises on wages or social measures, none was more talented than Fianna Fáil

at staging the necessary pantomime with the union leaders, always leaving them room to march out the rank and file as a stage army, putting on a show of resistance before agreeing the "best compromise available".

Until 1992 the furthest such collaboration went was to impose union-government "development programmes" (such as the PNR and the PESP) to control the wages' struggle and public borrowing. But there is an element of unprecedented collaboration in the new governmental pact.

As such it is the most thoroughgoing expression of class collaboration ever seen in Ireland since the Trades Union Congress resolved to constitute itself as a party of labour in 1912 and began to unmoor the southern working class from the old Na-

tionalist party.

Fianna Fáil has purged its image during weeks of negotiations since 25 November, finally agreeing to 90 pages of promises, all phrased in the language of Labour's aspirations but *entirely* within the parameters of Fianna Fáil's basic budgetary targets. Significantly, there was no agreement on budget cuts or taxation policy before the deal was done.

## Budget

What this means may well become obvious in the Budget this February, which is expected to be one of the toughest for a long time, not least because of the pressing problem of the Irish currency crisis.

With unemployment already at 21%, the

country faces an increase of two percent, meaning 30,000 more on the dole in 1993 and probably each year beyond that. To meet this massive crisis of 300,000 out of work and growing, Labour has agreed the incredibly radical proposal to create 30,000 new jobs a year beginning in 1994!

Most of the proposals simply re-jig existing temporary or training schemes. By 1994, the new EC structural funds for Ireland should be coming on stream along with a possible upturn in the world economy. This is just as Fianna Fáil promised in their own election programme, proving that Labour has in fact neither fought for nor won any real concessions even at the level of promises.

This matters little to the Labour leaders whose first concern, as with all good bourgeois politicians, was to have the prestige and spoils of office. And in this respect they have done well indeed, taking a number of powerful departments and drafting in friends as salaried advisers. There have been rumblings of discontent from the backbenches based primarily on fears that allocation of EC funds will be assigned to Fianna Fáil ministries—who are determined to benefit politically, and exclusively, from their distribution.

The allocation of ministries itself suggests another important ruling class agenda for Labour. They have been given the ministries which handle sensitive "social" reforms that Fianna Fáil has not been able to carry through because of its alliance with the Church.

Labour ministers are expected to steer through the Dáil the introduction of divorce, the decriminalising of homosexuality, a slightly progressive reform in the Victorian abortion law, and the modernisation of the school system in which the Church is the single most powerful vested interest.

Yet Labour itself faces some internal dissent from its loyal Catholic elements. They can expect at least as much trouble as kudos from these reforming responsibilities—and little enthusiasm from their Fianna Fáil bedfellows. ■



Labour helped Fianna Fáil make it happen!

# Trade union monetarism

**T**HATCHERISM IS alive and well and thriving in the headquarters of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)—that's the verdict of the bourgeois economists. Fine Gael deputy, Richard Bruton, accused Congress of "crude monetarism" for "defending a policy that sacrifices employment in order to secure lower inflation and to serve the interests of debt managers".

Bruton was referring to ICTU's policy of actively supporting the government's defence of the currency—at the risk of huge interest rises on mortgages and already at the cost of serious loss of jobs... with still more threatened.

Against all expectations the currency was kept within its EMS band, at the cost of more than the Central Bank had in total reserves. This resulted in a staggering 3% jump in general interest rates to 14%. But it failed to stop the 10% devaluation announced on 30 January.

Finally the state promises to indemnify the building societies against foreign exchange losses on up to a billion Pounds of foreign borrowings, simply to dissuade them from adding yet another 3% to mortgage

## Interest rates!

And while the Irish pound managed to hold up this artificial value in the EMS, exporters to Britain faced the staggering 20% differential between the two currencies.

£1R500 million is being set aside to cover low interest rate loans for small and medium business affected by the crisis. Already £1R50 million from workers' taxes has been dished out to the bosses to lessen the impact on jobs in exporting companies.

## Doctrine

All of this has been fully supported by the trade union leaders! The Irish Congress of Trade Unions is so wedded to Fianna Fáil's strategy for "national development" within the European Union that it has pulled out all the stops to help "defend" the Irish pound. Current doctrine is that to qualify for full economic integration in Europe it is necessary to uphold the discipline of the European Monetary System, whatever the social cost. The bosses are now openly divided over the extremity to which this doctrine has been pushed.

Union leaders sought at first to justify outright opposition to devaluation by claiming it was the best way to fend off new pressure for an "incomes policy". The ICTU's real fear is that a panic devaluation would fuel inflation, thereby undermining their beloved PESP agreement, and generating demands for wage increases—which they would be expected to defend!

Despite this stand ICTU is nevertheless faced with the clamour of the industrial and farming leaders for wage cuts to ease the massive costs of propping up the exchange rate. Forty companies have announced that they cannot afford to pay the final phase of the PESP.

ICTU's Peter Cassells has responded: "I don't think we should panic. I don't think there can be a wage freeze!"

Such cringing reactions to this brazen attack on wages—the most serious in recent years—is guaranteed to give the green light to bosses everywhere. At the very least it will mean that they will refuse to cough up for the 3% local pay bargaining element of the deal.

The working class has no interest whatso-

ever in tying itself to either policy, for or against devaluing the pound. Instead it must confront the new treachery and collaboration by its leaders, Spring, Cassells and Attley etc, by demanding mobilisations to defend the immediate and concrete needs of the working class.

## Action

A rank and file movement is needed to fight within the unions, against the bureaucratic leaders, for a programme of action including immediately:

- occupations and seizure of plants to block threatened layoffs and resist wage cuts
- for nationalisation of the banks and building societies to force down house mortgage interest
- direct action to prevent repossession of workers' homes by Building Societies
- for steeply progressive taxes on speculators' and bank profits
- for useful public employment at union rates to create jobs for all
- Labour out of coalition now! Make the bosses pay for the crisis of their system.

## THE SWP AND THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

Last month we looked at the Socialist Workers Party's perspectives for the British class struggle. Continuing our analysis of the SWP in the aftermath of their 1992 Conference, **G R McColl** examines the current campaign of the leadership to reorganise the party, and shows that its methods have little in common with Leninism.

# A travesty of Leninism



"What is to be Done?": the question Tony Cliff can't answer

THE PARTY must . . . change radically if it is to take full advantage of the present opportunities." So reads the SWP's 1992 Conference document, *The SWP and the Crisis of British Capitalism*. The document makes it quite plain what has to change:

"Many more experienced comrades, scarred by the 1980s, dominate the branch meetings, where they act as a conservative block to shifting the party."

The message is clear and simple: the hidebound ways of established comrades have become the biggest barrier to the dramatic growth of the SWP.

Of course the leadership neglect to point out that it was their "downtum" theory of the 1980s that caused the scars. But then every one of the many twists and turns that SWP leader Tony Cliff has ever carried out has involved him attacking and purging the members who had loyally supported the previous lurch!

Now the SWP leaders insist that Britain is variously in "transition from the downturn to the upturn" or even on the verge of a protracted revolutionary period. The sole task of the party in this situation is to grow. This allows Cliff to come out with the notion that:

"... if we had 15,000 members of the SWP and 30,000 supporters: the 21 October miners' demonstration could have been different.

Instead of marching round Hyde Park, socialists could have taken 40 or 50,000 people to parliament.

If that had happened, the Tory MPs wouldn't have dared vote with Michael Heseltine. *The government would have collapsed.*" (Our emphasis)

### Overthrow

This scenario calls to mind the episode of *Citizen Smith* when the hero, Wolfie, rides his tank to the doors of Westminster to overthrow the government. And it is just as laughable. The unseating of a government will take much more than a mere march on parliament. It will also require the building of a totally different type of party to the SWP.

The SWP's understanding of the role of the party, its relationship to the working class, and the character of its organisational methods is deeply flawed. General propaganda for socialism is combined with an adaptation of the party's concrete demands to the existing consciousness of the workers, to what they are *already* thinking and fighting for.

This was why the SWP failed to fight for a general strike in the 1984/85 miners' strike. In 1992, they raised this slogan, but failed to raise the necessary practical next step of calling for action councils, because the "mood" wasn't there. This is what Lenin called "tail-ending" the spontaneous ideas of the class. It is a method known as *economism*.

Lenin developed his ideas about the relationship of the party to the class in his 1902 work, *What is to be Done?*. He insisted that the working class gravitates toward socialism, but that its spontaneous ideology does not go beyond reformist trade union consciousness. To do so, revolutionary socialist ideas have to be brought to the working class "from without".

### Misunderstood

These words have been amongst the most widely misunderstood of any of the writings of the great revolutionary leaders of the past. The Stalinists used them to justify an elite bureaucracy commanding the class, and taking action separately from them, "on their behalf". Middle class sectarians use them to disparage the importance of trade unionism and the ability of our class to fight. But the SWP make the opposite error.

Writing in his book *Marxism and the Party*, SWP theoretician John

Molyneux argues that:

"If we accept Lenin's formulation that revolutionary consciousness has to be brought into the working class then precious little is left of Marx's fundamental dictum that 'the emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class itself.' On the contrary, the role of the working class would be a strictly subordinate one."

This misunderstands Lenin's point entirely. He never suggested that the working class would be emancipated by the action of any class but themselves. His point was that the spontaneous struggles of workers against their employers over wages and conditions provided a vital school for socialism, but did not *in and of themselves* go beyond reformist, that is to say bourgeois ideas. He argued:

"Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers *only from without*, that is, only from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers."

### Programme

Lenin's true meaning was profound. He did not mean that workers could not take part in developing revolutionary ideas. He meant that the struggle over wages and conditions against the employers would not *automatically* demonstrate to the workers the need to go beyond reforms and do away with the entire profit system through a violent social revolution. To do that, it was necessary to develop arguments and a political programme based on "the sphere of relationships of *all* classes and strata to the state and the government, the sphere of interrelations between *all* classes."

This idea remains completely valid today. Marxism bases itself on a scientific analysis of the entire political situation. It develops a programme, a guide to action for the working class, not only on the basis of the ideas that workers are automatically developing in the economic struggle, but on what is necessary if the working class is to

defend its interests and go forward from the present situation towards socialism.

The SWP's understanding of the relationship of the party to the class is a break with Leninism. Because they believe that revolutionary socialist ideas can develop spontaneously from the economic struggle, they avoid the need to fight the *concrete* manifestations of the workers' spontaneous reformist consciousness today.

So we see no attempt to organise a rank and file movement against the bureaucrats, because the workers "aren't ready for it". We see no challenge to the idea of the pit camps, which are being pushed by the NUM bureaucracy not as a "focus" for action but as an alternative to the the fight for occupations of the pits. We see no alternative strategy mapped out for the class by the SWP except more of the same and, of course, "join the SWP".

Instead of a party of the most advanced workers fighting for a focused strategy for today, the party plays a purely organisational role as "the glue that links the militants together".

The SWP's wrong understanding of the role of the party underlies its present attempt to redefine and broaden the criteria for party membership. Their conference report announces that:

"Today a member of the party is someone who sells *Socialist Worker* and is prepared to defend the politics it contains."

This explains the proliferation of blank party membership cards being scattered like confetti at meetings, pickets and demonstrations. In reality, all you have to do to join is hate the Tories, not be racist or sexist, and part with 50p.

Of course for a sizeable party to win broad masses of workers in a period of upsurge it would be wrong to demand, as the conference report puts it, "a formal knowledge of the Marxist classics" as a precondition

for membership.

But even at a stage when the party is opening its ranks to a mass working class membership, fresh layers of workers would need to be won not just to "selling the paper" but to the practical policy of the organisation in the class struggle, to an *action programme* around which the party is fighting in the class.

### Membership

The SWP's refusal to develop a programme means that they are now recruiting on an absolutely minimal basis. This is all very well if a party is simply adapting to the spontaneous mood. But if party membership involved a hard fight in the unions and the workplaces around a policy being opposed vigorously by the trade union leaders, then new members would have to be made aware of that, and agree with the party's programme before joining in order to fight for it.

That was why Lenin insisted on the need for party membership to be highly selective. In an article entitled "What Kind of Party do we Need?", in *Socialist Worker* of 9 January 1993, Ian Taylor deliberately misrepresents Lenin's fight against the Mensheviks in 1903. He avoids mentioning what the dispute with the Mensheviks was about: the definition of party membership.

Lenin argued that:



From a 1974 party handbook on chairmanship (sic). Some things never change!

"A member of the Party is one who accepts its programme and who supports the Party both financially and by personal participation in one of the Party organisations."

Against this Martov, the leader of the Mensheviks, argued that:

"A member of the . . . Party is one who, accepting its programme, works

actively to accomplish its aims under the control and direction of the organs of the Party."

Lenin insisted on the need for a disciplined, tightly-knit party as against the Mensheviks' much looser proposal. But the startling point here is that both Lenin and Martov agreed on the need for members to accept the party's programme.

What would Lenin have made of the new definition of membership by the SWP? It can only be described as ultra-Menshevik, the inevitable result of trying to win a mass membership without a clear programme for the working class. Ian Taylor knew exactly what he was doing when he deliberately kept this information out of his article: he was miseducating his readers in the history of Bolshevism to excuse the SWP's own Menshevik practice.

### Control

With such a diffuse and politically heterogeneous membership the SWP leadership keep control by the simple means of denying full internal democracy. Again they depart from Lenin's method. His party organised on the principle of democratic centralism, combining full internal debate and discussion of differences—even during periods of major crisis, including the revolution itself—with iron discipline in practice.

Rather than equipping recruits to develop their understanding of Marxism and encouraging its creative application, the SWP seeks to stifle democratic debate. SWP members will receive only three or four "internal bulletins" during the course of a year, all in the run up to the annual conference. New members are fed a line from above and are given neither the political education nor the democratic opportunity to mount any challenge to it within the structures of the party.

As a result what should be the organisation's supreme policy making body becomes a ritual rubber stamping of the views of the Central Committee majority. While the minimal requirements for membership leave the bulk of members ill-prepared to challenge their leaders, the party's ban on factions (except in the run-up to conference) makes it all but impossible to conduct organised opposition.

### Sect

This is what explains the witch-hunt being waged against the "conservative middle cadre" at the moment, the expulsions in Glasgow, and the open attacks on Pat Stack, Mike Gonzales and Colin Barker that Tony Cliff grants himself the right to make at public rallies but which is denied to lesser mortals.

The result of this bureaucratic centralism is that the SWP is becoming more and more of a sect, despite its recent growth.

Workers Power rejects the SWP's method of party-building and its conception of the role of the party. For our challenge to Cliff's economism we were expelled from the Party when we refused to shut down our faction.

We are not yet a party, though we aim to build one. We recognise that for a revolutionary party to win the masses, it must first be a party of cadre, of potential leaders of the working class steeled in struggle and trained in Marxist theory, intervening in all the struggles of the class around a focused programme.

Whether the SWP continues to grow or not, it is building not a revolutionary, but an opportunist party. To SWP members who recognise the need for a revolutionary party to have a revolutionary strategy, for it to aim at leading the class rather than tail-ending it, for it to abide by the principles of democratic centralism and not bureaucratic centralism, we address a simple appeal: help us build that party. Join Workers Power. ■

## Drugs and dealers

Dear comrades

Ben Williamson's article on Moss Side placed Benji Stanley's murder in its grim social context. But the article underestimated the role played by the police in regulating the supply of illicit drugs. The Met currently faces its biggest corruption scandal in two decades after Hackney Community Defence Association produced overwhelming evidence of the planting of drugs by officers and extensive, highly lucrative dealing by detectives in predominantly black areas of Stoke Newington and Dalston.

There is also a slight inaccuracy in the article's account of the role played by the Black

Panthers. Undeniably, the organisation lifted many youth out of gang warfare and did its best to ensure that its own members had no involvement with the drug trade. The Panthers, however, never succeeded in shutting down the narcotics trade in the key strongholds of Oakland, California. Sadly, in later life, one of the Panther's founders, Huey Newton, sank deeper into the morass of crack addiction and his 1989 death was almost certainly the result of a crack deal gone wrong.

Nevertheless, the article was an excellent read!

In comradeship,  
G R McColl, London N16

Dear comrades

In your article on the situation in Moss Side you said that the problem with the dealers is that they sell drugs adulterated with "crap". No doubt this is a good reason for putting the manufacture and distribution of all drugs under workers' control, as the article suggests.

But the other point is that heavy drug use—especially of drugs like crack and heroin—is destroying the lives of many inner-city youth and is depriving the working class of some of its best fighters.

At the end of the last century, the Second International led massive campaigns against alcoholism which wrought similar damage on the working class, sapping workers' willingness to fight and

killing thousands upon thousands.

The Bolsheviks did much the same thing when they were in power.

The cycling clubs and nude swimming parties which were seen as an alternative 100 years ago would probably not entice today's youth, but part of the challenge faced by revolutionaries is to find a way to these youth, to offer them action and a perspective that will take them out of the shooting galleries and onto the streets.

There should be no moral condemnation of drug use. But we should make absolutely clear that the youth who are spending all their time stoned are, literally, wasting their lives.

Revolutionary greetings,  
J Stansfield  
Bristol

Dear Comrades,

On the last letters page (WP163) V N Gellis takes issue with the statement that "workers have no interest in maintaining small and medium sized capitalist farming in Europe".

He then argues, "presumably they don't have an interest in maintaining a small or medium sized capitalist coal industry in Britain?".

Just to take up the argument about import controls: as regular readers of *Workers Power* will have noticed we do not advocate protectionist measures to maintain the British coal industry, as Gellis implies.

We oppose import controls because we are internationalists. Labour's Robin Cook puts the capitalist case for protectionism when he says: "if you import coal you export jobs." Put it another way: if you limit imports you export unemployment.

Precisely because revolutionary socialists do care about the living standards of all workers in Europe—from Greek farmers to German coal miners—we will not advocate the export of unemployment.

But Gellis raises an important question. Where does that leave us on the current government proposal to subsidise coal production?

In a de-regulated market like post 1992 Europe, any subsidy is a measure of competition and acts like an import control. But fighting unemployment necessitates forcing the capitalist state and the bosses to pay for the maintenance of industries that can't make a profit.

Michael Heseltine claims that the coal industry is subsidised by £1 billion a year already. "The question is", he says, "how much will the subsidy be reduced?"

## IMPORT CONTROLS

In the short term, if the Tories want to reduce subsidies for one industry (coal) but keep them for others (nuclear power, road freight, farming) to make workers pay for the recession we have to oppose them.

In the medium term, however, simply opposing the reduction of government subsidy is not a strategy for maintaining jobs, protecting communities etc.

Whenever the bosses want to attack workers in basic industries, especially since 1979, they have formulated Europe-wide plans. They agreed in advance across-the-board cuts in steel production, for example, in order to

make sure that the local balance of class forces in one country (where a steel closure could be resisted) did not lead to unfair competition between the national steel industries during the "rationalisation process".

Faced with this workers need their own international plan. A workers' plan for the European energy industry would make sure, just like the bosses do, that no one national section of our class suffered from applying working class criteria to the energy industry.

The international plan is not utopian, not a distraction from the main issues of today's struggle. If it seems impracti-

cable that is only because of the short sightedness of the reformist union bureaucrats who refuse to organise on a pan-European scale.

It may not seem relevant to many miners fighting for their jobs today. Many will heave a sigh of relief if the Tories agree a new subsidy and, to paraphrase Robin Cook, start exporting unemployment to the mining communities of Germany. But they had better start worrying that the German workers don't fight and force their government to implement an even higher subsidy, exporting job losses back to Britain. Despite the internationalist rhetoric of the union bureaucrats that is where economic nationalism ends up.

Yours  
Colin Lloyd

## Apology for ethnic cleansing?

Dear comrades,

It is unfortunate that the article "Rape as a military weapon" should have reached the printed page. The writer seems at a loss in tackling the horror of the systematic raping of Bosnian Muslim women by Serbian forces. The problem appears to arise from a need to distance her/himself from imperialist anti-Serbian propaganda. Why else are we told, despite the disclaimer, "no army or soldiers who commit it can be absolved from responsibility", that, "Serbian soldiers have been forced to regard their neighbours and fellow workers as the enemy" (emphasis added). And later on, that it is the officers who are really to blame for "forcing" the soldiers to rape.

Come on! These allegations of force amount to an apology for those engaged in "ethnic cleansing". It is the familiar cry of the SS warden that he was "only following orders".

Secondly, why does the article finish with an appeal to the "ethnic cleansers" and "pogromists" to form committees to resist their officers and prevent the rapes? The implication, by omission, is that the overall strategy of ethnic cleansing is OK! Surely the appeal should be for the soldiers to turn their weapons against their bloody racist misleaders and turn the civil war into a revolutionary, internationalist struggle?

Finally, the idea that war can be talked about in terms of what is "legitimate" or not is

ludicrous when observing, that is when not commanding, the forces involved. If, by an amazing stretch of imagination, the Serbian pogromists were conducting a struggle in defence of the international working class, that is to say a "just" war, then communists would have the right and duty to criticise what tactics are legitimate or not in terms of working class morality. This is not the case in Bosnia and as such to cry that because rape is "a particularly degrading form of violence" it is decreed by *Workers Power* as illegitimate becomes, sadly, a nonsense.

Yours,  
Patrick Spackman

*We reply: You have missed the point. The "force" we were talking about was in relation to the ideology of ethnic cleansing—in other words the soldiers are being systematically taught to regard their enemy as subhuman. Do you think that Serbian forces are spontaneously this aggressive towards Muslims? The appeal to the ethnic cleansers as you call it is a recognition that soldiers and officers are not the same, and that elected committees of soldiers is a part of the revolutionary programme.*

*We do not jump to your conclusion that all Serbian soldiers are committed ethnic cleansers. And our discussion of whether it was a legitimate weapon or not was to point out that even if we fully supported their war aims (and we made clear that we did not) we would still be in favour of turning the guns of the other soldiers upon anyone who raped.*

## Solidarity and the miners' strike

Dear comrades,

The letter in the last paper from Marjorie Warwick says that *Workers Power* "sneered" at the collection of food and other items for the miners and their families in the 1984-5 strike.

As a member of *Workers Power* during the strike I was active in support groups in Coventry and Leicester and the Women's Support Group at Keresley Colliery.

The point we are making, and made then, about money and food donations to the miners was that they were insufficient to win. Of course food, baby clothes etc. were important and gratefully received.

However, even if millions of tons of these things had been

collected the miners would still have lost, because what they needed far more was not to be left to struggle in isolation.

Collections needed to be made, using the opportunity to talk to other workers about supporting the miners, but not only through donations. What was necessary was the winning of solidarity action—industrial action to ensure that the dispute won.

In Coventry, *Workers Power* won leading members of the Keresley Strike Committee, such as Colin Ward and Baz Hindson, to the need to leaflet key local workplaces asking for strike action alongside the miners. But when miners and supporters went to give the leaflet out at a local factory,

the convenor said that if it was distributed he'd see to it that the food and money collections in the factory were stopped! In response to this threat the miners reluctantly agreed not to give it out.

The result of this sort of attitude was that miners received the support to survive from week to week, but were denied the only solidarity which could have helped them win.

*Workers Power* members were very active in the strike, and never "sneered" at the idea of collecting food or money.

It just wasn't enough, as later events have unfortunately shown.

Yours  
Gen Doy, Leicester.

## WHERE WE STAND

**WORKERS POWER** is a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the documents of the first four congresses of the Third (Communist) International and on the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International.

Capitalism is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human need.

Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

The Labour Party is not a socialist party. It is a bourgeois workers' party—bourgeois in its politics and its practice, but based on the working class via the trade unions and supported by the mass of workers at the polls. We are for the building of a revolutionary tendency in the Labour Party, in order to win workers within those organisations away from reformism and to the revolutionary party.

In the trade unions we fight for a rank and file movement to oust the reformist bureaucrats, to democratise the unions and win them to a revolutionary action programme based on a system of transitional demands which serve as a bridge between today's struggles and the socialist revolution. Central to this is the fight for workers' control of production.

We are for the building of fighting organisations of the working class—factory committees, industrial unions, councils of action, and workers' defence organisations.

The first victorious working class revolution, the October 1917 Revolution in Russia, established a workers' state. But Stalin and the bureaucracy destroyed

workers' democracy and set about the reactionary and utopian project of building "socialism in one country". In the USSR, and the other degenerate workers' states that were established from above, capitalism was destroyed but the bureaucracy excluded the working class from power, blocking the road to democratic planning and socialism. The corrupt, parasitic bureaucratic caste has led these states to crisis and destruction. We are for the smashing of bureaucratic tyranny through proletarian political revolution and the establishment of workers' democracy. We oppose the restoration of capitalism and recognise that only workers' revolution can defend the post-

capitalist property relations. In times of war we unconditionally defend workers' states against imperialism.

Internationally Stalinist Communist Parties have consistently betrayed the working class. Their strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) and their stages theory of revolution have inflicted terrible defeats on the working class world-wide. These parties are reformist and their influence in the workers' movement must be defeated.

We fight against the oppression that capitalist society inflicts on people because of their race, age, sex, or sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of all of the oppressed. We fight racism and fascism. We oppose all immigration controls. We fight for labour movement support for black self-defence against racist and state attacks. We are for no platform for fascists and for driving them out of the unions.

We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland. We politically oppose the nationalists (bourgeois and petit bourgeois) who lead the struggles of the oppressed nations. To their strategy we counterpose the strategy of permanent revolution, that is the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle by the working class with a programme of socialist revolution and internationalism.

In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of "our own" army and the victory of the country oppressed and exploited by imperialism. We are for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. We fight imperialist war not with pacifist pleas but with militant class struggle methods including the forcible disarmament of "our own" bosses.

*Workers Power* is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary International (Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51.

The LRCI is pledged to fight the centrism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International and to refound a Leninist-Trotskyist International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. We combine the struggle for a re-elaborated transitional programme with active involvement in the struggles of the working class—fighting for revolutionary leadership.

If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!

# Workers power

**INSIDE**

Number 164 February 1993

- ★ **Somalia: famine and war**
- ★ *Fascism and the united front*
- ★ **Monarchy in crisis**

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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## IMPERIALIST PEACEKEEPING

**Bloody hypocrisy. These words sum up the murderous attacks on Iraq carried out by the world's leading war-mongers: the USA, Britain and France.**

In the name of a global "peace-keeping" mission, scores of Iraqis, including civilians and children, were incinerated in a series of cowardly aerial attacks last month. One hundred and fourteen aircraft carried out the first attack, which the USA claimed was targeted at military hardware such as anti-aircraft guns, radar and communications. But despite attempts at a cover-up even the bosses' media could not conceal the damage done to residential areas, the Al-Rashid hotel and non-military plants by the second raid.

These attacks were another step in the march of the USA and its imperialist allies towards securing two vital aims: undisputed military control of the region and safe supplies of oil.

Tory minister Malcolm Rifkind described the carnage as "measured and proportionate". Disgracefully, but not unexpectedly, the leader of the "opposition", John Smith, said the raids were "justified" and added, "I hope Saddam Hussein clearly understands that he cannot continue to flout international opinion."

### Opinion

But whose opinion was he speaking of? Certainly not that of the masses of the Arab world, who can see only too well the hypocrisy of Bush and Clinton. These butchers seize at any excuse to bomb Iraq but apply different standards to Israel's oppression of the Palestinians. The Arab masses are not stupid. They can see the difference between the way imperialism treats Iraq and the way it treated Israel after it deported Palestinians fighting the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

Nor can Smith be referring to the opinions of the workers throughout the advanced capitalist countries. They have no quarrel with the Iraqi workers and peasants. But they do suffer unemployment and

# Bloody

# Hypocrisy

declining living standards at the hands of the same rulers who spend billions to finance bloodshed and destruction in order to preserve their control of the Gulf region and its oil supplies.

Smith is certainly not talking about the opinions of the Iraqi people themselves. They are not pouring out onto the streets to thank the imperialists for bombing their homes and strafing their streets.

What Smith is really concerned with is the opinion of the bankers, financiers and industrialists of the world. In a fast-changing situation they are relying on US military strength to guarantee their global system of super-exploitation, of luxury for a handful of parasites alongside crippling Third World debt, austerity in the West and starvation for millions in Africa. Smith, who owes his position to the votes of working people, sides every time with their most vicious enemies.

### Collapse

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of Stalinism in the East was supposed to herald a golden age of democracy, peace and stability for the world. The Gulf War demonstrated that the USA could openly assume the role of a world policeman, using the cover of the UN for its own naked self-interest. But US attempts to settle existing regional conflicts are running aground.

In Palestine the growth of intransigent Islamic opposi-



**US troops back in Kuwait**

tion to the PLO's intended sell-out and the Israeli state's vicious repression have undermined the peace talks. In the Balkans the spread and intensification of reactionary nationalisms have destabilised the entire region, raising the spectre of a conflict spiralling out of control by drawing other Balkan states into a war. The US Navy looms off the Adriatic coast of the former Yugoslavia, ready to add firepower to the UN forces if necessary.

In the former Soviet Union, the restoration of capitalism faces tremendous obstacles, with imminent hyper-inflation raising the threat of social conflict dwarfing the Balkan crisis. Already ethnic and na-

tional conflicts have led to civil war in a number of former Soviet republics.

### Conflicts

The USA and its allies are faced with a proliferation of regional conflicts. They cannot police them all. Most significantly, the recession in the USA and its overall decline as the world's leading economic power prevent it capitalising on its global political victories to underwrite a new period of world-wide economic expansion and prosperity. Even recovery from the recession will be weighed down by the burden of debt incurred during the boom of the mid to late 1980s. There will be plenty of

prior claims on future profits.

As the "economic miracles" of Germany and Japan go deeper into recession, rivalries between the main capitalist powers are already sharpening. A massive economic expansion is essential if imperialism is to re-establish lasting order from the chaos of the post-Cold War world. But to do that, the imperialist powers will have to drastically reduce the living standards of their own working classes. This will mean a period of massive attacks on workers' rights and organisations.

Far from entering a period of global stability, we are witnessing sharpening social conflicts, disillusion in exist-

ing political parties and leaders, the emergence of mass radical and reactionary movements, national and religious strife, intensifying economic rivalries and wars.

We stand at the beginning of a period in world history of profound disequilibrium, in which the inability of the capitalists to solve deep social and economic problems will raise the possibility of millions with no stake in the system flocking to radical solutions, whether of the right . . . or of the left.

Here the question of working class leadership is crucial. The Communist parties are discredited, fragmented, desperately looking for new movements and a new ideology in the west or seeking to survive using chauvinism or anti-semitism in the east. The social democratic, Labour and other reformist parties can offer no way out to those losing faith in a system that they have defended through thick and thin.

### Leadership

In the struggles that lie ahead, the working class must forge a new leadership, an international party dedicated to socialist revolution, to the overthrow of the capitalist system and its replacement by a democratically planned economy, the only basis for lasting peace and prosperity. Our movement, the League for a Revolutionary Communist International, is laying the foundations for such a leadership. ■